

CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND SPIRIT BAPTISM AMONG CANADIAN PENTECOSTAL CLERGY*

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1. Introduction

Historians often describe Spirit baptism signified by speaking in tongues as the single most important theological and ritual component of early American and Canadian Pentecostal belief. Speaking in tongues concomitant with Spirit baptism functioned as a rite of passage and prerequisite for spiritual leadership as well as a mechanism for establishing identity maintenance and boundaries with other denominations. The results of a national survey of clergy, or credential holders,¹ within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) conducted in October 2014, revealed that in the past three decades, clergy have changed their views regarding the relationship between Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues, with less than half indicating that tongues speech is a necessary component of Spirit baptism. In this sense, many PAOC clergy no longer believe that initial evidence is a required evidentiary aspect of the experience of Spirit baptism.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, this article describes the specific nature of the transformation of Pentecostalism's central theological and ritual component among PAOC clergy and

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¹ The term "credential holder" is used within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada to refer to religious specialists and is a close, but not perfect, approximation to the term "clergy." It refers to those individuals that have applied for and received one of four classes of "credentials" that officially recognizes their ability to perform specific ministry functions within congregations and to participate in denominational governance. The largest group are "ordained" credential holders who in 2014 numbered 2,170 individuals or 60 percent of all credential holders. In this article, we use the terms credential holders and clergy synonymously to refer to the total group of all religious specialists credentialed by the denomination.

presents two arguments. First, sociologically we argue that the changing views of PAOC clergy regarding the relationship of tongues speech to Spirit baptism are the result of their participation in the broader generic evangelical subculture, which promotes the adoption of a common evangelical religious identity and experience. Second, historically we argue that, rather than representing a simple capitulation to modern influences, this change, if even unintentionally, shows some similarity to both early American and Canadian Pentecostal views regarding Spirit baptism. To be clear, we are not making a theological argument regarding whether or not this change is good or bad, but rather, attempt to simply describe what PAOC clergy reported and briefly contextualize these changes.

2. Method

In October 2014, we conducted a total population survey of PAOC clergy.² A questionnaire was distributed in parallel English and French

² One of our objectives with the survey was to use the results of Carl Verge's 1985/86 survey as a baseline with which to compare the data from 2014 in order to measure whether or not any overall changes in religious belief and practice have occurred among clergy during the course of the last three decades (Carl Verge, "A Comparison of the Beliefs and Practices of Two Groups of Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Ministers: Those with a Master's Degree and Those with Only Three Years of Bible College Training" [PhD diss., New York University, 1987], 5; Carl Verge, "Pentecostal Clergy and Higher Education," *Eastern Journal of Practical Theology* 2 [1987]: 41–47. Both sources are available for download at: <http://paocbeliefs.weebly.com/findings.html>). As a result, we selected forty of Verge's 116 original questions that were thought to be the most relevant to contemporary discussions and debates that currently exist within the PAOC as well as the individual interests of the researchers. In order to accurately compare the results of the present study with those of Verge, it was important that both the wording of most of these questions and the specific metrics used to measure responses remained the same despite the fact that they were sometimes outmoded, imprecise, or did not allow respondents to provide additional context by means of a qualitative response. We strongly believe that any inherent weaknesses contained in Verge's original instrument are far outweighed by preserving the ability to compare the two sets of data. In addition to Verge's original questions, the researchers also added some new questions concerning demographics, ministry setting, marriage and sexuality, alcohol, biblical literalism, Spirit baptism, soteriology, theology of religions, the prosperity gospel, and eschatology. Many other questions could have been added, however, the researchers limited the number of questions in an attempt to minimize the risk of fatiguing respondents with an exceedingly long questionnaire.

text in order to allow responses from readers of Canada's two official languages. The questionnaire was hosted on SurveyMonkey and distributed via email by staff members of the international office of the PAOC to all credential holders for whom they had email addresses, which totaled 3,095 of all 3,575 credential holders on record with the PAOC at the time. It was the researchers' objective to distribute the questionnaire to as many credential holders as possible without sending the instrument by mail, which would have been financially prohibitive. Of the 3,095 email addresses on record with the PAOC, 2,971 were determined to be active by subtracting the 124 emails that were returned or "bounced back" from the total number of email addresses on record. The sample for the questionnaire, then, was 2,971 credential holders. A total of three emails were sent to credential holders over the course of a two-week period—an initial invitation sent on 6 October, a reminder sent on 9 October, and a final reminder sent on 15 October—before the questionnaire was closed on 20 October. Our total sample was 1,596, representing a 51.6 percent clean response rate.³

3. Analysis of Quantitative Results

When comparing the results of *The 2014 Survey of PAOC Credential Holders* to the results of Carl Verge's earlier 1985/86 survey, it becomes clear that there has been a decrease in commitment among PAOC clergy to the belief that speaking in tongues is a necessary component of Spirit baptism. Although overall agreement with the statement, "Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit," only decreased from 95 to 84 percent, there was a more significant change among those who *strongly agreed* with this statement in 1985/86 (75 percent) as compared with those who did in 2014 (46 percent), suggesting less enthusiastic support for the idea of tongues speech as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism.⁴ Decline in overall agreement with the statement, "No individual has

³ We received a total of 1,730 responses to the questionnaire. We removed the 134 responses that failed to complete the survey past the demographic questions. In addition, we did a test for flat-liners—those with a standard deviation of 0.0—but none were found.

⁴ Statistics from 1985/86 are taken from Verge, "A Comparison," 1987. To determine a "total" for the 1985/86 data set, we calculated a weighted average for the two groups that Verge surveyed.

received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues,” was much more significant. In 1985/86, 85 percent of respondents agreed with this statement while in 2014 only 46 percent did. The decline in agreement regarding the necessity of tongues speech in connection with Spirit baptism further indicates less enthusiastic support for the initial evidence doctrine, but it also indicates that many PAOC credential holders are interpreting the initial evidence doctrine differently than most credential holders did thirty years ago. Our analysis of the survey’s qualitative results helps to clarify this further.

4. Analysis of Qualitative Results

a. Closeness of the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism

On the survey, we asked one question that required a qualitative response: “What do you think is the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism?” A total of 1,282 respondents (80 percent of the sample) completed this question. Our initial analysis of these results involved simply determining how clergy understood the closeness of the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism. We achieved this by coding each response according to how respondents described the closeness of this relationship, grouping responses into the following four categories: “close relationship,” “some relationship,” “undecided,” or “distant relationship” (see Table 1).

Table 1	
How clergy described the closeness of the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism (%)	
Close Relationship	96
Some Relationship	2
Undecided	1
Distant Relationship	1

Our analysis indicated that 96 percent of PAOC clergy believed that there was a close relationship between speaking in tongues and Spirit baptism.⁵ Clergy indicating a “close relationship”

⁵ For all percentages in this paper, we have removed those who responded ambiguously to the question.

included those who responded with comments like, “The baptism of the Holy Spirit is almost always accompanied by tongues,” as well as those whose responses contained terminology found in the PAOC’s *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* such as, “It is the initial evidence!”⁶

Only 2 percent of clergy indicated that they believed there was only *some* relationship between speaking in tongues and Spirit baptism. One such person suggested, “I believe tongues is a ‘gift’; it may be a supporting evidence of the Baptism but it is not the ‘primary’ or the ‘initial’ evidence.” Of the 1 percent of respondents who indicated that there is a *distant* relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism, most believed that Spirit baptism happens at conversion. For example, one credential holder proposed, “Tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit and given to some believers as a spiritual gift. Spirit Baptism happens at conversion.” A further 1 percent of clergy indicated that they were undecided regarding the nature of the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism by providing responses such as “I’m uncertain” or simply “undecided.”

b. The evidentiary relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism

After even the most rudimentary review of the qualitative responses, a clear pattern emerged in which most respondents chose to describe the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism using some form of evidentiary language. We continued our analysis of the qualitative results, then, by coding each response according to how respondents described this evidentiary relationship, grouping responses into the following seven categories: “the evidence,” “the evidence with reservation,” “an evidence,” “evidence without an article,” “undecided,” “not an evidence,” or “no indication regarding the evidential value of tongues” (see Table 2). We discuss the nature and significance of these responses in more detail below.

i. The evidence

Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that they believed that tongues is the evidence of Spirit baptism. Below is a selection of five typical responses provided by respondents who shared this view:

⁶ All quotations from survey respondents have been reproduced verbatim.

I believe that speaking in an unlearned language is the confirming sign that one has been baptized in the Spirit.

It is the initial evidence!

Tongues is a necessary evidence of Spirit baptism.

Tongues is the only Biblical physical evidence given to in Scripture to confirm Spirit Baptism. It is therefore the initial evidence by which we can affirm that someone has been Spirit Baptized.

It is the universal and normative sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Table 2	
How clergy described the evidentiary relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism (%)	
The evidence	45
The evidence with reservation	7
An evidence	23
Evidence without an article	18
Undecided	1
Not an evidence	0.6
No indication regarding the evidential value of tongues	5

Among those who described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism, there was some diversity regarding how they understood the evidential value of tongues. First, although the terminology “physical evidence” has not appeared in the PAOC’s *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* since 1980, 30 percent of those who indicated that tongues is the evidence of Spirit baptism described their understanding of the evidential value of tongues using the “physical” or “outward” qualifier. Respondents who used one of these terms may have felt prompted to use the physical/outward qualifier simply because this phraseology was used on one of the statements in the questionnaire (respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit”).

Regardless, for some respondents, the physical/outward qualifier was of particular significance. For example, one person indicated, “I believe tongues is the initial physical evidence of being baptized. This is consistent with also believing some persons exhibiting ‘non-physical’ evidence of being baptized.” There were, in contrast, other respondents who also described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism, but who implicitly disagreed with the physical/outward qualification. One such person wrote, “Tongues is the ONLY initial evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

A second qualifier that some respondents used when describing tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism was the idea of “first” or “initial.” Of the 70 percent of those who used this qualifier as they described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism, some indicated that they used the term “initial” because they thought the qualifier was particularly meaningful. For example, one person wrote, “Tongues is the initial physical evidence of Spirit Baptism, with emphasis on ‘initial.’” In contrast, some people found the “initial” qualifier unnecessary, as exemplified in the following response: “The Biblical precedent still seems clear that it is the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Having said that (and believe it firmly) I think the word ‘initial’ itself is unnecessary for either practical or theological study.” Clearly, as with the physical/outward qualification, utilization of the “initial” qualifier is also an indication that there was some diversity in how clergy understood the evidential value of tongues, even among those who described it as the evidence of Spirit baptism.

ii. The evidence with reservation

In addition to the 45 percent of those respondents who indicated that tongues is the evidence of Spirit baptism, 7 percent *reservedly* described tongues as the evidence. One respondent, for instance, replied: “It is the most prominent evidence given in scripture for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, which makes a good case for it being the evidence to look for, yet it is an experience between the individual and God, and we must be careful not to impose upon it.” Another commented: “I do wonder if tongues is the ‘only’ evidence (although I believe it is, I am not as secure in that understanding as I am in most other doctrines). Many people who claim never to have spoken in tongues nevertheless give ever other indication of being baptized in

the Spirit and flowing with the Spirit's gifts." Finally, one respondent wrote: "Tongues is the clearest indicator, scripturally, that one has experienced the baptism in the Spirit for empowered witness/service. But I wouldn't argue with someone who ministers in the Spirit power in spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, evangelism who say they do not speak in tongues, telling them that are not baptized in the Spirit. Knowing prospectively that there are/may be other Christian who have a fruitful ministry in the power of the Spirit who have not spoken in tongues is one area in which I struggle with my current conviction of 'tongues as initial physical evidence.'"

This last response illustrates that, as with those respondents who described tongues as "the evidence" of Spirit baptism, some (27 percent) who described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism *with reservations* also included the physical/outward qualifier. For these respondents, including the physical/outward qualifier may have been a way of expressing their belief that someone could be baptized in the Spirit and have non-physical evidences to indicate the experience, even though the same person might not have spoken in tongues. For example, one respondent commented: "Tongues is the initial PHYSICAL evidence of Spirit baptism, but not necessarily the only, primary, or initial evidence of Spirit baptism. A person may be Spirit-baptized without speaking in tongues." Another told us: "Tongues is the initial physical evidence, in that it is the only overtly physical evidence in Scripture. There is, however, a Spiritual evidence of the Baptism that we cannot see and that precedes tongues (tongues is an outflow of this). The Spiritual evidence always comes but tongues does not necessarily need to come."

iii. An evidence

In contrast to those who affirmed that tongues is "the" evidence of Spirit baptism, 23 percent of respondents described tongues as "an" evidence of Spirit baptism. One respondent, for instance, replied: "I believe 'tongues' is one evidence, and very valuable, but not necessarily the only physical evidence of Spirit Baptism." Another commented: "Tongues is an evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, however because the gifts are subject to the receiver not all those baptized in the Spirit have stepped out in faith to practice that gift for themselves." Finally, another respondent told us: "Tongues is an evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit but I am not convinced

that it is the only sign because the infilling of the Holy Spirit is to give us boldness to witness and I have seen lots of people with boldness to witness and a deep love for God who are open to the infilling but have never spoke in tongues passionately lead others to Christ.”

As with the other categories of qualitative responses, there were some clear differences of opinion among those who described tongues as “an evidence.” Several clergy, like the following three respondents, indicated that tongues is frequently connected to Spirit baptism:

Spirit baptism followed by prophetic response, typically tongues. Purpose is to fill with Holy Spirit, to empower, not provide evidence. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, that God’s people do what was once restricted to prophets.

In most cases, it is a sign that the person has received the baptism.

It is the most likely evidence of Spirit Baptism because of the examples in scripture. However, I do think there are some who are baptized other ways, like ‘moaning’, or ‘falling’. Comes from my experience with my ‘spirit-filled’ mom who never spoke in tongues, but was living more actively in the spirit than some who spoke in tongues.

In contrast to these types of responses, others did not necessarily believe that speaking in tongues was likely to occur when a person is baptized in the Spirit. For example:

Tongues is a ‘sometimes’ sign of Spirit baptism but not an inevitable sign. Many believers receive the baptism but do not speak in tongues.

Tongues is one of many biblical signs of Spirit baptism. While it has often been one of the most common seen in PAOC churches, it is not the only one. In Acts,

tongues, prophecy and boldly proclaiming the gospel are all signs of Spirit baptism.

It is 'a' sign, but not 'the' sign. Ultimate indicator is living a transformed life—this is greatest marker consistently seen in the lives of the early believers in Acts. . . . If tongues was meant to be understood as 'the' initial sign or starting point for all believers of Spirit baptism—then quite simply I believe it would have been stated clearly and matter of factly by Luke or Paul. It wasn't.

Related to the disagreement regarding how likely a person who has been baptized in the Spirit is to speak in tongues, some of those respondents who described tongues as an evidence of Spirit baptism were close to affirming the "initial evidence" language, while others were less receptive to this language, even rejecting it. Of those who were receptive to initial evidence language, one person responded: "I believe that speaking in tongues are an important part of Spirit Baptism and that each believer should aspire to speak in tongues. Even if I see a clear link between tongues and Spirit baptism in the Scriptures, I am not totally convinced that speaking in tongues is the only initial sign of Spirit Baptism. It is, however, a clear visible sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In this sense, it confirms that a person has been baptised in the Holy Spirit. However, it is possible that the said person has been baptised in the Holy Spirit previously."

By contrast, the following response is illustrative of those respondents who were not receptive to initial evidence language: "I believe that tongues are a manifestation of the baptism in the Spirit. I do not believe the 'sign' is mandatory, or that every person baptized with the Spirit necessarily speak in tongues. The position of the 'initial evidence' says something that goes beyond what the Scriptures clearly allow us to affirm."

Many of the responses from those who had *reservations* regarding the idea that tongues is "the evidence" (described in the previous section) shared common features with the responses categorized as "an evidence." Many people from both groups indicated that some people who have never spoken in tongues had been baptized

in the Spirit, and many submitted that there are other indications (in addition to tongues) that can signify that a person has been baptized in the Spirit. Given the similar features between these two types of responses, we might have regarded all of these responses (30 percent combined) as falling within the “an evidence” category. We did not do this, however, because of the differences in the explicit language that the two groups of respondents used: the first group somehow described tongues as “the evidence” of Spirit baptism, while the second group somehow described tongues as “an evidence” of Spirit baptism.

iv. Evidence without an article

An additional group of respondents, who indicated some support for an evidentiary relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism, were those who described tongues as “evidence” of Spirit baptism (18 percent), but who used neither a definite article (the) nor an indefinite article (an) in their response. As an example, one respondent stated: “tongues is evidence of spirit baptism.” Some of the responses in this category included those who described tongues as “initial evidence” (40 percent of this group used the “initial” qualifier). Those who responded this way might have believed that tongues is “the evidence” of Spirit baptism, but given that some responses in the “an evidence” category also used the “initial” language, we cannot be certain what the “initial” qualifier was intended to indicate. In contrast to the responses in this category that included the “initial” qualifier, some of the respondents who did not use an article when describing some evidential value to tongues seemed *not* to view tongues as “the evidence.” For example, one person wrote: “I am sure that real tongues is evidence, but I am not sure that it is necessary evidence.” Although the responses in this category indicated that respondents believed there to be some evidentiary relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism, their overall ambiguity makes it difficult to determine the degree of support for an evidential view of tongues.

v. Undecided, not an evidence, and no indication

A small number of respondents (1 percent) indicated an undecided view regarding the evidential value of tongues. An even smaller number of respondents (0.6 percent) claimed that tongues has no evidential value in relationship to Spirit baptism. For example, one person wrote: “There are many people who speak in tongues but they

have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit—likewise there are many people who are baptized in the Holy Spirit who don't speak in tongues. Tongues is a gift of the Spirit available to everyone but the evidence of baptism is 'walking in the Spirit'—not in the flesh—and as such demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit."

Five percent of respondents gave no indication regarding the evidential value of tongues. That is, their response was not unclear, but they chose not to describe tongues using any evidential language. One such person wrote: "Speaking in Tongues is a gift available and desirable to all who have been baptised in the Holy Spirit." Another person described tongues as a gift "promised to believers for personal edification." If one does not take into account these responses and the responses that described tongues as "evidence" of Spirit baptism (given their overall ambiguity regarding respondents' level of support for the evidential view of tongues), then one is left with 793 responses where clergy unambiguously indicated an opinion regarding the evidential value of tongues in relationship to Spirit baptism. Of this group, 59 percent of respondents described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism, 9 percent described it as the evidence with reservation, 30 percent described it as an evidence, 1 percent were undecided, and 0.8 percent believed tongues was not an evidence (see Table 3).

Table 3	
How clergy who unambiguously indicated an opinion regarding the evidential value of tongues described the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism (%)	
The evidence	59
The evidence with reservation	9
An evidence	30
Undecided	1
Not an evidence	0.8

5. Comparing the Quantitative and Qualitative Results

At first glance, the above qualitative responses, where only 45 percent of respondents described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism, might appear to be inconsistent with the quantitative responses in which 84 percent of respondents indicated overall agreement with the statement "Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit" (the IPE statement). We believe that this

mixed result was due to some diversity regarding how respondents understood the IPE statement. Twenty-eight percent of respondents who agreed with the IPE statement, for instance, also indicated disagreement with the following statement: “No individual has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues.” Examples of the types of responses provided by clergy who agreed with the IPE statement, but who also did not believe that tongues was a necessary indicator of Spirit baptism, include the following:

Tongues is not about ‘must’ but ‘may.’ I believe anyone filled with the Holy Spirit ‘may’ speak in tongues. I also believe that in the Western World (primarily) there are psychological barriers to receiving and/or expressing this sign-gift publicly which did not exist in the time of the apostles.

Christians who don’t speak in tongues can also have the ‘Spirit Baptism’ such as when they have some spiritual gifts like: prophecy, gift of knowledge etc.

Tongues is the most common initial physical manifestation, as well as the most reliably quantifiable manifestation. Therefore, it’s use as initial evidence is appropriate, however baptism does not necessarily require tongues to be manifested.

Of those who agreed with the IPE statement, 51 percent described tongues as “the evidence” (see Table 4). Seven percent, however, described tongues as the evidence with reservation, with the reservation usually consisting of the belief that someone who has not spoken in tongues might still have been baptized in the Spirit. Another 17 percent of those who agreed with the IPE statement described tongues as “an evidence” of Spirit baptism. Examples of respondents who agreed with the IPE statement, but who described tongues as an evidence, include the following:

Tongues is one of several gifts which a Spirit baptised believer can experience. To say it is the initial evidence can be disputed because the baptiser may chose some

other gift to be manifested at Spirit baptism. However speaking in tongues is a blessing along with the other gifts. We can expect to speak in tongues when baptised in the Spirit.

It is one of the gifts. It is sometimes the initial evidence.

People can be full of the HS and not speak in tongues. Tongues are a spiritual gift for personal and corporate edification, which sometimes accompanies Spirit Baptism.

Table 4	
How clergy who agreed with “the initial physical evidence” statement described the evidentiary relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism (%)	
The evidence	51
The evidence with reservation	7
An evidence	17

These responses appear to indicate some contradiction between respondents’ affirmations of the IPE statement and their descriptions of how tongues relates to Spirit baptism. It is possible that some respondents indicated agreement with the IPE statement simply because it is worded closely to how the PAOC’s *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* describes tongues in relationship to Spirit baptism (as “the initial evidence”) and, therefore, some respondents might have felt that disagreeing with the IPE statement put their loyalty to or identity within the PAOC into question.

In many cases, however, there was no contradiction between clergy’s affirmations of the IPE statement and their responses regarding how tongues relates to Spirit baptism. Rather, as indicated in the above section, PAOC clergy understand the “initial physical evidence” terminology in a number of ways. For example, as indicated in some of the qualitative responses quoted in the above section, some respondents believed that the “physical” qualifier was an indication that a person might be baptized in the Holy Spirit, but exhibit other non-physical evidences of Spirit baptism.

In summary, the difference between the quantitative responses—where 84 percent of respondents agreed with the IPE statement—and the qualitative responses—where only 45 percent of respondents described tongues as the evidence—is explained by the fact that, when given the opportunity to contextualize their opinions in a qualitative format, those who initially affirmed the IPE statement in response to a quantitative question, explained their understanding of the relationship between speaking in tongues and Spirit baptism in a number of different ways.

6. Interpretations of the Results

a. Sociological Observations

One might ask, “What external social factors might contribute to the changing views of PAOC clergy?” The changes noted here regarding clergy’s understanding of Spirit baptism are in keeping with other changes we have observed that indicate a general decrease in commitment to beliefs held by PAOC clergy in 1985/86.⁷ For example, we observed significant changes in belief and practice regarding issues such as alcohol consumption, women in ministry, divorce and remarriage, a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church, and theological understandings of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁸ These changes closely mirror similar trends occurring within the broader Canadian and American evangelical landscapes, suggesting a convergence of evangelical belief and practice across denominational lines. As Sam Reimer, Michael Wilkinson, and Adam Stewart have argued elsewhere, there is a generic evangelical subculture in North America that is comprised of a shared set of beliefs, practices, and transdenominational relationships.⁹ Participation in this subculture

⁷ Adam Stewart and Andrew Gabriel, “A longitudinal study of clergy in Canada’s largest Pentecostal denomination” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, Ottawa, Ontario, May 30–June 2, 2015); and Adam Stewart and Andrew Gabriel, “Theological Vitality in the PAOC Today,” *Enrich: The Leadership Magazine of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada*, Spring, 2015, 12–15 (available for download at: <http://paocbeliefs.weebly.com/findings.html>).

⁸ Alternatively, pro-life sentiments, understandings of marriage and sexuality, some eschatological beliefs, and a tendency toward biblical literalism, remained largely unchanged.

⁹ Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States* (Montreal and Kingston:

promotes the adoption of generic evangelical emphases at the expense of earlier denominational emphases, producing a largely homogeneous religious subculture that spans both denominational and national boundaries. Sociologically, the changing views of PAOC clergy regarding the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism is the result of a pervasive realignment of earlier Canadian Pentecostal emphases resulting from Canadian Pentecostals' increasing participation in this ever-expanding generic evangelical subculture.

This homogenization of religious identity and experience by no means applies universally to all individuals or equally to all aspects of the PAOC. Our research, rather, contains some important instances of departure from the overall narrative of decline in commitment to earlier views. These exceptions suggest that PAOC clergy are critically negotiating their adoption of generic evangelical culture by not simply jettisoning earlier belief and practice, but by carefully reframing aspects of the tradition so that they more closely emphasize, in the words of Reimer and Wilkinson, "evangelical boundaries instead of denominationally specific boundaries."¹⁰ This approach allows PAOC clergy to participate in a generic evangelical subculture, but to do so without entirely divorcing themselves from all aspects of their tradition. The result is a transformation of earlier belief and practice that is not entirely linear, and is a more complex process than many traditional theories of religious change typically assume.

We see this complexity illustrated in the views of PAOC clergy regarding Spirit baptism in particular. On the one hand, PAOC clergy are not as likely as they previously were to insist that a person who has not spoken in tongues has not been baptized in the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, PAOC clergy are still as likely as they previously were to believe that Spirit baptism is an experience subsequent to conversion. In both instances, whether it is moving away from or maintaining earlier modes of belief and practice, clergy are showing a confluence with broader trends within the generic evangelical subculture.

McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 17, 39, 42; Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson, *A Culture of Faith: Evangelical Congregations in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 103–104, 132–3; Adam Stewart, *The New Canadian Pentecostals* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Reimer and Wilkinson, 104.

b. Historical Observations

Historically one might ask, “Are PAOC clergy departing from earlier views of North American Pentecostal belief?”¹¹ While the changing views of PAOC clergy represent a departure from the views of PAOC clergy three decades ago, they do not represent a full departure from the early views of North American Pentecostals, but rather, share some similarities with these early views.

Among early North American Pentecostals, one can find views regarding Spirit baptism that are similarly as diverse as those held among PAOC clergy in 2014. Among the earliest American Pentecostals there were certainly those, like Charles Parham, who viewed tongues as the necessary “Bible evidence” of Spirit baptism. Parham declared that “speaking in other tongues is an inseparable part of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit distinguishing it from all previous works; and no one has received Baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not a Bible evidence to show for it.”¹² Nevertheless, not every early Pentecostal leader held this position. William J. Seymour, leader of the Azusa Street Revival, argued that love, not tongues, was the definitive sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹³

There are signs of diversity on this topic in early Canadian Pentecostalism as well. On the one hand, referring to a convention that had been held at the East End Mission (also known as the “Hebden Mission”) in Toronto, one participant expressed the evidential value of tongues: “Many were baptized with the Holy Ghost. The only way we knew it to be so with them, was because we heard them speak with

¹¹ It would not do to ask this question of global Pentecostals, since many global Pentecostals have not held to the understanding that Spirit baptism is an experience subsequent to salvation for which the initial evidence is speaking in tongues.

¹² Charles F. Parham, *Kol Kare Bomidbar: A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (Kansas City, MO: Charles F. Parham, 1902; reprint, Baxter Springs, KS: Robert L. Parham, 1944), 35, quoted in Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 48–49.

¹³ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “William J. Seymour and ‘The Bible Evidence,’” in *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism*, ed. Gary B. McGee (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 72–95.

other tongues and magnify God. Acts 10:45, 46.”¹⁴ On the other hand, in the lead article in the first issue of *The Promise* (published by the Hebden’s in Toronto), James Hebden wrote: “We have often been asked the question since the work began here if no one was baptized who did not speak with ‘Tongues.’ We should not like to say that, but that all who have received their baptism here have spoken in Tongues.”¹⁵

This diversity of views concerning the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism continued as North American Pentecostalism increasingly institutionalized and as Pentecostals formed statements of faith. This was the case in the Assemblies of God (AG) in the United States. One example of the diverse interpretations of the “initial evidence” doctrine comes from the first general secretary of the AG (elected in 1914), Joseph Roswell Flower. He wrote in his published testimony that he was baptized in the Holy Spirit several months before he finally spoke in tongues.¹⁶ Evidently, Flower, and others like him, interpreted the initial evidence doctrine to mean that, although there may be other signs that would come first, tongues was the initial sign which was decisive (the “initial evidence”) to convince other Christians that this experience had happened in one’s life.¹⁷ Hence, E. N. Bell, the first superintendent of the AG, indicated, “I see no reason to doubt such testimony,” regarding those who say they were baptized in the Holy Spirit one day, three days, or three weeks before speaking in tongues.¹⁸

¹⁴ “Convention,” *The Promise*, 14 (October 1909), 2.

¹⁵ James Hebden, No title, *The Promise*, 1 (May 1907), 1.

¹⁶ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God,” *Pneuma* 25, no. 2 (2003): 187–90. It is significant that Flower’s testimony was published (and considered acceptable!) in 1933, many years after the denomination had penned their statement of faith in 1916.

¹⁷ Flower also seems to view the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit as somewhat of a process because he suggests that it is only when believers have spoken in tongues that they have the “full manifestation” of Spirit baptism as found in the “biblical pattern.” As quoted in Frank D. Macchia, “Groans too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 2 (1998): 16. Available at http://www.aps.edu/ajps/98-2/98-2_index.htm.

¹⁸ Glen Menzies, “Tongues as ‘The Initial Physical Sign’ of Spirit Baptism in the Thought of D. W. Kerr,” *Pneuma* 20, no. 2 (1998): 184.

Such views likely would have been acceptable in the Canadian context as well. The original statement of faith affirmed by PAOC clergy appears to allow for diverse views regarding the relationship of tongues and Spirit baptism. From 1928–1979, the section in the PAOC *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* concerning “the Baptism of the Holy Ghost” included a section titled “Our Distinctive Testimony,” which affirms, “the baptism of the Holy Spirit is *regularly* accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit of God gives the utterance.”¹⁹

Two factors suggest that many early PAOC clergy would have interpreted this statement in ways that are consistent with the views of the AG leaders described above. First, the wording for this section of the *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* was taken from a 1918 resolution at the AG council.²⁰ Second, up until 1925 when the PAOC became independent from the AG, many Pentecostals living and ministering in Canada held credentials with the AG. Therefore, it seems likely that a good number of early PAOC clergy would have thought that the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not always require initial evidence, since it is *regularly*, but not always, accompanied by speaking in tongues. Further research is required regarding this topic.

Over the next four to five decades (approximately 1930–1980), it seems that North American Pentecostals became stricter in their interpretation of the relationship between speaking in tongues and baptism in the Holy Spirit, with an increasing number of clergy insisting that tongues would come immediately with the experience of Spirit baptism. Cecil Robeck argues that this is the case in the AG, particularly among denominational leadership. He traces historical shifts in the AG and suggests that, similar to the Roman Catholic

¹⁹ Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada: Including Essential Resolutions and Other Information* (London, ON: Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 1928), 16 (emphasis added).

²⁰ Assemblies of God, *Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States of America, Canada, and Foreign Lands* (Springfield, MO: The Gospel Publishing House, 1918), 8. The AG resolution regarding “the distinctive testimony” was never incorporated into the AG statement of fundamental truths. Nevertheless, since the resolution was made in 1918, one only finds the resolution included again in the *combined minutes* of the AG General Council for 1914–1920, 1914–1921, 1914–1923, and 1914–1925.

church, the AG “executive officers, the General Presbytery, and the Doctrinal Purity Commission have become the magisterium, and together they have essentially removed the discussion of certain doctrines from the general fellowship.”²¹

It appears that over time, an increasing number of clergy in the PAOC were likewise insisting that tongues would come immediately with the experience of Spirit baptism. Fifty years after the PAOC affirmed that “the baptism of the Holy Spirit is *regularly* accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues,” (emphasis added) in 1978, the PAOC’s Doctrinal Statement Study Committee presented a resolution to the General Executive with the intent to “reaffirm the historical position” of the PAOC regarding the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The resolution that the General Executive passed included an affirmation “that the use of the word ‘regularly’ in the *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* was intended to mean ‘must always’ and further that the dictionary definition of the word ‘regularly’ supports this affirmation.”²² It seems then, that by the time Verge conducted his research in the mid-1980s, the leadership within the PAOC (and most other PAOC clergy as well, given their responses to Verge’s survey) were allowing for less diversity with respect to how clergy could understand the relationship between speaking in tongues and Spirit baptism.

Our historical conclusion, then, is that the views of PAOC clergy in 2014 did not represent a complete departure from what one might call “traditional Pentecostalism,” but rather, that contemporary views are more in keeping with the early years of North American Pentecostalism, when Pentecostals, including prominent denominational leaders, accepted a number of views regarding the connection between Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.

7. Conclusion

The 2014 Survey of PAOC Credential Holders reveals that over the past three decades, PAOC clergy have changed their views regarding

²¹ Robeck, 170.

²² General Executive Meeting Minutes, March 1978, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Archives, Mississauga, ON.

the relationship between Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues. Although the vast majority of PAOC credential holders still believe that there is a close relationship between speaking in tongues and Spirit baptism, PAOC clergy understand this relationship in many different ways. Less than half of clergy insist that tongues is a necessary indicator of Spirit baptism and, therefore, many affirm that some believers have been baptized in the Holy Spirit even though they have not spoken in tongues. The changing views of PAOC clergy are, at least in part, the result of their participation in the generic evangelical subculture. Furthermore, even though PAOC clergy have changed how they understand the relationship between baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, this change does not represent a complete departure from traditional Pentecostalism. Rather, the views of contemporary PAOC clergy are consistent with descriptions of Spirit baptism that can be found among early North American Pentecostals.

APPENDIX: Demographic Differences

While it is not germane to the overall argument made in this paper, it is worth noting that there were some differences regarding how clergy responded to aspects of the questionnaire that pertained to the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism based on their age, education, the size of the congregation that the respondent ministered within (when applicable), and the geographical district they are associated with (we observed no significant differences based on gender).

With respect to age, although credential holders of all ages generally indicated that there is a close relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism, only 38 percent of those aged 20–40 indicated that tongues is the evidence of Spirit baptism, whereas 41 percent of those aged 41–60 and 54 percent of those aged 61 and greater, described tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism. Likewise, those who were younger (20–40) were less likely to indicate agreement (73 percent) with the statement “Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit,” than those of older demographics (84 percent agreement for those aged 41–60 and 92 percent agreement for those aged 61 and greater). Furthermore, younger clergy (20–40) were less likely to indicate agreement (31

percent) with the statement: “No individual has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues,” than those who were older (46 percent agreement for those aged 41–60 and 59 percent agreement for those aged 61 and greater). Regardless of the different responses based on age, all of these age groups indicated less agreement with these statements than the total number of respondents to Verge’s 1985/86 survey where clergy indicated 95 percent agreement with the first statement and 85 percent agreement with the second statement.

Unlike Carl Verge’s earlier survey results, the 2014 results do not reveal a negative correlation between graduate education in theology or religion and commitment to traditional views of Pentecostal belief and practice.²³ Nevertheless, there was some correlation between overall education levels and belief concerning the relationship of tongues and Spirit baptism. Sixty-six percent of those who had a high school education or lower agreed with the statement, “No individual has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues,” whereas only 48 percent of those who had either some undergraduate education or a college diploma agreed with the statement, and only 41 percent of those who completed an undergraduate degree agreed with the statement. Interestingly, those who had completed a graduate degree had a slightly higher level agreement with the statement (42 percent) than those who had completed an undergraduate degree.

The results of the 2014 survey also revealed a correlation between congregational size and belief that tongues is a necessary indicator of Spirit baptism. Those clergy who ministered within a congregation of under 100 members, for instance, were more likely to indicate agreement (50 percent) with the statement, “No individual has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues,” than those clergy who ministered within a congregation of over 1000 members (38 percent agreement). It is important to note that agreement with this statement does not correlate with the population of the broader community in which a respondent’s church is located, but

²³ See Stewart and Gabriel, “A longitudinal study;” Stewart and Gabriel, “Theological Vitality,” 12–15.

rather, is specially correlated with the size of the congregation.²⁴ This difference, however, may be related to the fact that larger congregations have more clergy in a variety of positions on staff, some of whom are less likely to indicate agreement with the above statement. For example, those who indicated that their ministry position was as a “senior pastor” indicated a higher level of agreement (53 percent) with the above statement, in comparison to those who self-identified as a “youth pastor” (37 percent agreement), “administrative pastor” (30 percent agreement), “executive pastor” (28 percent agreement), or “music pastor” (25 percent agreement).

The district with which respondents held their credentials also correlated with how they viewed the relationship between speaking in tongues and Spirit baptism. As illustrated in Tables 5–7, with the exception of the Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario District, the districts that are more conservative on this issue are in Eastern Canada (Quebec, Maritimes, and Eastern Ontario²⁵), and the less conservative districts are in Western Canada (Saskatchewan, Alberta/Northwest Territories, and BC/Yukon).

To summarize this appendix, the survey revealed a noticeable difference in agreement with earlier views of the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism, which correlated with age, education, congregation size, and district.

Table 5	
Agreement (%) with the statement, “Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit,” based on PAOC district	
Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario	96
Québec	91

²⁴ For example, respondents did not respond significantly differently to the statement, “No individual has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues,” if they ministered in a community with a population under 1,000 people (46 percent indicating agreement) in comparison to those who ministered in a community with a population over 100,000 people (42 percent indicating agreement). Furthermore, those who ministered in a community with a population of 10,000–29,999 were most likely (50 percent) to agree with this statement.

²⁵ This was the name of the district at the time the survey was conducted. Subsequently, in 2015, the district was rebranded as the Eastern Ontario and Nunavut District.

Eastern Ontario	89
Maritimes	86
Western Ontario	84
Saskatchewan	82
Alberta and the Northwest Territories	79
British Columbia and Yukon	76

Table 6	
Agreement (%) with the statement, “No individual has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit who has not spoken with tongues,” based on PAOC district	
Québec	63
Maritimes	56
Eastern Ontario	55
Western Ontario	53
Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario	51
Alberta and the Northwest Territories	34
British Columbia and Yukon	32
Saskatchewan	23

Table 7		
How clergy described the relationship between tongues and Spirit baptism (%) according to district		
	The Evidence	An Evidence
Maritimes	69	13
Eastern Ontario	54	13
Québec	49	17
Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario	48	18
Western Ontario	46	21
Alberta and the Northwest Territories	37	28
British Columbia and Yukon	35	34
Saskatchewan	30	40