

## **The Assemblies of God and Positive Confession (Part 2)**

### **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).<sup>1</sup>

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

As we wrote in Part 1, the Assemblies of God position paper is a response to what the alleged extremes in the Faith Movement – at least as seen from the Assemblies of God perspective. This is to be understood as some leaders in the Faith Movement acknowledge that there have indeed been extremes that required some correction. Unfortunately, one of several flaws in this position paper is that it paints all advocates of “positive confession” with the same broad brush. It hardly, if at all, addresses any of the “positive” in this teaching.

While the Assemblies of God have every right and obligation to separate themselves from extremes, they also by implication in both this position paper and in subsequent writings, associate the current faith teachers with the errors that they are disputing. Furthermore, the AoG *distorts* several facets of faith teaching. These things must be addressed.

In some cases, the AoG without realizing it, actually oppose *scriptural truth* and present it as error or extremism. Many of these truths are *foundational Pentecostal teachings*. Patriarchs in their own denomination advocated some of these Scriptural truths. Therefore, it is necessary to remind them of its heritage. In part 1 of our response we also cited examples of this and we will continue to do so in this part.

### **1. The AoG’s Dispute With Possessing God’s Best**

Not only do they seem to have difficulty with the position that one can believe God for “the best”, but the Assemblies’ presentation of this position paints a picture of greedy “Christians” whose only desire to learn the “positive confession” teaching is to possess material things. They write, “This view advocates that God wants believers to wear the best clothing, drive the best cars, and have the best of everything.”<sup>3</sup>

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

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

<sup>3</sup> The General Council of the Assemblies of God **The Believer and Positive Confession**, 1980, p. 2

There is *some* truth to the above because faith teachers do believe that we can receive God's best. Unfortunately, the Assemblies distort the actual teaching to present it as though it were some "gospel of greed." This will be proven later.

A believer should never be ashamed to accept God's best in any area, whether these be *spiritual* or *physical* blessings. In reference to spiritual blessings, Smith Wigglesworth said: "God is making people hungry and thirsty after His best."<sup>4</sup> Long before Wigglesworth, the devotional writer, Hannah Whitall Smith once wrote, "...we always know that God must give the best because He is God and could do no other."<sup>5</sup>

Why would He NOT want us to have His best in any area? As parents, wouldn't we give our children the best if we can afford to do so? Is not our Heavenly Father an even greater Father in comparison to us mere mortals? Wouldn't He give His children good things, even the best (Matt. 7:11)? The great holiness preacher and devotional writer, Andrew Murray, once wrote,

We have a rich Father, and as no true earthly father would like to see his child in rags, or without shoes and proper clothing, etc., neither does our God; but He wishes to fill up our life with richest and choicest blessings.<sup>6</sup>

God certainly wants to give His "choicest" blessings – His best. In Luke 15 we have a picture of a prodigal son who is a type of either an unbeliever or a backslidden Christian. After sinfully wasting his inheritance, this prodigal returned to his father. The father is a picture of the Heavenly Father who receives us back with open arms. This father, like our Heavenly Father, desires that even his wayward child would have the *best* upon his return: "*But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.*" (Luke 15:22).

God expressed His desire to give the best in both spiritual and material blessings when He spoke these words through the Prophet Isaiah: "*If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land*" (Isa. 1:19). By implication, the "good" of the land is the best that the land has to offer. Other versions convey this thought better: *You will eat the **best** of the land* (New American Standard Bible); *you will eat the **best** from the land* (God's Word to the Nations); *you will eat the **best** of the land* (New Life Version); *you will eat the **best** from the land* (New International Version); *you'll feast like kings* (The Message).

Unless one is an ultra-dispensationalist, there is no reason to limit this promise to the nation of Israel. This promise can be applied to all of God's willing and obedient children. The context of the promise has more of a *material* application than a *spiritual* one. Even Calvinists like the late A. W. Pink believed that God's children can enjoy God's best in material possessions:

By God's "best" we mean a personal experience of His approbation; a manifest enjoyment of His favour in grace, in providence, and in nature. It is not to be limited unto the receiving of His special favors in a spiritual way, but includes as well His interpositions on our temporal behalf. It is to have the blessing of the

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<sup>4</sup> Wigglesworth, Smith, **Faith That Prevails**, Chapter 7

<sup>5</sup> Smith, Hannah Whitall **The God of all Comfort**, Chapter 9

<sup>6</sup> Murray, Andrew **Divine Healing** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 139

Lord upon our lives, in all their varied aspects and relations, upon the soul and body alike.<sup>7</sup>

Do Calvinists such as Pink have a better understanding of God's generosity than Arminians such as the Assemblies of God? Considering that He "*giveth us richly all things to enjoy*" (1 Tim. 6:17), why would we find it difficult to accept that God would want us to have the best in material and spiritual things?

Now let us look at the other side of this. It is clear that God does want His people to have the best; unfortunately many have taken this teaching to a very selfish extreme. They become concerned about their needs and selfish desires. The Assemblies of God has every right and obligation to dispute the arrogant and selfish position that some have taken by going to extremes in this truth.

However, in their position paper the Assemblies of God has gone to a completely opposite extreme by their implication that God would not want His people to have the best in material things. Ironically, in other writings, this denomination goes to great lengths to defend the prosperity teaching of Dr. David Yonggi Cho, pastor of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, in their attempt to vindicate Dr. Cho and separate him from the Faith Movement, the AoG continues to paint a picture that most American advocates of positive confession promote the type of selfishness mentioned in their position paper, books, and denominational journals. This is far from the truth:

For the last two years I've told our RHEMA students, "If you came here with ears itching to get faith so you can drive Cadillacs, fly airplanes, or have million-dollar homes, go home. Or else reach up, pull off those itching ears, and say, 'I'm here to receive what God has for me.'" (Kenneth Hagin Jr.)<sup>9</sup>

... What has happened is that a lot of Christians have made prosperity a thing for me, myself, and I - us three. They have made the prosperity message a way to get bigger houses, newer cars, more designer clothes, and a nice bank account. Many have forgotten about those in the world who don't know Jesus, and are lost and on their way to hell. (Dr. Frederick K. C. Price)<sup>10</sup>

Do we believe that God wants us to have the best? YES! Do we believe that this is the focus of the faith message? NO! In another book, Dr. Price writes, "Keep

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<sup>7</sup> Pink, Arthur W. **Practical Christianity**, Chap. 13. Accessed online at <http://www.pbministries.org> (Last accessed: December 23, 2004)

<sup>8</sup> To read the Assemblies of God's recent defenses of Dr. David Yonggi Cho's prosperity message, see Anderson, Allen *The Contextual Pentecostal Theology of David Yonggi Cho*, pp. 115-121 and Menzies, William W. *David Yonggi Cho's Theology of the Fullness of the Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*, pp. 29-32 (*Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, Volume 7, Number 1, January 2004). Accessed at <http://www.aps.edu/ajps/#7-1> (Last accessed: 12 January, 2005). Ironically, the writers claim that Cho's prosperity teaching is within a Pentecostal context while insinuating that the faith teachers is more "extreme" and "Westernized." Both writers reference the position paper against positive confession. I would encourage my readers to purchase and read the books by Dr. Cho and compare them to that of the American faith teachers to discern if there is any real difference in the message. I would discourage relying upon the AoG's bias perspective on this issue.

<sup>9</sup> Hagin Jr., Kenneth **Itching Ears** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1982), pp. 17, 18

<sup>10</sup> Price, Frederick K. C. **The Purpose of Prosperity** (Los Angeles, CA: Faith One Publishing, 2001), p. 6

everything in its proper perspective. Don't let things become your goal in life, but simply a means to an end. The kingdom is first. Things are not my goal in life: things are simply stepping-stones. Jesus is my goal."<sup>11</sup> The faith teachers believe God wants His children to have the best because the Bible teaches a generous Heavenly Father. However, the faith teachers caution against making “things” the primary goal of our faith.

## 2. Admission and Denial of the Negative

The Assemblies of God writes:

When the positive confession teaching indicates that to admit weakness is to accept defeat, to admit financial need is to accept poverty, and to admit sickness is to preclude healing, it is going beyond and is contrary to the harmony of Scripture.<sup>12</sup>

It goes on to mention a couple of places where godly men in Scripture made “negative” confessions yet received God’s intervention. For a position paper that teaches its readers to “consider the total teaching of Scripture” and “consider everything God’s Word has to say on a given subject,”<sup>13</sup> it seems to fall very short of following its own advice.

For example, the position paper mentions Jehoshaphat’s admission that he had no might against the army coming against him. This is supposedly a “negative confession” and it supposedly refutes the positive confession teaching. Of course He had no might to go up against the enemy and there was nothing wrong with telling God about his problem.

Faith Teachers are NOT opposed to this. What they are opposed to is a continuous “negative confession” after having received a word from God.<sup>14</sup> Once a person receives God’s Word as Jehoshaphat did, then they should believe that Word and have corresponding action commensurate with their faith. Jehoshaphat did just that. He actually made a “positive” declaration to the people:

*Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. (2 Chron. 20:20)*

The very chapter that the AoG exalts as an example of God’s intervention in spite of a “negative confession” is the very chapter in which Jehoshaphat makes a positive declaration of faith in God’s Word. Also, contrary to the writer of this position paper, this Israelite king had to make a demonstration of faith BEFORE God intervened:

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<sup>11</sup> Price, Frederick K.C. **Faith, Foolishness, or Presumption** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1979) p. 33

<sup>12</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 3

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Once while struggling with some painful physical symptoms in his body, Kenneth Hagin admitted to God that he was having difficulty keeping his mind off the pain and praising God for the healing. After receiving insight from the Holy Spirit in line with God’s Word, he began to focus on that. See *Classic Sermons*, p. 79.

*And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. (2 Chron. 20:22)*

The Israelites began praising the Lord BEFORE they received any physical evidence of God's intervention. This can be easily applied to any promise from God. Concerning those anointed with oil for healing, the AoG pioneer, P. C. Nelson once wrote, "Those who are anointed should praise the Lord by faith, whether they see or feel anything or not. Many wonderful healings have been taken by faith without any evidence whatever other than the Word of God."<sup>15</sup>

Praising the Lord by faith in spite of circumstances is cited by most Faith Teachers as a form of "positive confession." Don Gossett, an advocate of the positive confession teaching, wrote, "... the language of faith is PRAISE."<sup>16</sup>

Another example cited by the AoG is Paul's supposed "negative confession of his weakness." Yet, this is nothing more than a distortion of Scripture by the Assemblies of God. It seems to be a desperate attempt to find Scriptural evidence against positive confession. Contrary to the warped presentation by this denomination, Paul's confession was very positive. Paul's exact statement was "... *for when I am weak, then am I strong.*"

If we follow the advice of the AoG to "consider everything God's Word has to say on a subject," we would read all of Paul's words on the teaching of God's strength vice our weakness. Paul encouraged us that we are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10). Paul's most "positive confession" was, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" (Phil. 4:13). It appears to me that the AoG continually fails to comply with their own standards. Furthermore, they seem to be opposed to the advice of one of their own pioneers, Mrs. Cornelius Nuzum:

Then God says, "Hold fast that thou hast" by never once doubting that you really have it. Then Joel 3:10 says, "Let the weak say, I am strong." Not the strong ones say, I am strong, but the weak ones. Not say, "I shall be strong," but "*I am strong now.*" Not say it after you get strong, but say it while you are weak. Of course, you must think it and believe it, but you must also *say* it ...<sup>17</sup>

Space would not permit us to deal with every Scripture example distorted by the AoG. Yet, the examples I cite demonstrate that the AoG is willing to misinterpret Scripture to foster their dispute with those who advocate positive confession, a doctrine once taught in their own denomination before they became "Evangelical."

Adding insult to injury, the AoG continues to make the implication that faith teachers encourage people to make "positive confessions" that are contrary to fact. This is far from the truth as we have seen in Part 1 of this essay. They teach people to make confessions based on God's Word. Legitimate Faith Teachers dispute any extreme teaching that leads one to make a statements that contradict our circumstances but said

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<sup>15</sup> Nelson, *Does Christ Heal Today*, p. (o) – Appendix

<sup>16</sup> Gossett, Don **There's Dynamite in Praise** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1979), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> Nuzum, Cornelia **The Life of Faith** (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1997), pp. 33, 34. First published in 1928

“confession” has no basis in God’s Word. Faith Teachers consider this to be “lying” rather than positive confession.

Finally, the Faith Teachers do not deny that God, at times, mercifully intervenes in spite of a person’s negative confessions. Copeland writes, “In years past, if we got our hearts and mouths out of line with God's Word we had some time to get ourselves straightened out before we ran into the consequences of that disagreement. God, in His grace, would just keep dealing with us until we repented and got back into a place of faith.”<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Adequately Considering God’s Will

The AoG writes, “Getting what the believer wants is not as simple as repeating a positive confession. Pleasant things might be out of the will of God; and, conversely, unpleasant things might be in the will of God.”<sup>19</sup> Once again, the Assemblies present *some* truth in their statement. To a certain extent, we agree with the AoG’s dispute on this issue. Relating to the believer’s confession as planting a seed, Charles Capps wrote:

Sometimes people think it's going to happen just because they say it. Saying it is involved in planting it. But it won't necessarily happen just because you say it. I want you to get this point, because many people got hold of Mark 11:23 and run off into left field and make a mess of things.<sup>20</sup>

For sure the Faith Teachers do not believe that one gets what they want simply by making a “positive confession.” Most Faith Teachers are not that simplistic. Furthermore, Faith Teachers do not teach that one should make positive confessions contrary to the will of God. A close friend of the late Kenneth Hagin who also strongly advocated the positive confession teaching wrote the following:

This is a hard message for me to bring to you, for I am a strongly positive preacher. I believe it. I preach it, but I see some misunderstanding in it. I am asking you for a cushion in your confession. This extreme causes much confusion and disillusionment. I have seen people backslide because they confessed things that were not God’s will. They never came to pass.<sup>21</sup>

As one can see, not all advocates of positive confession teach “positive confession” as going against God’s will. Neither do Faith Teachers believe that one can make a positive confession that conflicts with the way that God may be leading a believer. Kenneth Hagin writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Copeland, Kenneth **Does Your Heart Agree With Heaven?** Accessed from [http://kcm.org/studycenter/articles/faith\\_hope/heart\\_agree\\_with\\_heaven.php](http://kcm.org/studycenter/articles/faith_hope/heart_agree_with_heaven.php) (Last Accessed: January 5, 2005)

<sup>19</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 5

<sup>20</sup> Capps, Charles **Dynamics of Faith & Confession** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, 1987), p. 55

<sup>21</sup> Buess, Bob **The Pendulum Swings** (Van, TX: Bob Bues, 1979), p. 80

... You can make all the faith confessions you want to, but if the Holy Ghost has already told you to do something, you'd better obey Him. If you don't, you're in disobedience, and your faith confessions won't do a bit of good."<sup>22</sup>

Faith Teachers constantly encourage people to seek God's will "Especially in places where the Bible is not specific" because "if it is not in His will, He will not hear us."<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the believer can have what he or she wants if what one wants is in line with God's Word. John 15:7 tells us, "*If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and it will be yours.*" (International Standard Version).

A. B. Simpson wrote, "How shall we know God's will? At the least, we shall know it by His Word and by His promise."<sup>24</sup> Concerning things like divine healing, Lillian B. Yeomans wrote, "God's people of this day, should be as free from doubt regarding our Father's will for our bodies as they were, for it is as clearly revealed in the Word as His will concerning the salvation of souls."<sup>25</sup>

Therefore we can ask for *anything* that we *want* as long as we are continuing in Christ and we have a basis for what we want in His Word.<sup>26</sup> God's Word, which contains His promises, is one definite way to know His will. This is an area the Faith Teachers emphasize more than anything else. This has been demonstrated frequently in this two-part essay.

God has "*generously given to us the precious and exceedingly great promises*" (2 Pet. 1:4; The New Testament: An Expanded Translation by Kenneth S. Wuest). These promises are nearly unlimited. One man came to the conclusion that there are 7,487 promises given from God to man.<sup>27</sup> That is quite a number of promises. With over 7000 promises, one can surely trust that an all knowing God would cover just about any "want" or desire that a man would have that is not sinful.

So while we would not advocate making a positive confession of just *anything* that one desires, we would certainly advocate confession of *anything that God's Word covers*. We certainly recommend following the advice of the late AoG minister, P. C. Nelson: "Look up all the Scripture texts. *Repeat them over and over*. Remember, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Search the Scriptures for other texts to build up your faith."<sup>28</sup> (Emphasis mine).

The Assemblies' position paper could discourage the weak believer from praying with confidence. The passages that they cite are believed to insinuate that specific prayer requests were not answered. For example, the AoG references Paul's thorn as well as Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39-44). Of course the AoG realizes that no true Christian would accuse Jesus of lacking faith.

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<sup>22</sup> Hagin, Kenneth E. **Classic Sermons** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1992), p. 100. Hagin also says, "This is where 'faith' people miss it: They haven't understood the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>23</sup> Hicks, Roy **Praying Beyond God's Ability** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1977), p. 62

<sup>24</sup> Simpson, Albert B. **The Life of Prayer** (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1989), p. 18

<sup>25</sup> Yeomans, Lillian B. **The Great Physician** (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1933), p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> I cover this subject in greater detail in my book, **The Goodness of God**, which is online. See especially chapter 4: <http://www.victoryword.100megspop2.com/godisgood/good4.html>

<sup>27</sup> Herbert Lockyer cites a schoolteacher named Everett R. Storms as having come up with this number from a tally he did after his 27<sup>th</sup> reading of the Bible. See Lockyer's book, **All the Promises of the Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1962), p. 10

<sup>28</sup> Nelson, *Does Christ Heal Today*, p. 44

Neither do we have to. If we continue to follow this position paper's own rule of considering "everything God's Word has to say on a given subject," then we will see that Jesus did not fail to get His prayer answered that night:

*Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared (Heb. 5:7)*

The Bible is very clear that when God hears, He answers with a "YES" (1 John 5:14, 15). Many Bible teachers believe that Jesus was praying against a premature death in the garden of Gethsemane, one that would come before His appointed death. This is a possible understanding based on Heb. 5:7. However we want to understand it, the Bible says that Jesus' request was heard.

Space will not permit me to deal extensively with Paul's thorn. I will only say that when a person claims to have a "thorn" like Paul, I will pull up a chair to listen to the abundance of revelations that God has given them (2 Cor. 12:7). If we keep Scripture in context, we have no right to claim one without the other. Amazingly, Charles G. Finney, the great revivalist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed that reference to Paul's thorn to prove "that the prayer of faith would not be answered ... is to trifle with the word of God, and to break the power of the Christian ministry."<sup>29</sup>

It is sad that the AoG attempts balance by citing the very rare occasions where God seemingly does not answer prayer. E. M. Bounds, who has written many books on prayer, wrote, "The few denials to prayer in the Scriptures are the exceptions to the general rule, suggestive and startling by their fewness, exception, and emphasis."<sup>30</sup>

#### **4. Does Positive Confession replace Prayer?**

The Assemblies of God claim that advocates of positive confession have replaced prayer with confession. They write, "When the positive confession view teaches that believers are to confess rather than to pray for things which God has promised ... the instruction not to pray for promised blessings is contrary to the teaching of God's Word."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps there have been some who have done this, but I am quite unaware of any.

While the AoG mentions that *some* do this, one can easily get the impression from their paper and (as stated earlier) other AoG writings (that cite this paper) that this is a common practice among Word-Faith teachers. If one were to simply look at the titles of many of the books and teaching tapes from major leaders in the Faith Movement, one would see that the *majority* of Faith Teachers are strong advocates of *praying* for God's blessings.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Finney, Charles G. Lectures on Revivals of Religion, Lecture V: The Prayer of Faith, Accessed at [http://www.gospeltruth.net/1868Lect\\_on\\_Rev\\_of\\_Rel/68revlec05.htm](http://www.gospeltruth.net/1868Lect_on_Rev_of_Rel/68revlec05.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Bounds, Edward M **The Possibilities of Prayer**, Chapter 12

<sup>31</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 5

<sup>32</sup> Some examples of books and tapes by faith teachers on prayer: *Bible Prayer Study Course, Plead Your Case, Prayer Secrets, Praying To Get Results, Steps to Answered Prayer, The Art of Prayer, The Interceding Christian, Prevailing Prayer to Peace, The Will of God in Prayer*, by Kenneth E. Hagin; *Prayer Your Foundation for Success* by Kenneth Copeland; *One Word From God Change Your Prayer Life*

I have been in a number of so called “Word-of-Faith” churches over the last two decades and I am not aware of one that did not have a separate prayer service (some had several), and whose pastors did not spend much of their time in fasting and prayer. Perhaps, the current AoG leadership simply does not understand the teaching on “positive confession.” Rather than this teaching replacing prayer, it is an important aspect of it. Charles Capps wrote, “Your confession is so vital to prayer.”<sup>33</sup>

Just as one makes the right type of “negative” confession to God in regards to their sin (1 John 1:9; Prov. 28:13), one can also make a “positive” confession to God by confidently taking His promises to Him and expecting Him to “do as He has said” (2 Sam. 7:25). Positive confession directed towards God is also thanking Him and praising Him for the answer, even when it has not yet appeared physically.

The Psalms are full of “positive confessions” as direct prayers and praises unto God. Hagin writes, “Make every prayer concerning your need a statement of *faith* and praise, not a statement of *unbelief*.”<sup>34</sup> Gossett demonstrates his belief that praise to God is related to positive confession when he writes,

“When you believe with all your heart that, “by his stripes I am healed,” you will praise the Lord by faith as much as though you had already received.”<sup>35</sup>

It should be obvious to the reader that Faith Teachers believe that “positive confession” is dialogue, rather than just speaking words into the air. It is agreeing with God concerning the positive aspects of His Word.

Since a “confession” is an expression of agreement with God’s Word, it can be made to God, man, oneself, and the devil. We make “confession” to the devil by authoritatively asserting what God says in direct opposition to the devil’s lies (Matt. 4:1-11). We testify positively of God’s goodness to men, and we remind ourselves of what God’s Word says about us. Yet, its primary purpose is related to prayer and praise unto God.

Prayer and positive confession normally work hand in hand. Kenneth Hagin wrote, “whatever a person is believing for, the words he speaks *after he has prayed* can determine whether or not he receives his answer”<sup>36</sup> (Italics are mine). One’s faith is demonstrated by their confidence before and after they have prayed. Usually one cannot have confidence if they are NOT praying.

## 5. Positive Confession and Importunate Prayer

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by Kenneth and Gloria Copeland; *Jesus, Our Intercessor, Releasing the Ability of God Through Prayer* by Charles Capps; *Prayers That Avail Much, Volumes 1, 2, and 3* (and many other books in this series) by Germaine Copeland; *Praying for the Impossible* by Buddy Harrison; *How To Get Your Prayers Answered* by Norvel Hayes; *Praying Beyond God's Ability* by Dr. Roy Hicks; *A Formula For Answered Prayer* (Tape series) by Dr. Frederick K. C. Price; *The Prayer Of Petition* (Tape Series), *From "Amen" to "There It is!"* (Tape Series) by Jerry Savelle.

<sup>33</sup> Capps, Charles **Releasing the Ability of God Through Prayer** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers), p. 94

<sup>34</sup> Hagin, Kenneth E. **Prevailing Prayer to Peace** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1985), p. 8

<sup>35</sup> Gossett, *There's Dynamite in Praise*, p. 52

<sup>36</sup> Hagin, Kenneth E. *Classic Sermons*, p. 226

The AoG also tell their readers that positive confession teaching "... overlooks the teaching of God's Word concerning importunate prayer."<sup>37</sup> The AoG does not make it clear what they mean by "importunity" but one cannot accurately claim that positive confession advocates overlook this type of prayer. Advocates of positive confession simply do not accept what some call "importunity":

It is the importunity of faith, not the importunity of unbelief that gets results. We can keep on begging God – importuning all we want – and we never will get an answer if our importuning prayer is in unbelief ... It is the importunity of faith that works.<sup>38</sup>

Since the AoG does not fully explain what they mean by the prayer of "importunity" in this position paper, we will have to assume that they mean the type of repetitive praying that asks more than once for the same thing.

Due to the primary focus on Mark 11:24 and 1 John 5:15, as well as influence from classic teachers such as Smith Wigglesworth and Andrew Murray, the late Kenneth E. Hagin and other Faith Teachers focused primarily on asking once and then believing that one received the answer.<sup>39</sup> If the thing that one is asking for has been promised in God's Word, then there is no need to ask again. Persistence in faith is demonstrated through our praise and thanksgiving unto God. However, Hagin was not inflexible concerning this. He certainly believed in persevering prayer:

Not every need can be met through offering a short, one-time prayer. Sometimes it is necessary to persevere in prayer by taking a bold stand on God's Word, refusing to back down until the answer comes.<sup>40</sup>

Hagin heartily endorsed a book by a friend of his named Bob Buess that we quoted from earlier. This book addressed extreme teachings in the Charismatic Movement. Hagin even wrote the preface for it and stated that much of the material in the book was already being implemented in his Bible Training Center.<sup>41</sup>

This is significant to note because Buess, like Hagin, believed that asking once and then praising God is the best demonstration of persistent prayer. Yet, Buess also wrote, "The extreme in positive faith says, 'You have asked once, and that is enough.' However, there are times when you just have to keep on asking."<sup>42</sup> If Hagin endorsed this book as heartily as he did and used the material in his Bible Training Center, then surely he must have agreed with it.

Another one of Hagin's close friends, Dr. Roy Hicks wrote, "Both Smith Wigglesworth and Andrew Murray mention the fact that to ask twice is unnecessary and

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<sup>37</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 5

<sup>38</sup> Hagin, *Prevailing Prayer*, p. 67

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, on pages 8 and 68, Hagin credits Andrew Murray with giving him the insight on how he understands the prayer of faith and importunity. See also pages 85 and 86 of Andrew Murray's book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House Publishers, 1981)

<sup>40</sup> Hagin, Kenneth E. **The Art of Prayer** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, ), p. 141

<sup>41</sup> Buess, *The Pendulum Swings*, first preface. It is also worthy to note that Hagin quotes extensively from Buess's book on pages 185 to 187 of his own excellent book, *The Midas Touch*, which addresses extremes and errors in the prosperity doctrine.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 79

could even be unbelief. There are some who have carried this to an extreme.”<sup>43</sup> Hicks, like Hagin, believed one needed to ask only once if that which is being asked for has been promised in Scripture. Yet he felt that this could be taken to an extreme. He believed that some things are a matter of continuous prayer.<sup>44</sup>

One must remember that the Faith Teachers have attempted to move people away from prayer that has no assurance of being answered to effective praying (James 5:16). However, it is erroneous to say that they do not believe in prayer and inaccurate to say that their teaching discourages importunity prayer. They discourage *unbelieving* prayer that is unsure that God will answer the petitioner.

## 6. Positive Confession and Suffering

The AoG constantly repeats the accusation throughout their position paper that advocates of positive confession promise only pleasant circumstances and negative circumstances demonstrate a lack of faith. They write, “To hold that all suffering results from negative confessions and indicates a lack of faith contradicts the Scripture. Some heroes of faith suffered greatly, some even died through faith, and they were commended for it.”<sup>45</sup>

Though we dealt with this in Part 1, this accusation is repeated in the position paper and is also made a major topic. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate further on the *true* position that the Faith Teachers advocate.

It is true that, “Poverty and sickness are usually mentioned among the circumstances over which believers are to have dominion”<sup>46</sup> in Word-Faith teachings. The AoG demonstrates a certain amount of hypocrisy in their dispute with the WoF since their position paper on *divine healing* states the following:

The Assemblies of God constitution in its Statement of Fundamental Truths, section 12, states: “Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; James 5:14—16)”<sup>47</sup>

If Jesus atoned for *sin*, should we not have dominion over it (Rom. 6:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:56, 57)? If He atoned for *sickness*, doesn’t this give us dominion over it? Mrs. Cornelius Nuzum, in a book published by the AoG, 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.’”<sup>48</sup>

Dominion over sickness was a belief among early Pentecostals, including the AoG. The denomination still holds to “healing in the atonement” as an official position.

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<sup>43</sup> Hicks, *Praying Beyond God’s Ability*, p. 61

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62

<sup>45</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 8

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

<sup>47</sup> The Assemblies of God **Divine Healing: an Integral Part of the Gospel**, 1974, p. 1

<sup>48</sup> Nuzum, *The Life of Faith*, p. 64

Their hypocrisy is underscored in their defense of Dr. David Yonggi Cho's prosperity teaching while disputing the teaching of the Western Faith Teachers.<sup>49</sup>

While the Faith Teachers believe that one has dominion over poverty and sickness, they do not teach that one will go through life without any suffering. Kenneth Copeland writes,

If you attend to the Word and yield to the Holy Spirit, the Word will keep you corrected, and you'll be showered with the blessings of God. Let me warn you, though. You'll still experience trials and tests. Satan will see to that. He'll use them to try to steal the Word from your heart.<sup>50</sup>

The Faith Teachers most certainly believe that there will be struggles and persecutions in this life and that no one escapes them. However, the Faith Teachers do not see these life problems as something that God *sovereignly ordains* for the believer. They see them as an aspect of *spiritual warfare* as seen in this statement by Kenneth E. Hagin:

Did you ever stop to think that the Bible says, "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12)? Are you suffering persecution? If not, it may be because you're not living right.

Many people think that when they learn how to believe God they'll never have any more problems ... As long as you are in this world, dear friends, Satan is the god of this world.<sup>51</sup>

The warfare aspect is also recognized in Dr. Frederick K. C. Price's admonition to his readers to stand against Satan's wiles. He acknowledges that a "faith stand" can be tough and exasperating:

If you are going to win with God, you are going to have to stand. It takes work to stand. Sometimes you can get so tired of standing that you wish you had never heard about the shield, or armor, or authority, or faith. Sometimes I want to throw my hands up and go on and die and go to heaven. Then I will not have to put up with struggling against the enemy anymore.<sup>52</sup>

Even some of the scholars within the Assemblies of God denomination acknowledge that, "The New Testament does not recognize that the world represents 'the will of God.' On the contrary, the Gospels suggest that the world is dominated by a

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<sup>49</sup> *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* (Volume 7, Number 1, January 2004), Accessed at <http://www.aps.edu/ajps/#7-1> I do not believe that the average reader would not make the distinctions between Cho's prosperity teachings and that of American faith preachers.

<sup>50</sup> Copeland, Kenneth Q&A-"What Am I Doing Wrong?" Accessed at <http://kcm.org/studycenter/articles/protection/whatamIdoing.php> (Last accessed: 22 December, 2004)

<sup>51</sup> Hagin, Kenneth E. *Must Christians Suffer?* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries.), pp. 10, 11

<sup>52</sup> Price, Frederick, K. C. *The Way, The Walk, And The Warfare Of The Believer* (Los Angeles, CA: Faith One Publishing, 1994), p. 365

power hostile to God and His purposes.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the AoG reader should recognize that the Faith Teachers proclaim the believer’s suffering from a *warfare worldview*, rather than a view that places God’s sovereign hand behind the suffering of believers.

God’s will for the believer is to be *victorious in his or her suffering* (John 16:33; Rom. 8:37; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; 1 John 4:4; 5:4, 5). He never promises that we won’t suffer, but He does promise us *deliverance* (Psalm 34:19; 91:16; Isa. 59:19; Dan. 3:15-28; 2 Tim. 3:11). The Faith Teachers emphasize the victory and deliverance available to the suffering one.

## 7. Positive Confession and the Sovereignty of God

In their position paper, the Assemblies of God complains that the positive confession teaching, “... include statements which make it appear that man is sovereign and God is the servant.”<sup>54</sup> Certainly many of us have taught that “faith moves the hand of God,” but never should statements such as this or any similar to this be misconstrued to imply that positive confession advocates deny God’s rightful rule and reign over our lives.

The Faith teachers have recognized that God stated His *sovereign* will quite clearly in His Word (Rom. 10:8, 17; Eph. 1:9; 3:3) and that He stands by that Word (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56; Isa. 55:8-11; Jer. 1:12; Luke 1:45). He will keep His covenant and not break it (Num. 23:19; Psalm 89:34, 35; Heb. 6:17-19).

However, the Faith Teachers also believe that God has given man a free-will and will not *normally* force His will upon him, even if that will is for his good (Luke 7:30; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is man’s choice to receive or reject the blessings of God (Deut. 30:15, 19; Prov. 1:24; Isa. 1:18-20; 30:15; Matt. 23:37). Copeland writes, “The point is, yes, God is sovereign. But a sovereign God has given us His sovereign Word. And that means we have a major part to play.”<sup>55</sup>

Due to the fact that God has given us His Word which reveals His sovereign will, He has invited us to come boldly to His throne of grace to find help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16). God invites us to pray like David and bring His Word before Him and with humility say, “Do as thou hast said” (2 Sam. 7:25). Furthermore, we make bold proclamations of faith concerning God’s promises with the confidence that He will bring them to pass (Heb. 13:5, 6). Again, Copeland writes:

Yes, God is sovereign. But a sovereign God has given us His sovereign promise. He decided and declared that we-you and I-have our part to do and say. He has told us what to do, and we know what to expect. If we don't obey, of course, nothing will happen. But if we obey His Word, we become partakers in His divine nature and purpose.

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<sup>53</sup> Flokstra, Gerard *Power Encounter in Divine Healing*, contribution to a larger work, **Power Encounter: A Pentecostal Perspective**, Edited by Opal Reddin (Springfield, MO: Central Bible College, 1989), p. 294

<sup>54</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 8

<sup>55</sup> Copeland, Kenneth **You Do Have A Say**, Accessed at: [http://kcm.org/studycenter/articles/faith\\_hope/you\\_do\\_have\\_a\\_say.php](http://kcm.org/studycenter/articles/faith_hope/you_do_have_a_say.php) (Last accessed: 23 December, 2004)

We will be whatever the Word says we can be. We will do whatever the Word says we can do. And we will have whatever the Word says we can have. We are joint heirs with the Anointed One-Jesus our Lord and Savior.<sup>56</sup>

Though the Faith Teachers affirm the sovereignty of God, the AoG basically insinuates that we use “faith” to force God’s hand when they write, “It is taught that faith compels God’s actions.”<sup>57</sup> Kenneth E. Hagin wrote, “God isn’t going to agree with your plans and opinions that don’t line up with His Word and His will – so you might as well go ahead and agree with God.”<sup>58</sup>

By now, the reader should be in no doubt that current Faith Teachers believe in submission to the will of God either by His Word or by His leading. Any teaching that advocates “claiming” anything outside of God’s known will has been repudiated by the Faith Teachers themselves.

In spite of this, the AoG insists that, “In this view there is very little consideration given to communion with God in order to discover His will.”<sup>59</sup> We might commend them for saying that “very little consideration is given” rather than saying that *no* consideration is given. Yet, even the former is inaccurate. The Faith Teachers have always taught that one must seek God’s guidance for those things that are not clearly stated in Scripture.

We often talk about receiving direction from God. But the first step to receiving guidance and direction is to choose to walk with God. In other words, *we must choose to follow God’s plans and purposes for our lives instead of our own plans and ambitions.*

As you walk with God, you can have continual fellowship with Him. You can talk to Him as a loving Father and listen to your heart as He talks to you. You just need to trust Him, and He’ll show you what you need to do.<sup>60</sup> (Italics mine)

Perhaps the AoG has not listened to the right Faith Teachers, because the above statement by Kenneth E. Hagin is common teaching within the Faith Movement.

## **8. Positive Confession and the “Practical Test.”**

The AoG seem to insist that “positive confession” is limited to those who are already in countries, nations, and other areas that are prosperous. They write, “In

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 2

<sup>58</sup> Hagin, *Classic Sermons*, p. 234

<sup>59</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 8 Ironically, Allan Anderson, who we noted in part 1 of our rebuttal for his attempts to make a distinction between the prosperity teaching of Dr. Cho and the American faith teachers (though void of any real substance for his argument) laments some take the view, “... that Pentecostalism is a ‘made in the USA’ product that has been exported to the world. See Allan Anderson, “The Forgotten Dimension: Education for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality in Global Perspective,” Unpublished paper, Society for Pentecostal Studies, March 2001. Quoted in Derek Vreeland’s paper, “P.G. Vargis and the Indian Prosperity Gospel” Available at <http://www.derekvreeland.com>

<sup>60</sup> Hagin, *Classic Sermons*, p. 233

reviewing the efforts of those who advocate this positive confession teaching it is evident that the basic appeal is to those who are already Christians living in an affluent society.”<sup>61</sup>

If the positive confession teaching can only appeal to those in already affluent societies, then this would mean that no one outside of the United States and other supposedly affluent countries are experiencing conversion to Christ. After all, a *positive* confession of Christ’s resurrection and lordship (Rom. 10:8-10) is necessary for salvation.

Of course, we do understand that the AoG’s accusation is primarily in reference to the “prosperity teaching” that has become a staple within the movement. Yet, many who live in affluent societies are not benefiting from it. To live in an affluent society does not automatically make one prosperous. The streets of America show people who are far from experiencing any of the benefits that should supposedly come from being in such an affluent country.

Thankfully, many Americans who were in poverty but have heard the message of prosperity and have applied its principles have come out of poverty. They have testified to the fact that God wants to prosper His people regardless of their condition or residency. However, many other American Christians who have heard a message on prosperity and have *tried it* have not necessarily become prosperous, even though they are living in an affluent society.

Yet in stark contrast to the above and the accusation of our Assemblies of God friends, there are actually Christians living in societies that would not be considered “affluent” by our standards, yet they are experiencing prosperity. Derek Vreeland, an associate pastor of Cornerstone Church in Americus, Georgia wrote an essay that traces the progress of a minister of the gospel in India from a belief in “poverty as a necessity” to an embrace of the prosperity message.

Vreeland chose the teachings of P. G. Vargis, a missionary and church planter in India. In the midst of a poverty stricken country, Vargis preaches a message of prosperity. According to Vreeland’s examination of Vargis’ writings, this minister claims no influence from the West. Vargis believes that all of his understanding of prosperity came directly from a study of Scripture.

Vreeland, who I am personally acquainted with through many e-mail discussions, is certainly no hyper-prosperity advocate. On the contrary, Vreeland is a sympathetic critic of faith teaching who feels the need for a “reconstruction” of Word-Faith theology.<sup>62</sup> Yet, Vreeland, who has visited India, writes this:

If ever a message needed to be preached in India, it is this, "poverty is of the devil." Those in the West can easily claim poverty as a "divine blessing," but poverty in its Indian expression bares no resemblance to anything "divine" or

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<sup>61</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 9. We will refrain from addressing the AoG’s insulting accusations of “elitism”. Let the reader judge the evidence that has been presented so far to determine if the accusation is just.

<sup>62</sup> Vreeland, Derek E. **Reconstructing Word of Faith Theology: A Defense, Analysis and Refinement of the Theology of the Word of Faith Movement**, Accessed at <http://www.victoryword.100megs.com/reconstruction.html> (Last accessed: January 27, 2005)

"blessing." Poverty, starvation and homelessness that plagues low caste Hindus is nothing more than satanic.<sup>63</sup>

If one believes that poverty is the work of the devil (and I certainly do), then one should recognize that Jesus has destroyed him in conjunction with such works (1 John 3:8). Our victory over poverty should be declared "positively" as we would salvation and healing. Just as we should not cease preaching salvation in a society that is not predominantly "Christian" and just as we should not refrain from preaching divine healing in a society that is not predominantly healthy, we should not draw back from declaring a balanced prosperity message in a society that is not as "affluent" as we suppose the West to be.

According to Vreeland, Christians in India considered prosperity and wealth to be "evil". They searched the Scripture to justify their poverty. They believed that their poverty was the result of God's sovereignty and was considered to be a blessing. After a personal crisis and a reexamination of the Scriptures, Vargis began to embrace the message of prosperity.<sup>64</sup>

Dr. David (formerly Paul) Yonggi Cho has a similar testimony. He believed "that poverty had great moral value."<sup>65</sup> After seeing the results of poverty in a slum area he volunteered to pastor in, he realized that poverty could not be a blessing from God. He then began searching the Scriptures and discovered that it was God's desire for His people to prosper.

Unlike the Assemblies of God personnel who had a hand in writing the position paper under dispute (and those who swear by it), Cho did not accept the belief that the principles of positive confession only work in already affluent societies. Cho openly declares that God's poverty stricken children are not prosperous because they, "have failed to claim God's blessing of prosperity."<sup>66</sup>

We could cite similar testimonies from different parts of Africa where preachers of prosperity have seen dynamic changes in the lives of their people. These societies are not very affluent, yet the principles work because they are founded upon God's Word. Nevertheless, what we have presented here is sufficient to demonstrate to the reader that Biblical principles will work anywhere. God's Word is not limited to a particular society or people.

## **9. Positive Confession, Assemblies of God, and the Logos and Rhema**

Rhema and logos are two Greek words in the New Testament that are translated as "word" in the English. Both are primarily used in reference to God's Word. Some in the Faith Movement as well as other Christian groups believe that each word conveys two different aspect of how God's Word is related to the hearer. The Assemblies of God dispute any distinction between the two:

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<sup>63</sup> Vreeland, Derek E. P.G. **Vargis and the Indian Prosperity Gospel**, Paper presented at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. Available online at <http://www.derekvreeland.com>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Cho, Dr. Paul Yonggi **Solving Life's Problems** (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, Inc., 1980), p. 27

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 29

A distinction is generally made by proponents of this view between the words *logos* and *rhema*. The first, it is claimed, refers to the written word. The second, to that which is presently spoken by faith. According to this view whatever is spoken by faith becomes inspired and takes on the creative power of God.

There are two major problems with this distinction. First, the distinction is not justified by usage either in the Greek New Testament or in the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament). The words are used synonymously in both.<sup>67</sup>

I am not aware of any faith preachers who are dogmatic about this distinction. As the Assemblies admit, there is very little to no literature from faith preachers on this subject. The closest that I could find to a written Word-Faith polemic on this teaching is Dr. David Yonggi Cho:

In his Greek lexicon Dr. Ironside has defined *logos* as "the said word of God," and *rhema* as "the saying word of God." Many scholars define this action of *rhema* as being the Holy Spirit using a few verses of Scripture and quickening it personally to one individual person. Here is my definition of *rhema*: *rhema* is a specific word to a person in a specific situation.<sup>68</sup>

Cho's teaching on the *rhema* of God's Word would be considered radical by many, but is somewhat defended by at least one Pentecostal scholar.<sup>69</sup> It is interesting that Cho derived his understanding of these distinctions from Dr. Ironside's lexicon. Dr. Harry Allen Ironside was neither a Pentecostal, a Charismatic, nor was he Word-Faith. Even before Ironside, John Darby, one of the early leaders in the Plymouth Brethren movement, made the following comments on John 17:14, 17: "Logos: the word of God in testimony, see 1Cor. 1:5, distinct from Rhema, the divine communications, ver. 8."<sup>70</sup>

Two men who were neither Pentecostal nor Charismatic saw a distinction in the use of these two Greek words. The reader should observe the fact that the distinctions between the *logos* and *rhema* were not inventions created within the faith movement for the express purpose of promoting positive confession.

Now if the above were isolated incidents, we might still believe that the Assemblies has some ground for their otherwise distorted presentation of faith teachers allegedly distinguishing *logos* and *rhema*. Yet, research of several scholars proves that there is ample support for such a distinction. For example, W. E. Vine, in his dictionary says that *Logos* sometimes, "... is used as the sum of God's utterances, e.g., Mar. 7:13; John 10:35; Rev. 1:2, 9."<sup>71</sup> Furthermore he writes:

The significance of *rhema* (as distinct from *logos*) is exemplified in the injunction to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," Eph. 6:17;

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<sup>67</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 10

<sup>68</sup> Yonggi Cho, Paul (David) **The Fourth Dimension, Volume One** (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, Inc., 1979), p. 91

<sup>69</sup> Chan, Simon K. H. **The Pneumatology of Paul Yonggi Cho**, *AJPS* 7:1 (2004), pp. 79-99

<sup>70</sup> Darby, John **The Holy Bible (Darby Translation)**, Accessed at: [http://www.awmach.org/web/BDB/n\\_joh.htm](http://www.awmach.org/web/BDB/n_joh.htm) (Last accessed: 19 January, 2005)

<sup>71</sup> Vine, W. E. (Editor) **Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 683

here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture.<sup>72</sup>

Others who (from the best of my knowledge), are well known experts in the original Bible languages, seem to agree with Vine:

No word (ouk rhema). Rhema brings out the single item rather than the whole content (logos). So in Luke 1:38.<sup>73</sup> (A. T. Robertson)

The expression, “the word of faith” is *hrema tes pisteos*. *Logos*, “word,” is not used here, but *rhema*, the other Greek word for “word.” *Logos* refers to the total expression of some idea or person. *Rhema* is used of a part of speech in a sentence. Paul is referring here to the words themselves, which constitute his message of faith.<sup>74</sup> (Kenneth S. Wuest)

Two words are commonly found where the NIV and the NASB read “word.” One is rhema, which typically focuses attention on a specific word or utterance. In contrast, logos is a broad term, sometimes including the entire Christian message and often used in technical theological senses.<sup>75</sup> (Lawrence O. Richards)

Rhema, word, as distinguished from logos, word, in classical Greek, signifies a constituent part of a speech or writing, as distinguished from the contents as a whole. Thus it may be either a word or a saying. Sometimes a phrase, as opposed to rhema, a single word. The distinction in the New Testament is not sharp throughout.<sup>76</sup> (Marvin Vincent)

It should be noted that Vincent did admit that the “...distinction in the New Testament is not sharp throughout.” The Assemblies in their position paper write, “The distinctions between logos and rhema cannot be sustained by Biblical evidence.”<sup>77</sup> Unlike Vincent, the denomination takes an inflexible position.

Dr. Ken Chant, an Australian Pentecostal Bible teacher, is far from embracing the stringent position taken by the Assemblies of God. In his book, *Faith Dynamics*, Dr. Chant cites and explains a number of Scriptures that, in his scholarly assessment, makes a clear distinction between the logos and the rhema. While Dr. Chant would more than likely agree with the Assemblies to some extent, he is far from completely embracing their dogmatic assertion:

... Perhaps I should mention again that “rhema” and “logos” do not always reflect the distinctions I have been emphasizing. Both words are frequently

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Robertson, A. T. **A. T. Robertson’s Word Pictures**, from the E-Sword Bible Software. Comments on Luke 1:37

<sup>74</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. **Wuest’s Word Studies From the Greek New Testament: Volume One** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 177. Wuest’s comments on Romans 10:8

<sup>75</sup> Richard, Lawrence O. **Zondervan Expository Dictionary of Bible Words** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), p. 634. The Pentecostal Messenger commended this book.

<sup>76</sup> Vincent, Marvin **Vincent’s Word Studies**, from the E-Sword Bible software

<sup>77</sup> Assemblies of God, *The Believer and Positive Confession*, p. 10

interchanged in the NT and their inner meaning is often blurred. But in their fundamental significance a difference between them does exist, and this difference is highlighted in passages like those quoted above.<sup>78</sup>

*If* some Faith Teachers have erroneously made it an uncompromising rule that rhema and logos are *always* distinct, then the Assemblies have done worse by their lack of flexibility on the matter. The problem with their dogmatic position is that a number of scholars are opposed to it.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I do sympathize with the Assemblies of God's position paper to a certain extent. As has been acknowledged by some of its leaders, the Faith Movement has had its share of extremes and excesses. There have also been extremes in the Pentecostal Movement, yet there is no doubt that the Assemblies, a Pentecostal denomination, would not want to be associated with them. Therefore, I find it sad that they would take the approach that they did by painting the positive confession advocates with one broad brush.

It is without a doubt that the Assemblies of God's position paper on positive confession is tainted with bias and prejudice. It is unfortunate that papers such as this has placed the Assemblies' credibility under question. Perhaps a recantation and a public apology would restore their loss. I do not believe that one is forthcoming, but I would be happy to be proven wrong.

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<sup>78</sup> Chant, Ken **Faith Dynamics: God's Way To Move Mountains** (Werrington, Australia: Ken Chant, 1989), p. 140