

The Assemblies of God and Positive Confession (Part 1)

Response to the AoG Position Paper “The Believer and Positive Confession”

Good people enjoy the positive results of their words, but those who are treacherous crave violence. (Proverbs 13:2; New Living Translation)

***Praise Him by Faith BEFORE You see or Feel** (Phil. 4:4-6): Lack of praise is an evidence of a lack of faith, for faith appropriates the promises and rejoices in them before there is any outward or visible evidence (Hebrews 11). (P. C. Nelson, an AoG Pentecostal Pioneer).¹*

*“All I know about faith and healing, I learned in the Assemblies of God.”
(Kenneth E. Hagin Sr.)²*

The Assemblies of God position paper is a response to what the denomination considers to be extremes in the Faith Movement. The denomination is obligated to distance themselves from errors and extremes that have their roots in Pentecostalism. No one should fault them for this.

We also acknowledge the fact that there have been extremes in the movement. The late Kenneth E. Hagin Sr., credited by some as the “father” of the current Faith Movement, wrote, “In the so-called ‘Faith Movement’ which God has raised up in recent years (I just call it the Word of God Movement), we’ve had all kinds of extremes.”³

If the denomination were simply distancing themselves from these extremes then there would be no need for this response. Yet, the Assemblies not only fail to acknowledge that faith teachers such as Hagin have attempted to bring correction and balance to the movement, this position paper and subsequent writings from the denomination associate him and every faith teacher with them.⁴

The association of Hagin and *others* with the extremes and errors mentioned in this position paper justifies the need for a rebuttal. The Assemblies of God presents distortions of a doctrine that is far from being advocated by its proponents, and they must be refuted.

It would appear to any student of Pentecostal history that the Assemblies of God has backed away from some aspects of Faith Teaching that were at one time “prominent” in the movement. One aspect is “positive confession” or, more Biblically speaking, a

¹ Nelson, P. C. **Does Christ Heal Today?** (Enid, OK: Southwestern Press, 1941), p. 43

² Synan, Vinson **The Faith of Kenneth Hagin**, an interview with the late Kenneth Hagin Sr. published in *Charisma and Christian Life* magazine, June 1990.

³ Hagin, Kenneth E. **Learning to Flow with the Spirit of God** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1986), p. 20

⁴ See Anderson’s essay titled, “The Contextual Pentecostal Theology of David Yonggi Cho” in the **Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies** (Volume 7, Number 1, January 2004), p. 105. Can be accessed at <http://www.aps.edu/ajps/7-1/A-Anderson.pdf> (last accessed: 11 January, 2005). In reference to the position paper by the AoG, Allan Anderson writes, “In 1980, the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God officially condemned the ‘positive confession’ teaching increasing in the USA at this time through the work of Kenneth Hagin and others” Anderson’s essay is a defense of Cho’s theology with attempts to separate his teaching from the Western Faith Movement.

“confession of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:23). A Pentecostal pastor that I occasionally communicate with believed that within the Assemblies of God, “is a desire to fit into the orthodox mold, i.e., that Pentecostal organizations will achieve a ‘respectability’ that eluded them for the better part of a century.”

In our two-part rebuttal to the *current* Assemblies of God position, we will demonstrate that not only is their position out of sync with Scripture, but also with its own classic roots.

1. The AoG’s “Negative” Reaction to Distinguishing Between Positive and Negative Confession

The AoG position paper says,

Positive and negative confessions are expressions, which in recent years have received acceptance in an extreme form in some circles. Both the definition in writing and the pattern of usage give some insight into the implications of these terms.⁵

After giving what they believe is the common English definition relied on by those who advocate the “positive confession” teaching, the position paper writes, “This view goes a step further and divides confession into negative and positive aspects.”⁶

It is true that advocates of “positive confession” make a distinction between positive and negative confession in terms of confessing sin and confessing what one believes. Some Evangelical theologians who are not affiliated with the so-called “faith Movement” or “Positive Confession” Movement also teaches this. According to Greek Scholars, the word “confession” is translated from the Greek word “homologeō”. In *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, we find that,

From this common root emerge two distinct theological senses: the acknowledging or confessing of faith (in God, Christ, or a particular doctrine), and the acknowledging or confessing of sins before God.⁷

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* makes a similar distinction:

When man is said to confess or make confession, the contents of the confession are variously distinguished. All, however, may be grouped under two heads, confession of faith and confession of sin. Confessions of faith are public acknowledgments of fidelity to God, and to the truth through which God is revealed, as 1 Kings 8:33. They are declarations of unqualified confidence in Christ, and of surrender to His service; Matthew 10:32.⁸

⁵ The General Council of the Assemblies of God **The Believer and Positive Confession**, 1980, p. 1

⁶ Ibid, p. 2

⁷ Elwell, Walter A. (editor) **Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996). Accessed online at <http://www.crosswalk.com> (Last accessed: December 21, 2004).

⁸ **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, accessed online at <http://www.searchgodsword.org> (Last accessed: December 21, 2004)

Faith teachers usually make two implications by the phrase, “positive confession.” First, the term is used in contrast to the *negative confession* of our sins to God. The late Kenneth E. Hagin Sr wrote the following:

“.... I am not referring to the negative confession of sins, but to the positive confession of the **Word of God** and the positive confession of our faith in God's Word.” (Kenneth E. Hagin, Sr.)⁹

Though Hagin made the distinction between positive and negative confession, he did not limit “confession” to just these two aspects. As a matter of fact, Hagin speaks about FOUR different types of confession:

There are four kinds of confessions spoken of in the New Testament: (1) the teachings of John the Baptist and Jesus regarding confession of the sins of the Jews; (2) the confession of the sinner today; (3) the believer's confession of his sins when he is out of fellowship with God; and (4) the confession of our faith in God's Word.¹⁰

Hagin is not disparaging the need for the believer to acknowledge sin, sickness, or any other negative aspect of life. The emphasis of Hagin’s teaching was that the believer should agree with what God’s Word says on these subjects. Nonetheless, Hagin still taught that one is to make a confession (acknowledgment) of sin. Hagin strongly advocated the necessity for this:

Now if you are in Christ and you sin, that doesn’t mean you get “out” of Christ. If you sin, you can be forgiven of your sin. First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹¹

The above should negate any thought that Hagin and other faith teachers have a dispute with the *negative* confession that is necessary when one sins against God. However, he and others felt that it was also necessary to teach the “positive side” of confession for good reason. Many Christians only relate confession to bringing our sins before God and confessing them (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9; James 5:14-18).

Hagin and others felt that since this is not the only type of confession taught in the Bible, it would become necessary to place more of an emphasis on the positive aspect of Bible confession in which the believer confesses the *positive* aspects of God's Word - or His promises. This would be done in conjunction with, rather than the exclusion of, the *negative* aspect of Bible confession in which we confess our transgressions to God.

The second point implied by the phrase “negative confession” is when a believer speaks contrary to what God has promised, hence a *negative confession*. The thought behind this is that a statement made by a believer concerning their situation that is not in

⁹ Hagin, Kenneth E. **Understanding How To Fight The Good Fight of Faith** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1987) p. 113

¹⁰ Hagin, Kenneth E. **New Thresholds of Faith** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1987), p. 34

¹¹ See Hagin’s article “Do You Believe ‘Once Saved, Always saved’” in the September 2004 issue of **The Word of Faith Magazine** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 2004), p. 22.

line with the Word of God demonstrates a lack of faith. This potentially negates the promises of God in his or her life since God cannot be pleased apart from faith (Heb. 11:6). This is not a denial of the reality of one's situation, but *an acknowledgment of God's authority over it*.

In spite of this, the AoG insists that positive confession advocates believe that, "The negative is acknowledging sin, sickness, poverty, or other undesirable situations. Positive confession is acknowledging or owning desirable situations."¹² There is *some* truth to this statement. Ironically, the teaching under dispute by the Assemblies was taught among their own ranks at one time. One of the missionary pioneers in the *Assemblies of God*, Mrs. Cornelius Nuzum, wrote:

Never say, "I have pain, disease, doubt, or other evil." Say, "I will not have it. I will not let Satan put it on me. I refuse to accept it or recognize it or own it." Continue to say, "I am delivered, no matter how I feel or look." Praise hastens victory. Believe the thing is done, praise and rejoice, not because it is going to be done, but because it is done, even though you cannot see it or feel it.¹³

Allow me to reiterate that a modern faith teacher did not write the above, but it was written by a missionary in the AoG's own denomination. In spite of this, I am sure that someone would still accuse Nuzum of teaching "denial." The implication made in the Assemblies statement as cited above is that Hagin and others teach their listeners to deny the existence of "undesirable situations." Therefore, I would not be surprised by a similar accusation towards Nuzum, though she is one of their pioneers.

We will deal with this more fully in this response and also in Part 2. For now, we will state the fact that the faith teachers felt that their calling was to emphasize the more positive aspects of God's Word due to their neglect by other Christian groups.

2. God's Word Promotes "Positivism"

This position paper that represents the Assemblies of God's position does not take into account that there are some very "positive" things in God's Word. One of the late AoG Pentecostal pioneers, **P. C. Nelson** (one of the men from whom Hagin often credits as deriving his theology) wrote the following:

"Shall save the sick," "the Lord shall raise him up," "sins shall be forgiven him." Note the *positiveness* of these great promises. "They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. These promises are to be "laid hold of" by the sick. The Lord will make them good. (Italics and bold are mine)¹⁴

Nelson, who was a founding father and theologian within the AoG denomination, taught that there were some "positive" promises in God's Word. If there are "positives" in God's Word, should we not make them into confessions that are positive? The late

¹² Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 2

¹³ Nuzum, Cornelia **The Life of Faith** (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1997), p. 64. First published in 1928

¹⁴ Nelson, *Does Christ Heal Today?* p. k – Appendix

Baptist preacher, **Charles H. Spurgeon**, who was also known as the "prince of preachers" made this comment on Isaiah 53:5

Now child of God, if thou wouldst give glory to God, declare that thou art healed this morning. Be not always saying, "I hope I am saved." The man who says he hopes he is cured does not greatly recommend the physician; but the man who knows he is, he is the man who brings him honor. Let us speak positively: we can do so. Let us speak out in the face of all mankind, and not be ashamed. Let us say, "As surely as we are so diseased, so surely are we healed through the stripes of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us give Jesus all glory, let us magnify Him to the utmost.¹⁵

While I do not believe that Spurgeon was advocating "physical healing" in his comments, we still should note that this *Baptist* taught that one's speech should be consistent in a "positive way" with the statements in God's Word.

Scripture seems to encourage us to place our minds on "positive" things. Paul tells us that we are to be anxious for nothing, but pray, petition, and offer thanksgiving to God. We are then promised that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds through Christ. Yet, there is a part that we play as well. We are to think on, or meditate on only those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (see Phil. 4:6-9). Paul seems to lament over the loss of a "positive" attitude that the Galatians once had:

What happened to your positive attitude? It's a fact that if it had been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. (Gal. 4:15; God's Word to the Nations. See also the International Standard Version)

Scripture seems to promote a distinction between "positive" and "negative." One cannot be positive until they first have an assurance that God will bless them with those things He has promised. He makes these promises known in His Word. This Word reveals God's will. When we have grasped His will, we can be "positive" that what God has promised will be accomplished in our lives:

And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him. (1 John 5:15; Amplified Bible)

"Positively" means to "be positive." One who is positive, or has an assurance and certainty that God will do as He has said, demonstrates this outwardly. Being positive is not something we can keep hidden. If we are being "positive" in a Scriptural way, then this will show outwardly through our lifestyle and our speech:

But having the same spirit of faith, as it is said in the Writings, The words of my mouth came from the faith in my heart; in the same way, our words are the outcome of our faith; (2 Cor. 4:13; The Bible in Basic English)

¹⁵ Spurgeon, Charles H. **Christ In The Old Testament** (Chatanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1994), pp. 598, 599.

Faith is a very “positive” thing. True faith in God’s Word should make one positive because one will have an expectation that God will do as He has promised (Gen. 32:11, 12; 2 Sam. 7:25), and fulfill His promises in our lives (Ezek. 36:37), even when all of life’s circumstances seem contrary to this (Ps. 27:12, 13).

In their position paper on divine healing, the Assemblies of God appear to slightly contradict themselves. While recognizing abuses, they still affirm the truth that divine healing is, in their words, “an integral part of the gospel.” They also believe that it is a truth that must be proclaimed in a “positive” manner. “We recognize that there have been abuses today. But we must not let that cause us to retreat from a *positive* proclamation of the truth of the Scripture.”¹⁶ (Italics are mine). Perhaps the use of the word “positive” is only “extreme” when not used by the AoG? Certainly this is cause for wonder if not amusement.

3. The Assemblies of God’s Dispute with “English” Definitions of Confession?

In their position paper the Assemblies says that Positive Confession advocates rely on a particular English translation of the word “confess.” Here is what they write:

The positive confession teaching relies on an English dictionary definition of the word confess: “to acknowledge, or to own; to acknowledge faith in.” Confession is also described as affirming something that is believed, testifying to something known, and witnessing for a truth which has been embraced.¹⁷

Perhaps this is true. Yet, one must ask why the denomination seems to dispute the supposed reliance on the above definition. The position paper does not make a case for the possibility that the above definition should not be relied upon. After giving this definition, the position paper simply moves on to deal with how positive confession advocates distinguish between “positive” and “negative” confession.

Nevertheless, the word “rely” (as used in the position paper) seems to give a negative connotation to the use of the definition in question. Regardless of whether or not the writer of this position paper agrees or disagrees with the definition, we find it to be consistent both with Scripture and the original Greek language:

*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that **acknowledgeth** the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. (1 John 2:23-25)*

The word “acknowledgeth” in the above passage of Scripture is used as “confess” seventeen times in the New Testament, and as “profess” three times. Most English translations use the word “confess” vice “acknowledge” in the 1 John 2:23. This is from

¹⁶ The General Council of the Assemblies of God **Divine Healing: an Integral Part of the Gospel**, 1974, p. 6

¹⁷ Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 2

the Greek word “homologeō” which means, “to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent.” It also means “to declare openly, speak out freely.”¹⁸

One cannot *have* (“own” or “possess” according to the Greek¹⁹) the Father without openly confessing – or rather openly declaring the Son. Therefore, the definition that the AoG claims is *relied upon* by the proponents of positive confession seems quite consistent with both Scripture and the original Greek language.

The AoG themselves agree with the definition we have cited from the Greek. Unfortunately they make the implication that advocates of Positive Confession are saying something about “positive confession” that is inconsistent with God’s Word:

The Greek word translated "confess" means "to speak the same thing." When people confess Christ, it is to say the same thing as Scripture does concerning Christ. When people confess sin, it is to say the same as Scripture does concerning sin. And when people confess some promise of Scripture, they must be sure they are saying the same thing about that promise as the total teaching of Scripture on that subject.

The words of Augustine are appropriate in this regard: "If you believe what you like in the gospel and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself."²⁰

I am not aware of one Faith Teacher who would disagree with the Assemblies of God’s definition of confession. It is consistent with their discoveries. Charles Capps, who probably teaches the relationship between confession and faith more than most, writes, “To confess means ‘to say the same thing,’ or ‘to admit.’ Confessing God’s Word is admitting God’s Word is true.”²¹

Reading the following statements by some of the major Faith Teachers, one will begin to understand in their strict adherence to God’s Word when making a confession of faith:

"Now we dare to act on what we know the Word teaches. We dare to take our place and confess before the world what the Word says about us is true." (E.W. Kenyon)

"When your confession agrees with the **Word of God** then and only then will you receive what God has promised you. A true confession of faith is always based on the Word of the Living God." (Frederick K.C. Price)

"Learn to put the **WORD** into confession form" (Charles Capps)

"There is a vast difference between lying and speaking by faith. A lie is meant to deceive someone. It's designed to make someone believe that something is not

¹⁸ **The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon** (based on Thayer's and Smith's Bible Dictionary plus others; keyed to the large Kittel and the "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.") Accessed at <http://www.crosswalk.com> (Last accessed: 22 December, 2004)

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 4

²¹ Capps, Charles **Dynamics of Faith & Confession** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, 1987), p. 241

true. But to speak by faith is simply to speak words that agree with the Word of God instead of the circumstances around you." (Kenneth Copeland)²²

The Faith Teachers base their teaching on a number of Bible passages (Matt. 4:1-11; 12:33-37; 21: 21-22; Mark 11:23; Rom. 10:8-17; 2 Cor. 4:13; Heb. 4:14; 10:23; James 3:9-11 and many others). Unfortunately, the AoG position paper, perhaps unintentionally, could easily lead one to a distorted view of this teaching. It would seem from reading this position paper that Faith Teachers either teach us to make “positive confessions” with no Biblical basis, or “pick and choose” what Scriptures to confess while disregarding the rest of the Bible.

I do not dispute the fact that some have taken the teaching to such an extreme and that they go beyond the boundaries of God’s Word. Yet, the position paper leads one to believe that this is a common practice within the movement. The citation by Augustine (a church father who taught many of the extremes that later led to the Roman Catholic and Calvinistic heresies being revived among Evangelicals²³) is proof that the Assemblies are painting a picture that says all Faith Teachers are off target.

As we stated earlier, Hagin acknowledged that there have been extremes. Yet, he exhorted his listeners to come back into a balanced perspective and focus their desires on what the Bible teaches:

In the so-called "Faith Movement" which God has raised up in recent years (I just call it the Word of God Movement), we've had all kinds of extremes. Dear Lord, people get off on all kinds of tangents. But that doesn't do away with the real!

We try to stay balanced and stay in the middle of the road. I tell my students that if they can't find where the Bible says something, they shouldn't say it either.²⁴

Hagin has always attempted to discourage his listeners “from going into one ditch or the other.” Like most Faith Teachers before and after him, Hagin encourages his listeners to only advocate what is consistent with Scripture. His advice to his listeners has always been, “Be sure the Scriptures cover what you are believing for. Don’t get out beyond God’s Word.”²⁵ He notes that “getting beyond God’s Word” has ruined lives.

Along with Hagin, others who advocate positive confession have addressed extremes that come up from time to time in the movement. Three books that are worth mentioning are *Faith, Foolishness, or Presumption* by Frederick K. C. Price, and *Praying Beyond God’s Ability* and *Avoiding Ditches*; both books written by Dr. Roy Hicks Sr. (Available through Harrison House Publishers). These books certainly deal with foolishness in the name of “positive confession” or “faith.” Hicks also addresses some

²² Kenyon, Essek William **Two Kinds of Faith** (Lynnwood, WA: Gospel Publishing Society, 1969) p. 68; Price, Frederick K.C. **Name It And Claim It** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1992) p. 22; Capps, Charles **The Tongue: A Creative Force** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1976) p. 106; Copeland, Kenneth and Gloria **From Faith to Faith** (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1990) June 24 devotional: *Don't Tell It Like it Is*

²³ Fisk, Samuel **Calvinistic Paths Retraced** (Murfreesboro, TN: Biblical Evangelism Press, 1985), pp. 95-105

²⁴ Hagin, *Learning to Flow with the Spirit of God*, pp. 20, 21

²⁵ See The October 2004 issue of *The Word of Faith Magazine* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 2004), pp. 14, 15.

areas in *Praying Beyond God's Ability* that demonstrates the need to remember that walking by faith is not about just picking and choosing what we like in God's Word.

Nonetheless, because certain aspects of God's Word had been neglected by many mainstream denominations, the Faith Teachers felt that it was necessary to focus on them. This does not mean that they believe that other subjects found in God's Word are unimportant. As Kenneth Hagin Jr. once wrote, "The faith message is not the only message in the Word of God."²⁶ They are simply reacting to the lack of teaching in those areas they deem neglected, just as Pentecostal pioneers before them have done.

4. The AoG's Accusation that Positive Confession Advocates Teach assurance of only pleasant circumstances.

Now let us go forward to what I believe, as is so well stated by Bill O'Reilly from Fox News as "The most ridiculous item of the day." The writer of this position paper perverts what is actually taught in the positive confession message when he/she adds the false accusation that one will assure for himself pleasant circumstances:

According to this view, as expressed in various publications, the believer who refrains from acknowledging the negative and continues to affirm the positive will assure for himself pleasant circumstances.²⁷

And a couple of paragraphs later we read:

It is understandable that some people would like to accept the positive confession teaching. It promises a life free from problems, and its advocates seem to support it with passages of Scripture.²⁸

If this assessment of positive confession teaching has been derived from the literature of its proponents, I personally cannot recall having ever read it. It would have been nice for the writer to cite some actual example.

I have been with the Faith Movement for almost twenty years and I can not recall having been taught a life of ease that the Assemblies claim is being taught. On the contrary, I have been taught to expect trials and opposition. Two of the most well known leaders in the Faith Movement have left us without any doubt concerning this:

If you think you're just going to float through life on flowery beds of ease, you've got another thought coming! God never promised you a life without trials. But He has promised you victory in the midst of the trials of life (John 16:33)!
(Kenneth E. Hagin)²⁹

²⁶ Hagin Jr., Kenneth **Itching Ears** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1982), p. 7

²⁷ Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 2

²⁸ Ibid, p. 3

²⁹ Hagin, Kenneth E. **Classic Sermons** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1992), p.16

Some people have the idea that if you live by faith, you can float through life with no problems at all. Forget about that. It will never happen this side of the rapture. (Kenneth Copeland)³⁰

This certainly does not sound like a promotion of a “problem-free life,” now does it? In part two of our response, we will demonstrate how the Faith Teachers view the life of faith from a warfare perspective. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that Faith Teachers do not spend a large quantity of time teaching on the “suffering” of the believer. They believe that their mandate from Heaven is to provide instruction on Biblical principles that will enable the believer to be victorious in the suffering that one will encounter. One would have to search far and wide to find a statement by Faith Teachers advocating a life of ease and assurance and nothing but pleasant circumstances for oneself.

5. The AoG’s Accusation that Positive Confession Advocates Teach one can rule over poverty, sickness, and disease.

Here is what the AoG writes:

He will be able to rule over poverty, disease, and sickness. He will be sick only if he confesses he is sick.³¹

The writer of this position paper actually gets *some* things right. It is indeed true that Faith Teachers teach that one can rule over poverty, sickness, disease, and SIN (one of the things that is taught that the writer failed to mention). However, the current “positive confession” teachers were not the first to teach on these things. The Assemblies of God missionary, Mrs. Cornelius Nuzum wrote, “We are to overcome disease, pain, sickness, and weakness.”³²

Personally I am glad for this teaching because it is consistent with Scripture. The Scripture teaches us that Jesus ruled and reigned over these things (Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; 1 John 3:8 and many other passages). He later gave that same authority to rule and reign over sickness and disease to His disciples:

*Then he called his twelve disciples together, and **gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.** And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1, 2)*

The word “authority” in the above passage can be defined as “mastery” over something³³ (Strong’s dictionary). It can also be defined as “that which is subject to

³⁰ Copeland, Kenneth Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled, <http://kcm.org/studycenter/articles/protection/notyourheart.php> (Last accessed: 22 December, 2004)

³¹ Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 2

³² Nuzum, *The Life of Faith*, p. 62

³³ Strong, James **The New Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible** (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984)

authority or rule" and "one who possesses authority, a ruler, magistrate."³⁴ Therefore, Jesus gave His disciples mastery and rule over sickness and disease.

We recognize that the command to preach is still a valid one today. Therefore, the mastery and rulership over sickness and disease should also be valid. If we are to rid ourselves of one, then we should do the same with the other.

Sin, sickness, poverty, and disease are the works of the devil. Jesus gave seventy additional disciples "mastery" and "rulership" over all of Satan's works. Thankfully, the AoG has not fallen into the false teaching of cessationism and to deny the applicability of this passage for today's believer. One of their theologians wrote some years ago, "The seventy were promised power over all power that would come against them, whether natural or supernatural. They believed the promise then, so why should we not claim the same victory today?"³⁵

Thanks be unto God that the Scripture does teach that the believer can do the same works as Jesus (Matt. 21:18-22; John 14:12). The believer has been given authority over all of the power of the enemy and his works, which includes sickness, poverty, disease, and sin (Luke 10:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Gen. 4:7; Rom. 5:17; 6:1-15).

Pioneers within the Assemblies of God emphasized this truth. **Smith Wigglesworth** (a healing evangelist whose books and sermons were published and distributed among the AoG) says, "Demon power must be dislodged in the name of the Lord. You are always right when you dare to deal with sickness as with the devil."³⁶

Wigglesworth and Nuzum, both pioneers within the Assemblies of God, were bold advocates of our dominion over the devil, sickness, and disease:

Jesus said to His disciples that He gave them power to loose and power to bind. It is our privilege in the power of the Holy Ghost to loose the prisoners of Satan and to let the oppressed go free. (Smith Wigglesworth)³⁷

When Satan tries to put any of his work on us we must say, "I have a right to be free from this, for Jesus bought me away from you. You have no claim on me." (Mrs. C. Nuzum, a former missionary with the AoG)³⁸

It amazes me that the AoG would take an official position against the belief that we can rule over poverty, sickness, and disease. Furthermore, they distort what is actually taught by Faith Teachers. The writer of the position paper claims that positive confession teachers only believe that one will get sick if they confess sickness. I am unaware of any advocate of positive confession that goes to this extreme.

However positive confession teachers do not believe in *acknowledging* any *right* of sickness to reign in our bodies. For example, Charles Capps wrote, "I don't deny the existence of disease. I deny the right of that disease to exist in this body, because I'm the

³⁴ Vine, W. E. (Ed) **Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 45

³⁵ Hill, Bracy *Power Encounter in the Gospels and Acts*, contribution to a larger work, **Power Encounter: A Pentecostal Perspective**, Edited by Opal Reddin (Springfield, MO: Central Bible College, 1989), p. 121

³⁶ Wigglesworth, Smith **Ever Increasing Faith** (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1924), chapter 15

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Nuzum, *The Life of Faith*, p. 55

body of Christ.”³⁹ The Faith Teachers acknowledge their Biblical right to be free from sickness.

6. The Assemblies of God’s Accusation Concerning Distinctions.

Again we are glad the AoG actually state some of our beliefs correctly. The AoG writes:

Some make a distinction between acknowledging the symptoms of an illness and the illness itself.⁴⁰

Not only has modern day Faith Teachers made this distinction, but some pioneers within the AoG also did this. Once again we cite Nelson as an example of this teaching:

Hold on to Your Healing by Resisting the Devil (James 4:7): He does not want us to learn the way of faith, and will try to break down our faith and steal our victory. He frequently brings on us old symptoms after we are healed by the Lord to make us fear and doubt. We must have faith to take healing, and often we must have greater faith to retain it. This requires constant watchfulness and prayer, after we are healed.⁴¹

When you have a promise to stand on, and real faith, you are not disturbed by symptoms; - You are staking all on the Word of God, and ask for no other evidence.⁴²

Smith Wigglesworth was not far from making this distinction between symptoms and illness either:

I am not moved by what I see. I am moved only by what I believe. I know this - no man looks at appearances if he believes. No man considers how he feels if he believes. The man who believes God has it.⁴³

Even before Nelson, Wigglesworth, and other Pentecostals, many proponents of divine healing made the distinction between symptoms and the illness itself, or at least taught believers not to put their *focus* on them. This was a principle of faith taught within the *Faith-Cure* movement, a divine healing movement that preceded the Pentecostal Movement. As usual, I will cite a couple of examples:

If you do not see a rapid improvement immediately, but on the contrary the symptoms appear to be more serious, remember that you have entered on a path of faith, and therefore you ought not to consider the body, but cling only to the living God. (Andrew Murray)⁴⁴

³⁹ Capps, Charles **The Tongue - A Creative Force** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, 1976), p. 43

⁴⁰ Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 2

⁴¹ Nelson, *Does Christ Heal Today?* p. 43

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 29

⁴³ Wigglesworth, *Ever Increasing Faith*, Chap 3

⁴⁴ Murray, Andrew **Divine Healing** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 53

... When you do go forth to act your faith, be careful not to begin to watch the result or look at the symptoms, or see if you stand. You must ignore all symptoms, and see only Him there before you, almighty to sustain you and save you from falling. (A. B. Simpson)⁴⁵

Another leader in the Faith-Cure Movement, Carrie Judd Montgomery, wrote concerning the visible signs of sickness in our bodies, "... when any circumstances contradict the Word of God it is simply a lie of the enemy and must be refused."⁴⁶ Montgomery later became a leader in the Pentecostal Movement as many other Faith-Cure advocates. The Faith-Cure movement was a precursor to the Pentecostal Movement. Therefore the AoG, by taking this official position against "positive confession" is denying a part of their heritage. It seems to me that in their zeal to separate themselves from modern advocates of this teaching they are denying their very own history or attempting to separate from it. Denominations often become powerless when they separate themselves from its foundation teachings.

The teaching has sufficient Scriptural grounds and is expounded by former and current advocates of positive confession (Mark 11:22-24; John 11:40; 20:29; Heb. 11:1). However, Abraham's victory over the inefficiency of His body in order to claim God's promise by faith is certainly referenced often in even the foundation literature of the AoG:

*Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, **he considered not his own body now dead**, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. (Rom. 4:18-21)*

Abraham did not consider His body. He did not consider the physical circumstances. He did not allow these to dictate to him. He truly believed in the God "... who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." (v. 17) The Bible tells us that God changed Abram's name to Abraham because it meant "Father of many nations" (Gen. 17:4-6). Abraham began calling himself this long before Isaac was born. Was Abraham lying? Some of the late AoG would say "no" but instead, he was teaching us a principle of faith:

To believe only what you see and feel is not faith at all – that is knowledge. Faith never deals with anything but the *unseen* and the *unfelt*. You are to call the "things which be *not* as though they were." Rom. 4:17. Believe that the devil and the disease have gone, that healing and soundness do *now* take their place and that you are well. (Mrs. C. Nuzum)⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Simpson, A. B., **The Gospel of Healing**, Online version found at <http://online.cbcccts.sk.ca/alliancestudies/> (Last Accessed: December 23, 2004).

⁴⁶ Montgomery, Carrie Judd **Under His Wings – The Story of My Life** (Oakland, CA: Office of Triumphs of Faith, 1936), p. 92. As quoted in an unpublished paper by Dale H. Simmons titled "Say You Have it and You Have It: The Expanding Role of Positive Confession from Phoebe Palmer to Peter Popoff."

⁴⁷ Nuzum, *The Life of Faith*, p. 62

In Romans 4:17, we read of Abraham, "(I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." God help us to understand this. It is time people knew how to shout in faith as they contemplate the eternal power of our God to whom it is nothing to quicken and raise the dead ... You must learn to take the victory and shout in the face of the devil, "It is done!" There is no man who can doubt if he learns to shout. (Smith Wigglesworth)⁴⁸

When Satan comes along with some bodily appearance, or sensation that contradicts the covenant God has made with you covering healing and immunity from disease, what are you to do? "Consider not your body." Consider the covenant. Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession whose precious blood seals the everlasting covenant. "Consider not." Blessed words! Unfailing refuge from all the fiery darts of the wicked one; "Consider not." Heavenly atmosphere in which no disease germ can survive for the fraction of a second! Consider not." Do not accord to physical symptoms a passing thought: ignore them. Refuse to take them into your calculations.... "Oh why don't these distressing symptoms disappear? I was prayed for by the elders according to James 5:14!" Your speech betrayeth you. You are considering your own body and that is why they persist. (Lillian B. Yeomans)⁴⁹

Perhaps the AoG wants to deny this aspect of Faith theology because they feel that it has very little Scriptural support. Nevertheless, we find the same principle taught in the life of one of Israel's judges – Gideon. Gideon appeared to be a serious coward and complainer. Yet God called him a mighty man of valor (Judges 6:11-16).

Perhaps the AoG believes that to teach this is similar to "lying." They seem to give this implication:

According to this position, what a person says determines what He will receive and what he will become. Thus people are instructed to start confessing even though what they want may not have been realized. If a person wants money, he is to confess he has it even if it is not true. If a person wants healing, he is to confess it even though it is obviously not the case.⁵⁰

Was God lying when He told Abraham that he was the "father of many nations"? Was Abraham in denial by "considering not his body"? Was God lying when He called Gideon a "mighty man of valor" even though Gideon demonstrated all of the actions of a coward? If God can "call those things that be not as though they were" can we not say what He says even if it has not yet happened? The Assemblies themselves agree that "confession" is saying the same thing that Scripture says.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick He made a "positive confession": "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*" (John 11:4). Yet, the record shows that Lazarus died (v. 14). Later in the

⁴⁸ Wigglesworth, *Ever Increasing Faith*, Chap 7

⁴⁹ Yeomans, Lillian B. **Healing From Heaven** (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1935), p. 31

⁵⁰ Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, pp. 2, 3

chapter we read how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Did Jesus lie when He made His first "confession?"

I'm afraid that the current Assemblies of God leaders have lost the understanding that God's Word has creative power. Concerning God's Word, one Bible dictionary says, "The word in both testaments, particularly when associated with divine expression, is powerful to create, redeem, or judge."⁵¹ A. B. Simpson sums up this position well:

The Word of God creates what it commands. When Christ says to any of us, "You are clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (John 15:3), you are clean. When He says, "no condemnation" (Romans 8:1) there is none, though there has been a lifetime of sin before. And when He says we have "divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4), then the weak are strong. Faith takes God at His word and expects Him to make it real.⁵²

The fact that God's Word is a creative agency is taught in Scripture itself: "*For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment*" (Luke 1:37; Amplified Bible). Unfortunately, the Assemblies have forgotten that it is *faith* that brings the creative fulfillment of God's Word: "*And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord*" (Luke 1:45).

Because God's Word is able to create its reality in our lives, we can confess what it says about who we are and what we have. Faith Teachers believe that God's Word has more authority than the circumstances themselves. While the Faith Teachers do not deny the actual existence of the mountain, they do believe that speaking to the mountain with faith and authority will cause it to move (Mark 11:22-24).

Therefore the one seeking healing should not deny the sickness, but should recognize that healing was purchased for them 2000 years ago. They are to recognize that by His stripes we are healed (1 Pet. 2:24). If they are lacking faith, it is explained to them that they must meditate on the Word of God until faith comes (Rom. 10:17; Josh. 1:8). Though the sickness and doubt are real, these things can be overcome if God's Word is considered over the circumstances.

Also, the position paper presents a distortion. The belief that, "If a person wants money, he is to confess he has it even if it is not true" is not taught by any advocate of positive confession that I am aware of. Any Faith Teacher who tells a person to say that they have money when they do not is certainly teaching a person to lie, but I am unaware of any that teach this extreme. Most Faith Teachers would encourage a person without money to confess Philippians 4:19, which says, "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*"⁵³ In contrast to the AoG's accusation,

⁵¹ Freedman, David Noel (editor) **Eerdmans' Dictionary of the Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), p. 1386

⁵² Simpson, Albert B. **Seeing The Invisible: The Art of Spiritual Perception** (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994), p. 110

⁵³ An example of this type of confession is taught and practiced by Pastor Frederick K. C. Price: "When I did not have a dollar in my pocket, I said, 'Praise God, my God supplies all my need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' Understand that it is not true because you have it. It is true because God said it." – *Name It and Claim It*, p. 143

Charles Capps writes, “Don’t try to convince someone that you have something that you don’t have. That is not corresponding action. That is a lie.”⁵⁴

Therefore, positive confession is not teaching people to lie or deny circumstances. It is advocating the fact that God's Word is TRUTH (John 8:31-34). If the reality of our circumstance is contradicting the truth of God's Word, then we must believe that God's truth has authority over our circumstantial truth. The cardinal rule of faith teaching is found in 2 Cor. 5:7, “*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*”

Even the current AoG’s position paper on divine healing says, “Great faith then receives healing through the simple Word of the Lord.”⁵⁵ If this is true then should not “faith” accept God’s Word as having more authority than our circumstances? Should we not then consider the promise of God concerning our circumstances to be a greater reality than the circumstances themselves? These are thoughts that the AoG should consider based on their own official statement.

Conclusion to Part One

As one can see from the evidence presented thus far, the Assemblies of God, by taking the official position that they have taken against the teaching of positive confession, are not only disputing with modern day advocates of this teaching, but are denying a portion of their own history and heritage.

The AoG has in some cases misrepresented the teaching by citing some of the most extreme examples. They have used broad brush techniques that paint a picture that all teachers of positive confession accept, advocate and promote the extremes and distortions that they cite in their paper. We have proven from actual quotes by positive confession teachers that the AoG is inaccurate in their assessments.

In some areas where the teaching is correct, the AoG seems to move away from the teachings of the Scriptures, though they claim to believe in the life of faith and victory. In part two of our rebuttal to their position paper we will demonstrate that this position paper seems to disparage, rather than encourage, such a life of faith and victory.

⁵⁴ Capps, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 184

⁵⁵ Assemblies of God, *Divine Healing*, p. 5