

# STUDY COMMITTEE REPORTS

## REPORT 34

### NEO-PENTECOSTALISM

(Arts. 74, 76)

DEAR BROTHERS:

In response to overtures from two classes and an Appeal from an individual, the Synod of 1971 appointed your committee to "study, in the light of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit, the teachings and practices associated with that which is popularly called 'Neo-Pentecostalism,' and explore the reasons for its growing appeal in the Christian Reformed Church" (*Acts*, 1971, Art. 116, pp. 97f.). Grounds for this action speak of "much unrest and confusion over this matter in our denomination," and observe that the church's creeds do not speak explicitly to these things. Synod felt some urgency about its mandate, in view of developing "crises" in some local areas and the "urgent need" of consistories and individual members of the churches for guidance, and so instructed your committee to submit the fruits of its study to the Synod of 1972.

With regret your committee informed the Synod of 1972 that it had not been able to complete its study and that it would be necessary to delay its report until the Synod of 1973 (*Acts*, 1972, Report 42, p. 485). Synod patiently accepted this request for more time and decided to "continue this committee and request that its report be presented to the Synod of 1973" (*Acts*, 1972, Art. 26, p. 32). The Synod of 1972 also broadened our mandate by requesting your committee to formulate "practical advice to the churches confronting similar problems" as those which had arisen within the Christian Reformed Church of Clinton, Ontario (*Acts*, 1972, Art. 73, II, C. 3; p. 102).

The original overtures of Classes Sioux Center and Chicago North had called for advice specifically in regard to "the special gifts of the Holy Spirit." Mr. H. J. Jongsma requested that a study be made of "the extended indwelling of the Holy Spirit" and of "believer's baptism." In its mandate to your committee the Synod of 1971 spoke in more general terms and thereby enlarged the scope of our study in order to put the concerns of the overtures and appeal in a larger context.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In pursuance of its study your committee has attempted to acquaint itself with neo-Pentecostalism by various means: interviews and correspondence with participants in the "movement" (both lay and ordained), literature produced by those involved in the "movement," and published studies of the "movement." In its attempt to evaluate neo-Pentecostalism "in the light of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit," it has examined anew the biblical data, studied the writings of various Christian theologians who have attempted to evaluate this phenomenon in historical, theological and biblical perspective, and consulted the reports, decisions and pastoral letters issued by the broader assemblies or pastoral bodies of other denominations concerning the "movement."

In view of the fact that neo-Pentecostalism is itself an "ecumenical" phenomenon which has occasioned serious attempts at evaluation on the part of many ecclesiastical assemblies outside of our own denomination, your committee has judged it wise and proper to give special attention to documents of various kinds issued by these assemblies. Worthy of special mention are:

*Herderlijk Schrijven van de Generale Synode der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, 1960.

*Het Werk van de Heilige Geest in de Gemeente: Voorlichtend Geschrift over de Pinkstergroepen*, Uitgegeven in Opdracht van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken, 1968.

"Communion of the Spirit," report of a special commission to the 35th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1968.

"'Adiaphora' and 'Guidance,'" report of a special commission to the 36th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1969.

"The Baptism with the Holy Spirit," report of a special committee of Classis Victoria (Australia) to examine the teaching of the Rev. Dr. J. A. Schep, 1969.

"Minutes of Classis Victoria," pertaining to the decisions of Classis Victoria based on the above report, and including a brief "Word to the Churches," 1969. (The decisions of Classis Victoria were upheld by the 1970 Synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia.)

"Report of a Special Episcopal Commission to Study Catholic Pentecostalism," submitted to a meeting of American bishops held in Washington, D.C., November, 10-14, 1969.

*The Work of the Holy Spirit*, report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit to the 182nd General Assembly of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1970.

"Report of the Committee Appointed by Classis British Columbia to Study the Problem of Rebaptism," together with the "Minutes of Classis British Columbia" pertaining to this report, 1971.

*The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, With Special Reference to 'the Baptism of the Holy Spirit'*, report of a special commission

to the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern), 1971.

The committee gratefully acknowledges its indebtedness to these several documents. It is convinced that the attitude of the Christian Reformed Church to neo-Pentecostalism ought to be in accord with that of other Christian and Reformed communions where this is consistent with Scripture and our creeds, pastorally useful, and spiritually edifying.

## II. PENTECOSTALISM AND NEO-PENTECOSTALISM\*

The movement whose "teachings and practices" we have been asked to study is difficult to define. It is still too new, too diverse, too unstructured, too inarticulate (i.e., its published literature is largely incidental and devotional, and its spokesmen are still struggling to find or develop an adequate, generally accepted, and precise language for self-expression). This situation has been observed by all the studies which have come to our attention, consequently they tend for the most part to be cautious and tentative. We acknowledge the same tentativeness about our own analysis. Furthermore, we make no attempt to distinguish between the movement in general and the peculiar character it may have, if any, within our own denomination. Such distinctions have neither been possible within the limits of time granted us, nor required by the specific mandate assigned us.

Although a clear distinction exists between Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism, there is historically a definite geneological link. Pentecostalism itself sprang up in the early decades of the 20th century as a movement rising out of North American Holiness circles. These, in turn, were the offspring of Wesleyan theology with its emphasis on instant sanctification as a "second work" of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion, associated with an intense religious experience, and commonly called "the baptism with the Holy Spirit." In reaction to a diminishing emphasis on sanctification in the traditional Wesleyan churches, a revived Holiness movement exploded into more than a score of new denominations committed to Holiness principles in the decade 1895-1905. Although the primary factors leading to this proliferation of new denominations were religious (and theological), the whole upheaval was far more complex so that with considerable justification the rise of this family of new churches has been called "a conservative counterweight among the lower classes to the liberal thinking of the upper and middle classes."

Within certain circles among these Holiness communions, with their preoccupation with and intense cultivation of religious experience, there arose fairly early a doctrine of the "third blessing," subsequent to sanctification and conceived as of the "baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire." Although glossolalia and healing were often associated with the revival

\*For the history of Pentecostalism see: Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971; or more exhaustively: Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.

experiences so prized by the Holiness communions (as they had been also by earlier American revival movements), these were not at first conceived of as essential elements. However, in the teaching of Charles Parham, often called "the apostle of Pentecostalism," and in the later Pentecostal movement, glossolalia was recognized as the only sure evidence of one's having received the "third blessing." Subsequently, Pentecostals taught that no Christian should be satisfied until he had spoken with "tongues" as proof that he had received the Holy Spirit. The "second blessing" (sanctification) may have cleansed and purified the believer, but only the "third blessing" brought power for service.

For Pentecostals the universal ideal for Christian believers was the complex of experiences present in the early church as portrayed in the Book of Acts and reflected in Paul's epistles. Distinction was seldom made between the experiences of the 120 on the day of Pentecost and that of later converts who, according to Acts, were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, although it was taught that glossolalia was the universal and only valid sign that one had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, it was assumed that all the other "gifts" of the Spirit mentioned by Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians should naturally be expected to be present in the community of believers. Pentecostals rejected the long-accepted view that these "supernatural" gifts had served their purpose in the early years of the church as verifiers of the apostolic gospel and so had ceased to be given, at least in the normal course of the Spirit's working, since shortly after the close of the apostolic age.

As Pentecostalism began to make inroads into those communions which stood outside of the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions, i.e., among those which had not accepted the doctrine of instant sanctification as the "second blessing" of the Spirit, another form of Pentecostalism came into being, one which viewed sanctification as a process of "growth in grace." For these the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" was looked upon as the "second blessing." Nevertheless, with this one major exception, the distinctive views of Pentecostalism became generally accepted throughout the movement.

With its great emphasis on religious experience, its want of sound exegetical or hermeneutical principles for interpreting Scripture, its lack of theological leadership (indeed, its general suspicion of and consequent denigration of theology), and its break with confessional and theological traditions, Pentecostalism was defenseless against the rise of extreme, not to say bizarre, practices and doctrines; witness on the one hand the extreme chaos of some Pentecostal worship services and the emergence of such sects as the snake-handlers of Appalachia (based on Mark 16:18), and on the other hand the Jesus unitarian heresy which is still entertained by roughly one-fourth of American Pentecostals. It should be noted, however, that wide-spread charges that Pentecostals tend as a group to be emotionally unstable seem to have been disproved by recent studies.

Although neo-Pentecostalism has traceable links to and some marked affinities with Pentecostalism, it is a distinct phenomenon and can only be fairly described as much by contrast with that movement as by comparison. The cultural and religious climate of the mid-twentieth century

differs so radically from that of the century's first decades that cultural factors affecting religious experience today tend to produce religious phenomenon equally different. (For an attempt to identify some of the contemporary cultural factors see the next section of this report.) Moreover (or as a result of these factors), participants in neo-Pentecostalism for the most part do not come from the Holiness communions with their distinctive doctrinal baggage and peculiar ethos. They come rather from those communions which have long-standing confessional and theological traditions to which they generally remain true. In view of this fact, they show little inclination to be schismatic. In fact, there is among them generally an aroused enthusiasm for their own confessional communions and religious traditions (e.g., among Roman Catholics there appears a renewed enthusiasm for the Mass and for devotion to the virgin Mary). At the same time, they manifest a broad, unself-conscious and unofficial ecumenical spirit by regularly sharing their faith and religious experiences with persons from diverse confessional and ecclesiastical backgrounds in informal gatherings both large and small. Although they share common religious experiences and certain common assumptions (see below), and appear to be developing a common language, there is not among them a fixed, generally accepted body of doctrines or tenets that set them apart from their fellow church members. Moreover, while Pentecostalism was a movement primarily of the economically and educationally deprived segments of American society, and reflected this fact in its tendency toward undisguised anti-intellectualism and extreme irrationalism in religious expression, neo-Pentecostalism tends to draw its participants from the middle and upper economic classes and from the better to highly educated. Many of the leading spirits in the movement are ministers or priests in churches that maintain relatively high educational standards for their clergy.

With Pentecostalism, however, neo-Pentecostalism tends to share:

- (1) a great stress on individual religious experience combined with a measure of impatience with traditional churchly emphases on doctrine, liturgy, and institutional structures and orders;
- (2) a profound interest in the Holy Spirit, together with a Jesus-centered piety;
- (3) an assumption that all the extraordinary (miraculous) "gifts" of the Spirit are to be expected and sought by Christians today, just as in the days immediately after Pentecost;
- (4) enthusiasm for witnessing and testimonies—sharing the faith and its triumphs;
- (5) a great emphasis on prayer and praise, both individual and group;
- (6) a tendency toward pneumatic, in distinction from grammatical-historical-theological, interpretation of Scripture, a method of interpretation which tends on the one hand toward a fragmentation of the biblical literature, and on the other hand toward the paradoxical combination of a naively literal and an allegorical understanding of the biblical text;

(7) a heightened awareness of the demonic and a corresponding interest in exorcism;

(8) the assumption that the truly spiritual man is characterized by a complete yielding to the Holy Spirit (frequently evidenced by the total "yielding of the tongue"—man's most "unruly" member—to the Spirit in glossolalia), so that he seeks and receives direct divine guidance apart from the normal processes of decision-making;

(9) a distinctive "language" of faith which, however useful the participants may find it for prayer, praise and testimony, lacks theological precision;

(10) and impatience with, if not distrust of, theology and disciplined intellectual effort generally.

There can be little doubt that neo-Pentecostalism is *essentially* a revival movement within the confessional and traditional churches. Participants commonly testify of a former "hunger," "emptiness," "powerlessness," "lovelessness," "loneliness," "unfulfilledness," "deadness," "carnality" that has now been overcome. They profess an experience of the living Jesus who before was hidden for them behind the doctrines, liturgies and unspiritual atmosphere of the churches. They now testify to having the joyful assurance of salvation, the desire for prayer and praise, the freedom to testify and witness, liberation from bondage to sin, the power to live holy lives in the service of Jesus, a delight in the Word of God, a new capacity to love, a desire for Christian fellowship, and a peace that they have never known before.

The following testimony is typical:

What a hungry man I was for the evidence of God's power and the reality of a living Christ in my ministry. For seven years I had preached the Gospel. But Mark 16:17 bothered me.

I asked myself, "Why weren't these things following my ministry?"

My heart was hungry and desperate for a real moving of God in our midst.

My wife and I loved him, wanted to serve him and be used mightily of him, but it didn't look as though we were being used. Clearly, the scriptural evidence of God's blessing was not following our ministry. What few Christians we had were drying up spiritually, and we didn't know what to do.

One day a friend from a neighboring city dropped in to see us. We visited for hours sharing our heart hunger. Both of us were searching for more of God's power in our lives.

A week went by and one Sunday afternoon, the same young man from the neighboring city dropped in to visit with us. He and his wife beamed with enthusiasm. They had met God in a new way. As they told us of their experience in receiving the Holy Spirit I knew that this was our answer.

Special services had been held at the Episcopal Church in their town where Mrs. Jean Stone . . . spoke on the Holy Spirit. There they had been introduced to the Third Person of the Trinity—and discovered a new relationship with the Lord which was apparent in their attitude.

We could scarcely wait for the Monday evening service. After the message, those wishing to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit met together. God's desire to fill us with his Spirit was explained from the Scriptures. We were told to relax and believe that God would answer prayer as those ministering laid their hands on our heads and prayed for us. We were told to worship the Lord Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit led us—quietly and reverently. For it would be the Holy Spirit who would use our voice, although we would do the speaking, and miraculously guide our tongue in a language we would not know.

As we prayed, God came in mighty power on my soul, and for the first time in my life I sensed the reality of the Holy Spirit. My body was flooded with a glow of warmth. My heart overflowed with praise to God and I felt as though I were walking on air, as for 5 or 10 minutes I worshiped him in a language I never heard before.

A great calmness and stillness came over me and peace flooded my soul. I knew then that this was evidence of his power in my soul. The terrible hunger and thirst was satisfied at last and all I could do was praise God.

The response of my wife was different. The devil kept telling her that her experience was purely emotional. Next morning she went over to the church to pray. Then, it was as though the Lord plainly said, "Child of mine, I love you."

Immediately she came home to tell me, but somehow she still did not have the peace of mind and heart she desired. So we knelt down to pray, and it was then the full impact of what the Lord had told her broke over her soul. The joy of the Lord filled her heart and she began to worship the Lord. All doubts, fears and discouragement disappeared, and in its place a rest, such as she had never known before flooded her soul. The joy we shared together is unsurpassable.

The next night we shared what God had done for us with our Sunday-school superintendent. She replied simply, "This is what we all need."

Since then many in our fellowship have entered into this relationship with the Holy Spirit. The whole life of our church has been altered. Meanwhile of course, the Holy Spirit has changed my life in many ways.

I now have a rest of soul I never had known before. "There is a rest for the people of God."

I preach with more freedom—and the Lord has used the messages more effectively than ever before.

The Bible is real, interesting, alive. It opens up to me with new and refreshing meaning.

Discouragement is not unknown, but I can say it does not upset me, as it once did. There is a trust and faith in God's word that gives comfort and boldness.

It is so easy to witness to my faith in Christ now. Before, I witnessed with a feeling it was my duty. Now I want to.

Before, preaching was drudgery because there was no power to get it done with. But now the Holy Spirit does it through me, and I eagerly look forward to each opportunity.

There is great satisfaction in my daily Christian life. Before I received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, I had to rely on past experiences to keep me going. Not so now; he lives within with evidence each day.

As I look back over the year since the Holy Spirit first spoke to our hearts I am amazed at what he has done.

We pray for the sick, and they are healed.

.....  
Meanwhile, our Bible study has doubled in attendance. Prayer meetings have started again, and God has proved himself in many ways through the gifts of the Spirit manifested in our prayer meetings.

The Lord gave us prophecy concerning one of our couples in the church, "That if repentance for sin was not made, sudden destruction would be upon them." Repentance was made! The wife was healed and filled with the Spirit and the young husband has returned to the Lord.

When another couple was filled with the Spirit, the Lord gave a promise through interpretation that their children would be brought to the Lord. Both now have returned to the Lord.

Moreover, as the Holy Spirit works in our church others are being converted to Christ. For this we praise God.

.....  
Praying in the Spirit gives me real peace, power, rest, comfort, courage, love. It edifies and lifts, upbuilds, strengthens and is evidence that the Spirit is within me. The Bible says, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" (I Cor. 14:4). Our spiritual faculties are greatly built up and strengthened, "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (I Cor. 14:14, 15).

Speaking to God in a language that only the Holy Spirit can direct is a wonderful privilege. Our spirit understands and rejoices in the heavenly communion and praise. And when the Holy Spirit is guiding us in what to pray, no selfishness can enter in. The Holy Spirit knows what to pray for and how; many times we do not. It is a time of refreshing and rest to the Spirit-filled Christian (Is. 28: 11-12).

.....

It is a joy just to sit at the feet of Jesus and let him teach us day by day. . . .

I believe the Holy Spirit is moving over this earth one more time preparing the Christians for the Lamb's return. He is finding the hungry hearts in all denominations and sending them forth as human dynamos, filled with the Holy Spirit to win the lost. I believe this is for every Christian who will receive.

("This Is What Happened When the Holy Spirit Came to a Methodist Church," Marvin Buck; *Christian Life*, 23 (1962) pp. 34-36.)

This testimony is typical in many respects; in the experiences related, in the vocabulary employed, in the understanding of Scripture reflected, in the implied doctrines of salvation, the church, and the last things. Here is neo-Pentecostalism in a nutshell.

### III. WHY DOES NEO-PENTECOSTALISM SEEM TO HAVE WIDESPREAD APPEAL TO MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH?

Our investigations which were designed to provide an answer to the question which constitutes the title of this section of our report focused on two areas: A. the statements of Christian Reformed Church members who participate in the neo-Pentecostal "movement"; and B. the contemporary cultural context in North America.

#### A. Statements of Christian Reformed people who participate in the neo-Pentecostal "Movement"

1. The materials we used in this investigation were solicited and unsolicited letters sent to the committee, interviews, published articles, papers submitted to the committee, and classical reports. We present a miscellany of comments gleaned from these sources. Although these comments are by no means exhaustive of the materials available to us, they do represent the spectrum of Christian Reformed neo-Pentecostals' testimonies concerning the reasons why they have been attracted to neo-Pentecostalism.

a. "The church is too overly protective of tradition, concerned with worshiping in dogmatic, theologically correct truth, forgetting we must worship in Spirit also."

b. "Some churches have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof."

c. "We were sick and tired of our weak and ineffective lives. We showed so little power and grace. At first it almost seemed as if the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was passing by the Christian Reformed Church. A church can block the Holy Spirit."

d. "We gloried in our heritage, not in our Lord."

e. "There is so much noise but so little love, and people were sick of controversy."

f. "People were tired of hearing the same clichés Sunday after Sunday. What they heard had not really changed their lives much. We had somehow lost touch with a personal Savior. People couldn't notice that we had been with Jesus."

g. "People want the peace that comes from being peacemakers. Christ is being exalted now and praised as never before. We were meant to be a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled witnessing church. Then people began to gather in prayer. The Lord heard and answered. Then the Holy Spirit began to grace our people with his filling. What could not our whole wonderful Christian Reformed Church do if it had the infilling of the Holy Spirit!"

h. "Neo-Pentecostalism among Christian Reformed believers is appealing. It indicates there is still life, and shows that we are still reforming while being Reformed. If our denomination had become immune to appeals like this, it would be on its death bed."

i. "Distinctions of higher clergy and lower lay people are present. These are not based on the Spirit of God, but are based on education and synodical approval."

j. "There is a lack of originality, internal leadership and vision. There is a form of isolationism, yet we try to progress by importing. We have an inferiority complex stretching across the Atlantic Ocean to the Netherlands. We need to be involved in the here-and-now contemporary scene; we need sharing and group prayer; we need the guitar. We need to test these things, not detest them because of their novelty. We are witnessing an exodus of membership because of our intolerance, our complacency, our lack of enthusiasm, our lack of Christian love and fellowship. Youth wants a triumphant sense of the victory that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. What is happening in neo-Pentecostalism is the Lord's doing, which is marvelous in our eyes."

k. "There is so much opposition to what is simply an outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

2. We are able to make some observations and generalizations on the basis of this data.

a. The neo-Pentecostals with whom we became acquainted do not reject the Christian Reformed Church. They rather constitute a "loyal opposition" in the Christian Reformed Church. They love the church. They were saved in the church through the ministry of the church. They, however, wish the church to embody more concretely and visibly the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their negative critique of the church is designed to spur the church to reform and revival. They have not abandoned the church and have no intention of doing so in the future. (Cf. g. and h.)

b. The neo-Pentecostals with whom we became acquainted admitted to a deficiency in their pre-neo-Pentecostal Christian faith and life: the lack, in part or in whole, of an experiential embodiment and validation of the doctrinal articulation which the church proclaims as the structure of the gospel and which the members of the church appropriate to themselves. Without exception our respondents indicated that the Christian Reformed Church has not placed enough emphasis upon the experience of a personal relation to God the Father, Jesus the Savior and the Holy Spirit. For our respondents, the individual's experience is the/an important norm for valid, authentic Christian faith. (Cf. f., g. and j.) They found experience emphasized among the neo-Pentecostals and were

attracted by this emphasis. Their experience of God the Spirit provided them with new confidence and joy in Christ, a confidence and joy greater than they had known previously.

We wish to emphasize that the neo-Pentecostals' certainty of salvation and joy in Christ depend heavily upon their personal, individual experience. Experience, however, needs interpretation. What is the content of this experience? Is this experience really an experience of the Holy Spirit's active presence? The objective sign which validates the experience as a real experience of the Holy Spirit's active presence is often the spectacular, extraordinary phenomena: e.g., "speaking in tongues," "divine healing," "prophecy," etc. According to I Corinthians 12, Mark 16, etc., these phenomena are gifts of the Holy Spirit which makes his active presence visible. The presence of these phenomena, consequently, validate the interpretation of the personal, individual experience as a real, authentic experience of the Holy Spirit. (We have dealt with this matter at some length in the section of our Report entitled "Hermeneutic, Individualism, and Extra-Ecclesial Koinonia." Cf. Section VIII.)

c. The neo-Pentecostals with whom we became acquainted dissociate, at least in degree, "doctrine" and "life" (experience). This dissociation they express in a depreciation of reasoned constructions of the content of the gospel in particular, and in a downgrading of the educational requirements for the ministry. (Cf. a, b, d, f and i.) These tendencies they share with many neo-Pentecostals associated with other confessional traditions.

d. The neo-Pentecostals with whom we became acquainted spoke of the church as an objective (third-person) entity of which they were a part, but from which they feel to a degree alienated—at least from the church as an institution, an organization, a structure. They both love the church and simultaneously feel themselves alienated from her. The church conceived of as a community of believers like themselves they participate in willingly. (Cf. a, e, i and j.) But it is at the feet of the church as an organization, an institution with a structured communal life, that they lay the responsibility for their old experiential deficiencies. This dissociation of the church and the individual Christian was not unique to the "laymen"; it was expressed by the clergy as well. This suspicion of and alienation from the church in her institutional, organizational and structural dimension is common among neo-Pentecostals in all ecclesiastical traditions.

e. The neo-Pentecostals with whom we became acquainted conceived of the gospel as concerned primarily with the salvation of the individual from sin, and with the individual's life of personal piety. They evidenced little interest in and concern for the cosmic scope of God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ and the related work of the Holy Spirit. Among our respondents the gospel virtually begins and ends with the individual. They evidenced little appreciation for or sensitivity to the significance of God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ for societal structures. None of our respondents indicated any awareness of the "Kingdom" dimension of the gospel. Their societal interest was confined to fellowship among

the like-minded and a soteriologically oriented concern for the non-Christian.

f. The neo-Pentecostals with whom we became acquainted emphasize the importance of spontaneity. The spontaneous, unplanned response of the moment to the circumstances of the moment seems more easily accepted as the work of the Holy Spirit than does the carefully planned, articulated and initiated response of an established ecclesiastical community functioning within and through its established offices and structures.

This analysis of the neo-Pentecostals among us focuses upon but one aspect of the matter—their experiences, tendencies, feelings, and attitudes. But it must not be overlooked that there is heard in their statements a persistent and many-faceted critique of the Christian Reformed Church as they have experienced it concretely in their lives. They tell us that the Christian Reformed Church has gloried too much in her own peculiar heritage and has been overly protective of her traditions. She has manifested an isolationist stance over against the American Christian community, and at the same time an excessive dependence on the Reformed community in the Netherlands, as if all that is good and Christian comes only from the Reformed community of the land from which we sprang. Intolerance and complacency have marked our attitude toward the Christian communions around us.

In her worship the Christian Reformed Church has been excessively concerned with right doctrine, while neglecting "worship in Spirit." Worshipers have been bombarded Sunday after Sunday with tired clichés (one of the curses of mere traditionalism), rather than confronted with the living Jesus. There has been controversy instead of love, bickering instead of fellowship, praise and witnessing. A premium has been placed on education as preparation for the ministry rather than on evidences of the Spirit, and those so prepared have been elevated to the status of "clergy" to the devaluation of the "laity."

These criticisms are hardly estimations produced by the cool eye of sympathetic but disinterested observers. They are rather the complaints of disaffected sons and daughters of the church, whose personal experiences have caused them to feel cheated by mother church out of the full inheritance of the gospel. That is not to say, however, that these criticisms are to be lightly dismissed. They touch too surely on festering sores long complained of. However jaundiced the eye of the disaffected may be, and however distorted we may judge their present perceptions of themselves and of the church to be, it would be unwarranted for the church to hear their complaints with pained innocence. In the long history of the Christian church most outbreaks of sectarian-like movements have been occasioned in part by deficiencies in the church. We may not easily suppose that present events constitute an exception. The criticisms of our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters call us to repentance and renewal, to a renewed "concern for a rich spiritual life of the church as a whole, and of all its members" ("A Word to the Churches," *Classis Victoria*). Where the church has not been a source of spiritual aid and enrichment to all its members, where it has failed to manifest

richly the fruit and gifts of the Spirit, where it like the believers in Corinth lives too much like "men of flesh" rather than like "men of the Spirit," it must be called anew to the riches of Christ and to a "walk" that is "by the Spirit."

Although we recognize that there is some validity to the neo-Pentecostals' critique of the "established" church, we do wish to point out that the "established" church has not been insensitive to the problems which the neo-Pentecostals describe. The church, we must remember, consists of people who, like the neo-Pentecostals, are part of and influenced by the contemporary North American cultural context. This church has evidenced sensitivity to the problems described by the neo-Pentecostals in some congregations and in some geographical areas in the following phenomena: the organization of small-group meetings for prayer and/or Bible study; greater informality in worship services, greater congregational participation in worship, an emphasis on response or involvement in the religious education program and the attempt to structure mission into the "routine life" of the entire congregation. If these attempts are to be useful vehicles of the Spirit of God, they must enlist the cooperation of the *total* church. When these attempts are not useful or are inadequate, the church must be flexible enough to introduce modifications and changes in the life of faith which will enable the church to serve as the agent of God in the contemporary witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### B. The Contemporary Cultural Context in North America

The rise and spread of neo-Pentecostalism among members of the Christian Reformed Church is not an isolated phenomenon. Since 1960 neo-Pentecostalism has been visible in all of the established, so-called "mainline" denominations of Protestantism: e.g., The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church in America. Neo-Pentecostals are numerous, also, in the Roman Catholic Church. Both clergy and laity are found among the neo-Pentecostals. Furthermore, college, university and seminary professors, university graduates from a diversity of professions and skilled craftsmen are found among the neo-Pentecostals. The neo-Pentecostal phenomenon is, we conclude, a factor which is rooted firmly in the contemporary religious situation in North America.

Change, development and movement do not originate in a vacuum. The neo-Pentecostal phenomenon is an integral factor in the cultural context of contemporary North America. During the last two decades the rate of cultural change has accelerated rapidly. Increased social mobility has strained the fabric of both the extended and the nuclear family virtually to the breaking point. Advances in communication have reduced "distance" so that the entire world is present in one's living-room, and everyone has relatively easy access to places which a few decades ago were shrouded in romantic mystery. The world has become a global village. The average family moves to a different geographical location with some frequency. Changes in neighborhoods, schools, churches and friendships accompany these geographical moves. A degree of rootlessness results.

North American society, moreover, has become oriented increasingly to a consumer economy which has prospered fantastically as North America satisfied the consumer needs of the world. Increased productivity and planned obsolescence have been said to be the answers to all the ills of the consumer-oriented economy. The threat to society which was posed by the "nuclear age" stimulated an educational boom. Colleges and universities swarmed with a clientele which was equipped to develop and man increasingly sophisticated gadgetry designed to increase the productivity of our economic colossus.

But the higher standard of living generated by this economic evolution had a price tag attached to it. Many were excluded from gainful employment because they lacked the necessary sophisticated skills; consequently the distance between economic and social classes widened. Increasingly the technological society exercised a depersonalizing effect on its members. Its promise of increased stability and comfort also aborted. Technology's energies seem to be devoted to war. Technology's terrible by-product is ecological crisis. Population control is considered necessary as a result of greater longevity and lowered mortality rates due to the success of medical research. And technological effort to control population seems to have spawned a deteriorating sexual morality.

Increasingly North American people have become suspicious of the educated elite. Their activities in the sciences and in the humanities are viewed as much as threats to our culture as they are as assets. "Credibility gap" is a term frequently used relative to both the huckstering of the advertising industry and the pronouncements of the politicians. The proclamation of the gospel by a theologically trained ministry is not immune to this same suspicion of words. Leadership by intellectuals is scorned. Their "theory" appears impractical and consequently valueless; they, too, are but architects (and victims) of the whole culture, which seems to be disintegrating under our eyes. Moreover, science and technology have increasingly been drawn into the orbit of political and commercial concerns and so have served, even encouraged, the militarization of our culture and the mad materialism of our society. A vaunted intellectualism has prostituted humanity and left our culture bankrupt.

Every "solution" to our problems seems only to have spawned new problems more serious and threatening than those they were conceived to solve. Hope in man's ability to solve his problems is therefore abandoned. Unless there is an irruption into his world from outside the world—from God—there will be no aid or succor for man. And since the necessary irruption from the "other" world must introduce into history extraordinary phenomena of cataclysmic proportions to provide relief for man, ordinary descriptive language does not serve as an adequate vehicle for bearing witness to it. Resort must be made to metaphorical language, to imaginative language, for the purpose of pointing to the irruption which is viewed as imminent. The one who points to the coming irruption, moreover, does so, not as an uninvolved spectator, but as a participant in that to which he points. What we are here describing has sometimes been apocalypticism. Its perspective and language are analogous to that of Daniel 7-12 and the Revelation (Apocalypse) of St. John.

In this maelstrom of change and uncertainty, the *present moment* has taken on a significance which it did not have in previous ages. There may be no future! A general malaise clouds the continent. If we cannot think our way out of the crises in which we find ourselves, let us at least enjoy the present moment. And if none of our institutions and organizations seem capable of solving our problems, let us ignore or destroy them and begin once more from the bottom. *This moment* is the crucial one. How can we enjoy this moment? We can use drugs which will expand our consciousness so that we can pack the maximum of experience into this moment. We can turn inward to explore and exploit the possibilities of the subjective realm of "spirit."

The result is visible in the contemporary musical idioms, the "dance patterns," in communes, in the fad of eastern religions, the occult, Satan worship and witchcraft—and in the "Jesus-people." These are all attempts to have a positive, satisfying, self-conscious experience of one's self in this moment. The individual who is threatened on all sides by a complex world with which he cannot cope, which threatens to overwhelm him, which he feels powerless to influence can attempt to establish a workable area with which he can come to terms—the area of his own private, unfettered self. He may not understand his own self, but he can experience his own self. (The evidence at the end of 1972 suggests that even these attempts to achieve and live a "meaningful" life are proving unsuccessful.)

We summarize our analysis of the contemporary North American cultural context in which neo-Pentecostalism has emerged—a context in which cultural change is rapid:

1. Reason is distrusted; spontaneous (or stimulated) private (or group) experience is emphasized.
2. The sciences and technology have not enabled us to solve our problems; they have intensified old problems and created new ones. They have prostituted humanity. Consequently, both science and technology are viewed with caution if not distrust.
3. In the technological society, man has become depersonalized.
4. Education is distrusted and anti-intellectualism flourishes in a society that had developed great expectations based on education.
5. There is a strong emphasis on the present moment and on the self-conscious experience of the self both as a physical and as a spiritual being.

We suggest that this cultural contest can neither be ignored nor minimized when one attempts to account for the emergence and widespread expression of neo-Pentecostalism among members of the Christian Reformed Church. We recognize and respect their own account of why they were attracted to neo-Pentecostalism. We find, however, that the contemporary cultural context of North America constitutes at least a substratum that is congenial to the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism and that influences the contours and character of neo-Pentecostalism.

This analysis of the contemporary North American cultural context does not warrant our understanding neo-Pentecostalism as a mere "religious" veneer over a "secular" phenomenon and consequently to dismiss

it. We recognize, believe and confess that the Lordship of Jesus is exercised continually over the creation, and that the Spirit of God operates in and through all the phenomena of the day. To limit the sphere of the Lordship of Jesus and the activity of the Spirit is to repudiate the plain teaching of the Bible in passages such as Colossians 1:15-20 and John 1:1-18, and to contradict Lord's Day X of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. We do suggest, however, that all our institutions, rational formulations and religious experiences are culturally conditioned. We may neither ignore nor minimize the cultural conditioning of neo-Pentecostalism as we seek to come to terms with the present context of the Christian Reformed Church.

We suggest that the contemporary rediscovery of the apocalyptic dimension of the New Testament and the significance of the apocalyptic dimension in the New Testament church is no accident. We live in an age which is congenial to the apocalyptic perspective. Neo-Pentecostalism is stimulated by and thrives in an apocalyptic context. The individualism of neo-Pentecostalism, its emphasis upon the spontaneity of Christian faith and life, and upon the experiential dimension of truth, its virtual abandonment of the "Kingdom" concept and its emphasis upon God's irruption into the contemporary world through spectacular phenomena such as the gifts of the Spirit are comprehensible in a movement which has emerged out of the apocalyptic context of contemporary North American culture.

#### IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SCRIPTURE AND IN OUR REFORMED CONFESSIONS

##### A. The Holy Spirit in Scripture.

Any unprejudiced evaluation of neo-Pentecostalism must begin with the acknowledgment that two of its main emphases, viz., (1) that salvation must be a profound and transforming *experience* in addition to a confession of a body of doctrine, and (2) the importance of the Holy Spirit in applying salvation to sinners, are in accord with the Scriptures.

That to which men are called and invited by the gospel is not the mere acceptance of certain propositions about the nature of God, man, the world, right religion and true ethical principles, together with a disciplined and rational ordering of life in accord with those truths and principles. On the contrary, it is: "godly grief" for sin (II Cor. 7:9-10); the "knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (II Peter 1:2-3, 8; 2:20; 3:18; II Cor. 4:6; Phil. 3:8; John 17:3); "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1, 11; 8:6; 14:17; 15:13); "joy" (Rom. 5:2-3, 11; 12:12; 15:13; 11 Cor. 6:10; 7:4; Phil. 3:1; 4:4); and the familiar trio: "faith, hope and love" (I Cor. 13:13; etc.). These are surely all *experiences* (or involve experience). And when Paul speaks of "God's love having been poured into our hearts" (Rom. 5:5), of being "controlled by the love of Christ" (II Cor. 5:14), of being "set free from sin and becoming slaves of God" (Rom. 6:22), of being "transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2), of being "made alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13), of "old things" passing away and all things becoming "new" (II Cor. 5:17), of being "comforted in all our afflictions" (II

Cor. 1:4; etc.), of receiving the Holy Spirit as the "guarantee" of our salvation (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) by whom we are "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30; 1:13; II Cor. 1:22) and through whom we call God "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), he is surely speaking of matters that have a profoundly experiential dimension.

Similarly, when neo-Pentecostals ascribe the experiences accompanying salvation to the work of the Holy Spirit, they are echoing biblical teaching.

As early as Psalm 51 we hear the godly man praying:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence,  
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit (vss. 10-12).

Isaiah declared that Israel's persistent rebelliousness against God "grieved his holy Spirit" (Is. 63:10). Nehemiah confessed that God gave Israel "his good Spirit to instruct them" in the wilderness (Neh. 9:20). And when the prophets announced God's great new saving action which was to come, they frequently spoke of what God's Spirit would do in the hearts of his people: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring" (Is. 44:3; cf. 32:15). In Isaiah 59 the Lord declares, "And he will come to Zion as a Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression" (vs. 20). To that he adds: "And as for me, this is my covenant with them . . . : my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children . . . from this time forth and for ever more" (vs. 21; cf. also Ez. 39:29).

Here the future work of the Spirit is associated with God's enduring covenant with Israel; and through Jeremiah the Lord announced that "the days are coming . . . when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband . . . . But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days . . . : I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, . . . ; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34). "And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me" (Jer. 32:40; cf. Ez. 37:26; 39:29).

Joel also speaks of the future outpouring of the Spirit on the whole community of God's people "before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Joel 2:31): "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall

prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young man shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29).

(Note: When Isaiah writes, "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people" (28:11—King James Version), he is not writing of the future work of the Holy Spirit, or of speaking in "tongues." He is rather announcing the coming exile of Israel by a people that speaks a different language from that spoken by the Israelites. Cf. Is. 33:19 and Deut. 28:49f; Jer. 5:15; and also Ezek. 3:5f.)

These Old Testament references to and prophecies concerning the coming work of the Holy Spirit in salvation provide the background for John the Baptist's witness to Jesus that he would "baptize with the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). (The additional phrase "and with fire," found in Matthew and Luke, refers most probably to the judgment-character of Messiah's work, cf. Luke 3:9, 17.) John's witness implies that this "baptism" will effect an abiding transformation in the lives of all of Christ's disciples, a transformation to which his own baptism already pointed. In fact, Old Testament prophecy, including that of John the Baptist who as the last "Elijah" completed and focused it, announced the outpouring of the Spirit of God on all God's people as the final saving action of God to empower and equip them for obedient and triumphant service in the world.

According to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), Jesus not only commanded the apostles to baptize disciples into "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19), but also declared that the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask him more readily than an earthly father gives good gifts to his children (Luke 11:13). And he promised that when they are brought to trial before synagogue councils or governors and kings, the Holy Spirit will guide them in what they are to say (Matt. 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12).

In John's Gospel Jesus speaks more frequently and fully of the Spirit's activity in salvation. He is the agent of the disciples' "birth" into the Kingdom of God (3:5). Although he was not to be "given" until after Jesus' death and resurrection, subsequent to these central redemptive events *all* "believers" will receive him; and he will both satisfy their "thirst" and become a spring within them from which "shall flow rivers of living water" (7:37-39; cf. 16:7). After Jesus' departure, he will be given as the "other Counselor" to "be with" and "in" the disciples as "the Spirit of truth" (14:16-17), who "will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (vs. 26). He will "bear witness" of Christ (15:26), and will "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (16:8). He will "guide you into all the truth, . . . and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (vss. 13-14). No mention is made of "speaking in tongues" or of "gifts of the Spirit," but it is evident that the Holy Spirit will have the

central place in completing Christ's saving work in and through his disciples.

The Book of Acts speaks so frequently of the activity of the Holy Spirit that it has often been suggested that it might well be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." Here is testimony concerning fulfillment of the prophesy given by John the Baptist (renewed by Jesus just before his ascension: Acts 1:5; cf. 11:16) that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Frequently recurring expressions are: "full of the Holy Spirit" and "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9—reminiscent of Luke's testimony concerning John the Baptist, Luke 1:15; Elizabeth, vs. 41; and Zacharias, vs. 67; and of that recurring expression in the Old Testament: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon . . ." Num. 24:2; Judges 3:10; 14:6; 15:14; I Sam. 16:13; etc.).

Fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophecy takes place on Pentecost (Acts 2), and whenever the Spirit "falls" on Christian believers (Acts 11:15-17). With it the disciples "receive power" and become the "witnesses" of Christ in the world (Acts 1:8). As the result of it the quality of life of the emerging Christian community is transformed; it becomes characterized by boldness in witnessing, joy and gladness, praise, and self-giving acts of love (Acts 2:42-47; etc.).

Moreover, the Holy Spirit becomes the guiding and controlling factor in the spreading of the early Christian mission. Philip is instructed by the Spirit to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch (8:29), and subsequently is removed to other spheres of activity (vs. 39). Peter is directed by the Spirit to go to the home of the Gentile Cornelius, a centurion at Caesarea (10:19; 11:12.) The Spirit instructs the church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Saul on a mission to Asia Minor (13:2-4). And Paul and his co-workers are guided by the Spirit to move beyond Asia Minor into the continent of Europe (16:6-10).

The Book of Acts does not give much light on how the Spirit's guidance was received in these matters. It may have been in ways similar to the Spirit's directing of the Old Testament prophets. In any event, Acts bears witness to certain "prophets," alongside of apostles and teachers (Acts 13:1; cpr. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 2:20; 4:11). These seem to have engaged in foretelling (e.g., Agabus: Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11) as well as proclamation (Acts 15:32; 19:6; 21:9).

Some matters worthy of special note are:

1. The gift and the subsequent working of the Holy Spirit in the believing community is the continuation of the earthly ministry of Christ, who from his exalted place at God's right hand baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not come or work independently; Christ the Lord gives the Spirit and works through him.

2. Peter proclaimed on Pentecost that the promise of the Spirit is to *all* who repent and are baptized into the name of Jesus Christ (2:38), and subsequently in Acts those who believe and are baptized do receive the Holy Spirit.

3. Mention is made of speaking in tongues on only three occasions: (a) the 120 on Pentecost Day (2:4-12) — the account is subject to

varying interpretations —; (b) the conversion of Cornelius, the Gentile (12:46); and (c) Paul's baptism of the first disciples in Ephesus (19:6) —which suggests that the phenomenon was reserved for special occasions in the advancing mission of the church.

4. A certain obscurity remains as to when the Spirit was received by the new members of the believing community. No explicit mention is made of the Spirit coming on the converts baptized on Pentecost. Cornelius and his household received the Spirit before they were baptized (10:44-48). The Samaritan converts were baptized by Philip, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem and "laid their hands on them" (8:12-17). The disciples at Ephesus received the Spirit at the time they were baptized by Paul "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (19:6). Hence, in Acts there is no consistent pattern to the sequence: conversion, water baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the receiving of the Holy Spirit is always associated with baptism into the name of Jesus Christ.

5. The Holy Spirit is always *gift*, and subsequent to Pentecost there is no "waiting" for the Spirit; the gift accompanies the initiation into the believing community. (The Samaritan episode is clearly atypical; the delay of the gift of the Spirit there had to do with the unfolding of the divine program of world evangelism, not with the spiritual state of the Samaritan believers. Cf. Section V, below.)

6. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not presented as a secret that needs to be taught those in whom the Spirit dwells. Not only were there (sometimes at least) immediate signs of the Spirit's presence, but he effected such transformation of lives that others were provoked to imitation (Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1ff.). Furthermore, the assumption in Paul's question to the "disciples" in Ephesus is altogether clear: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). The Spirit's presence, Paul knew, was unmistakably experienced—experienced as the presence of God's power.

In the Gospels and Acts, from the testimony of John the Baptist to the Pentecost event with its subsequent effects on the life and spreading mission of the Church, the gift of the Holy Spirit is proclaimed as the great enabling act of God in Christ by which weak and sinful men became the redeemed community and the sanctified and powerful agents of Christ's mission in the world.

In the epistles, it is Paul who speaks most fully of the role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. Paul's apostolic ministry was itself performed in the Holy Spirit. His gospel came to the Thessalonians "not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction" (I Thess. 1:5); his preaching at Corinth was not done in his own strength, but "in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (I Cor. 2:4; cf. Rom. 15:16); the "wisdom of God" which he proclaimed had been "revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (I Cor. 2:10). As Christ's co-worker and God's minister he labored among the Corinthians "in the Holy Spirit" (II Cor. 6:6), so that the Corinthian church was as it were "a letter from Christ . . . ,

written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God" (II Cor. 3: 2-3). To Paul was "revealed . . . by the Spirit" the "mystery of Christ" that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs with the Jews, fellow-members with them of the body, fellow-partakers with them of the promises (Eph. 3: 4-6); by the Spirit he knew that "in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). It was by the Spirit that he was able to counsel the churches (I Cor. 7:40); and he called the "word of God" which he proclaimed "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17).

But Paul also had much to say about the Spirit's relationship to and activity within the believing community. God "sent forth" the Spirit ("the Spirit of our God": Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 3:16; 6:11; 7:40; and "the Spirit of his Son": Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6) into the hearts of believers "crying, Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6); "in Christ" they have their "access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). In Christ Jesus as the cornerstone believers are "built into a holy temple for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). Because they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God they are severally "temples of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19), and the church is "a temple of God" (I Cor. 3:16).

Believers receive the Spirit, not "by the works of the law," but by "hearing with faith" (Gal. 3:2). The indwelling Spirit is the "guarantee" of their inheritance (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) so that by the Spirit they are "sealed" unto their full salvation (II Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30), having already now "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23). They are "born according to the Spirit" (Gal. 4:29), "sanctified" by the Spirit (II Thess. 2:13; I Cor. 6:11) and "strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). Their hearts are flooded by the love of God through the Spirit (Rom. 5:5); they experience joy in the Spirit (Rom. 14:17; I Thess. 1:6), are raised from the dead by the Spirit (Rom. 8:11), possess "the mind of Christ" by the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14-16), have faith in Christ Jesus "through the Spirit," and in that Spirit-given faith "wait for the hope of righteousness" and walk in love (Gal. 5:5-6, cf. Rom. 15:13). They "worship by the Spirit" (Phil. 3:3), "live by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25), confess "Jesus is Lord" by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3), and "receive the gifts of the Spirit of God" by the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14). By the Spirit they "understand the gifts bestowed on us by God" (I Cor. 2:12), and they have the Spirit as a helper in their "weakness" in prayer in that "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26).

He who does not have "the Spirit of Christ" does not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9); but "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). They are "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9), "live according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5), "walk . . . according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4), and "have the mind of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5-6). The Spirit is for them "life and peace" (Rom. 8:6, cf. vss. 2, 10, 11, 13; Gal. 6:8), and "bears witness with their spirit that they are children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17). Living by the Spirit, they "put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13) and are enabled to fulfill "the just requirement of the law" (Rom.

8:4), having been liberated from "the law of sin and death" by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). The liberation that the law could not effect because of the "weakness of the flesh" is effected in them by the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4) so that now "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor. 3:17). Those who "walk by the Spirit . . . do not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16), and those who "are led by the Spirit . . . are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18).

In the teaching of Paul, all that the believer is as a new man in Christ, all that he experiences as a redeemed man in Christ, all that he does in his new life in Christ—all is to be ascribed to the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul can even speak of the indwelling Spirit as the supreme gift of God in Christ, as the sum of our salvation: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us . . . that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13f).

And in the epistles also, this reality of the indwelling Spirit is not a "mystery" that Paul must proclaim to an unknowing, unaware people. It is rather an experienced reality that must be understood in the context of the Gospel: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" (Gal. 3:2). That is why Paul can say, "You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it . . ." (Eph. 1:13f; cf. 4:30; II Cor. 1:22; 5:5). It is the Spirit who causes us to recognize God as "Abba! Father!" who "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:15f).

The indwelling Spirit is power (I Cor. 2:4; 4:20; Eph. 3:16), life (Rom. 8:2; 13; II Cor. 3:6), leading (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), witnessing (Rom. 8:16), knowledge (I Cor. 2:11ff), teaching (I Cor. 2:13), birth (Gal. 4:28), "pouring into our hearts" the love of God (Rom. 5:5), freedom from bondage to "the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16), etc. All these imply profound experience. The believer may need instruction regarding the role and work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation he has in Christ, but that instruction pertains to a work of the Spirit deeply experienced (although not necessarily as an ecstasy) and radical in its effect. Salvation is anchored in the objective work of Christ through whom we have the Spirit, but the Spirit actualizes that salvation in the lives and experiences of the redeemed. Where the experience of the Spirit's work is yet absent, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has not yet come to fruition.

### The "Gifts" of the Spirit

But Paul has some specific matters to say concerning the work of the Spirit which need further attention. He speaks of *pneumatikoi*, *charismata*, *charēs*, *dorea*, and *karpos*—all of which he ascribes to the Holy Spirit.

*Pneumatikoi* (usually translated "spiritual gifts": the word is an adjective, but is used absolutely in I Cor. 12:1 and 14:1—once it is used absolutely to refer to all the redemptive benefits that flow to the Gentiles through the gospel, Rom. 15:27) are certain abilities or powers which the Spirit bestows on individual believers. Hence, Paul also calls them

"manifestations of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12:7). In I Corinthians 12 the apostle mentions the following: utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, various kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues (vss. 8-10). Later in the same chapter he speaks of apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues (vs. 28).

*Charismata* (usually translated either "gifts" or "free gifts": the word is sometimes used to refer to the whole of salvation as God's free gift, for example: Romans 5:15-16; 6:23), like the *pneumatikoi*, are abilities or powers which the Holy Spirit effects in individual believers. In I Corinthians 12 the word is used interchangeably with *pneumatikoi* (vss. 4, 9, 28, 30, 31). Elsewhere Paul says that the Corinthians "were enriched in him [Christ] with all speech and all knowledge . . .; so that you are not lacking in any *charisma*" (I Cor. 1:5-7). Regarding celebrity he says: "Each has his own *charisma* from God, one of one kind and one of another" (I Cor. 7:7). Twice he writes to Timothy about "the *charisma* of God" that was "in" him; both are exhortations: (1) "Do not neglect the *charisma* you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you" (I Tim. 4:14); and (2) "Hence I remind you to rekindle the *charisma* of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (II Tim. 1:6). Apparently, in these two instances the *charisma* of God is the power to minister in the gospel, for in the second instance Paul continues: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (vs. 7). Thus the references in Paul's letters to Timothy are similar to that which appears in Romans 12:6, where he writes: "Having *charismata* that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion of our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." This passage in turn has links with I Corinthians 12, especially verses 28-30 (see above).

When Paul speaks of *charis* (usually translated "grace") in contexts relevant to the present subject, he refers to special capacities, abilities, or ministries possessed by individual believers or churches through the gracious working of God. Paul himself was given the "grace" of apostleship (Rom. 1:5), and more particularly, the grace "to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8; cf. vss. 2-7; Gal. 2:7-9). Again and again he appeals to this "grace" as the grounds of his apostolic authority in the gospel (Rom. 1:5; 12:3; 15:15; I Cor. 3:10; Eph. 3:2). But the "graces" differ from individual to individual: "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:7, 11).

Finally, Paul speaks also of "the *karpōs* (fruit) of the Spirit." This he says is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). These are contrasted with "the works of the flesh" (vs. 19), and Paul says of them, with a touch of irony, "Against such there is no law" (vs. 23). His next words make clear how he relates the work of the Spirit to the believer's relationship to Christ:

"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (vs. 24, cpr. Rom. 8). And he adds: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (vs. 25).

From the above it is clear that Paul's language, when speaking of the various workings of the Spirit in the lives of believers, is occasional. The words he employs fall short of being *termini technici*. He is concerned only to impress on his readers that the various workings of the Spirit in the lives of believers are of the nature of gifts freely, graciously, and sovereignly bestowed by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The several words employed do not in general designate distinctive categories of "gifts" (to use the most general term).

One distinction appears warranted, however. When Paul speaks of "the fruit (*karpos*) of the Spirit" he lists those things that the Spirit works in all those who are "of Christ," in all who have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:22-24). But when he speaks of *pneumatikoi*, *charismata*, *charis* and *dorea* he consistently speaks of those workings of the Spirit which differ from individual to individual, either in kind or in degree. Here he has in mind those "gifts" of the Spirit which some believers receive, but not all—"one after this manner, and another after that."

Because of the importance to the issues that have occasioned the present study, these matters call for further elucidation. The most relevant passages are Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:1-16, and I Corinthians 12-14.

It is significant that in all three passages Paul speaks after-the-fact concerning the several *charismata* mentioned. That is to say, he does not lay it down as a rule, or as a promise, that the continuing presence of these very same *charismata* would characterize the whole New Testament era. He rather takes note of the fact that these (and perhaps others not mentioned) were present in the believing community of his day, and he seeks to guide the church how it ought to come to terms with them in all their diversity. *Hence no sure conclusion can be drawn from his words as to the normalcy of the continuance or recurrence of any particular charisma in the church beyond the apostolic era.* The believing community can only be open to the recognition of authentic *charismata* whenever and in whatever form they may appear within the life of the church, learning only from the apostle how to recognize them and how to deal with them when they are present.

It was not so much their presence as their *diversity* that gave rise to problems in the churches in Paul's day and moved him to write of them as he did. In all three instances it is to their diversity that he speaks, and to the potential for pride and disunity inherent in that diversity. (In Corinth this potential was already being realized.)

He reminds his readers that these *charismata*, and their diversity, are of God (Rom. 12:3), in Christ (Eph. 4:7ff), through the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:4ff). Twice he goes to some length to emphasize the unity of their source: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, and the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one" (I Cor. 12:4-6; cf. vss. 8ff). "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one

Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

And they have all been given for the same purpose: "For the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). In all three passages Paul employs centrally his famous metaphor of the "body" (his most characteristic use of it). He reminds his readers that together they are "one body" and mutually dependent on one another, and that the various *charismata*, that are present in the church are for the sake of the well-being and effectiveness of the body.

These *charismata* are all "gifts," gifts of grace in Christ, and not personal achievements. They are "manifestations of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12:7) for the profit and benefit of the whole body (vs. 7; cf. 6:12; 10:23). As such they are peculiar to the believing community and belong to the order of redemption rather than of creation. Or put more precisely, they are powers worked by the Spirit in the redeemed community, rather than (to use Paul's phrase) in men "in the flesh."

The apostle does not distinguish between what we might call the "miraculous" and the "non-miraculous" *charismata*. And as far as the relative value of these several *charismata* is concerned, Paul seems to indicate something of his mind in the order chosen for his several lists:

<i>Ephesians 4</i>	<i>Romans 12:6-8</i>	<i>I Corinthians 12:8-10</i>	<i>I Corinthians 12:28</i>
apostles	prophecy	utterance of wisdom	apostles
prophets	service	utterance of knowledge	prophets
evangelists	teaching	faith	teachers
pastors and	exhorting	gifts of healing	workers of miracles
teachers	contributing	working of miracles	healers
	giving aid	prophecy	helpers
	showing mercy	distinguishing between spirits	administrators
		kinds of tongues	kinds of tongues
		interpretation of tongues	

Of course, we cannot be sure just what considerations controlled the sequence within each of these lists. The ordering may have been quite casual in all instances, or it may have been affected in one or more cases by the particular situation in view at the time of writing. This may be true especially of the list in I Corinthians 12:8-10, since it varies most from the others. Moreover, the other three appear to reflect more closely the Pauline emphases found elsewhere. In any event, Paul values highest those *charismata* most useful for the edification of the church (I Cor. 14), and this is consistent with his insistence that the *charismata* have as their purpose the "upbuilding of the body."

Although there are differences in value, the diversity in itself causes no "schisms" in the body. In fact, it is from the diversity that the body attains its completeness and well-being: "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so

we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:4-5). "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? . . . If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, they are many parts, yet one body" (I Cor. 12:17-20). "From whom [Christ, the head] the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). The various *charismata* (*pneumatikoi*, *charēs*, *dorea*) are distributed by Christ through the Holy Spirit, therefore, not to honor one believer above another, but for the welfare of the whole believing community.

In view of these things, Paul lays down certain instructions and warnings to the churches. To the believers at Rome he sends warning against pride: "For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him" (Rom. 12:3). To the Ephesians he writes: "I . . . beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

To the church at Corinth, where factions of many kinds were rending the fellowship, he had to write more extensively reminding them that "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, 'Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3); that "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (vs. 13); that no believer may depreciate his own or another's *charisma* (vss. 14-30); that without love no *charisma* is of any worth (ch. 13); that each one ought to desire and seek those *charismata* which are most useful for the upbuilding of the body of Christ (ch. 14:1-25); and that the *charismata* are to be used *only for, and in such manner as will best serve, the edification of the church* (ch. 14:20-40).

But now as to the relative value of the *charismata* (*pneumatikoi*, *charēs*, *dorea*) on the one hand and the "fruit (*karpos*) of the Spirit" on the other, there can be no question. The latter ought to be present in ever growing measure in all believers, and the *charismata* are distributed to the several members of Christ's body for the sake of working "the fruit" in all. Moreover, if one has ever so many of the *charismata*, and in whatever measure, but does not have "the fruit," especially love, he is nothing (I Cor. 13). And "the fruit" of the Spirit is not essentially ecstatic, but ethical: not explosive emotional or mystical experience, but: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23)—not that which sets apart from the community but that which serves and unites the community.

In the light of all that Paul has to say about the *charismata*, therefore, it is clear that the apostle recognized that God in Christ had effected in the lives of believers by the Holy Spirit a "third work" (other than conversion and sanctification). He had also given certain "gifts" to members of the believing community. Their purpose is not for the honor

or prestige of the individual receiving them, but for the welfare and growth of "the body of Christ" — "For the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . . in love." They are diverse, but because they are all from the one Spirit, and are all for the sake of the one body, none are to be depreciated. They are to be desired, but not for personal reasons, and those are to be most desired that are most useful for the upbuilding of the church. They are to be exercised, but only for the sake of the body, and in such manner as will best serve the body—only when exercised in love do they fulfill their purpose.

Whether the particular *charismata* mentioned by Paul were only for the apostolic age, or for the whole New Testament era, or for certain occasions within that era, or whether some were to cease while others continue, or whether the *charismata* of Paul's day were to be replaced by others as the needs of the church required—on all these questions Paul is silent. However, his general understanding of the purpose of the *charismata* strongly suggests that the presence of the particular *charismata* he acknowledged were occasioned by the needs of the time and therefore do not constitute a *normative catalogue* of Christ's gifts to the church for all time. To canonize Paul's several lists, or any of them, is to go beyond his teaching. It would appear that Paul expects that the church will always be gifted with *charismata*, but what the *charismata* of any time or place are to be must be left to the Christ who gives and the Holy Spirit who works. Believers are only to desire whatever *charismata* are needed in any given situation for the welfare of the body of Christ, leaving it to God to give as he will.

### Exhortations Concerning the Spirit

Out of his understanding of the Holy Spirit's important role in the effectuation of salvation Paul addresses to his readers certain specific exhortations relative to the Spirit. To the Galatians he writes: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (5:25; cf. vs. 16); to the Ephesians: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (4:30); "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18); "Pray at all times in the Spirit" (6:18); to the Thessalonians: "Do not quench the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:19); and to the Romans: "Live according to the Spirit" (8:13), be "led by the Spirit" (vs. 14).

Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals tend to emphasize such exhortations to such an extent that other apostolic concerns are muted. Whether this tendency springs primarily from their religious experiences or is occasioned by the relative neglect of such exhortations by the confessional churches is difficult to answer. The charge of their neglect is frequently heard in charismatic literature, and no doubt with certain justification.

All of these exhortations are relatively straightforward, and are expressed with grammatical simplicity. Indeed, they are so simple that they are often tossed about, especially by charismatics, as if their meaning were transparent. That is far from the case, however. When one begins to ask: Just what did Paul have in mind with each of them? or: Just how does the believer carry out Paul's exhortations? he discovers how elusive they really are.

In Galatians Paul addresses himself to the question whether salvation is to be had by observance of the Old Testament legal regulations (especially as interpreted by the Judaizers of his day), or by union with Christ through faith—union with him in his crucifixion and resurrection (2:15-21). "Let me ask you only this," he writes: "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" (3:2). And again: "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" (vs. 5). It is "through faith" he reminds them, that in Christ Jesus "you are all sons of God. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:26-27). Then he adds: "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave but a son . . ." (4:6-7). It is against this background that he says: "Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh." "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law." For "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (5:16ff). Speaking negatively, then, to "walk by the Spirit" (to be "led by the Spirit," vs. 18; to "sow unto the Spirit" 6:8) is not to live by "the flesh," or in "the flesh" to seek to obtain righteousness by observance of the law. But how is it to be understood positively? That is a more difficult matter.

The answer is surely not to be found in seeking special "guidance" from the Holy Spirit, a "guidance" which by-passes the necessity for wrestling toward moral decisions. (There is a tendency in neo-Pentecostalism to seek such "guidance" as the only sure way to know the Spirit's leading. Moral decision-making is suspect as giving too much room for the reassertion of the "mind of the flesh," as though the Spirit were incapable of illuminating and sanctifying the mind.) Paul points the way when he exemplifies the "fruit" of the Spirit (which are not achievements of the believer, but verily "fruit of the Spirit"): "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Let the Christian believer live by these, he counsels, not by mere law, for they are of the Spirit. By these—not by law—the "passions and desires of the flesh" are overcome. Paul's concern is with matters of morality, not with the tone of Christian experience—whether one lives in the atmosphere of a continual religious "high." And his appeal is to Spirit-wrought virtues which enable moral decision-making that is in accord with the will of God.

When Paul warns the Ephesians not to "grieve" the Holy Spirit (4:30), he does so again in the midst of a series of instructions concerning Christian morality. He writes: "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (4:22-24). Here, to "grieve" the Holy Spirit is clearly to live after the fleshly lusts of the "old nature" (cf. Is. 63:10): "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with

all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you" (vss. 31f). Contrariwise, to please the Holy Spirit is presumably to live according to the "new nature created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Paul does not speak here of resisting the special "gifts" or "guidance" of the Spirit (as some neo-Pentecostals are prone to assume) but rather of matters of moral conduct. He is concerned that the Ephesian converts from paganism "walk in love" (5:1) in every human relationship. Although he does not here speak expressly of it, it is clear that he would have the Ephesians also live by "the fruit of the Spirit"—note his illustrative catalogue of its opposites: "bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander . . ., with all malice" (vs. 31).

It is against this same background in Ephesians that Paul adds: "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). Meanwhile he has urged on them: "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light . . . and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (5:8-11). Then he adds: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs . . ." (vss. 15ff). To be "filled with the Spirit," therefore, belongs to the cluster of ideas: being "light in the Lord," "walking as children of light," "learning what is pleasing to the Lord," being "wise," and "understanding what the will of the Lord is." Most immediately it stands in contrast with getting "drunk with wine" which is "debauchery," and leads to "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart"—the opposite of "debauchery." Hence it seems to refer to an elevated and exhilarated state of mind that expresses itself in communal singing of heartfelt praise to the Lord. But beyond that Paul does not elucidate; he does not further explain how the believer is to satisfy the terms of his exhortation.

Care must be taken, therefore, that we do not too easily supply out of our own subjective experience, tendency, or imagination what Paul leaves unspoken, such as that Paul means here that we should seek ecstatic experiences, or that Paul advocates here the exercise of special charismatic gifts. That Paul speaks of an openness to the Spirit that brings joy bursting forth in songs of praise goes without saying, but he is not here discussing priorities in the Christian life. He speaks rather of Christian alternatives to pagan "highs" experienced under the influence of fermented spirits.

Paul is equally terse when he calls on the Ephesians to "pray at all times in the Spirit" (6:18). He writes as if the intent of his words is well understood by his readers, yet the history of piety shows that, if it was, it did not remain so. Many have understood him to be calling for an intense emotional state, if not for ecstasy, as the ideal atmosphere of prayer. Many neo-Pentecostals assume that Paul here calls for praying in tongues—or at least that prayer in tongues is the most perfect way to

achieve what Paul had in mind. Nothing in the context supports these assumptions, however. Neither can appeal to Romans 8:26 ("but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words") lend any support to these mystical interpretations of Paul's intent. In the Romans passage Paul speaks only of those elements in our needs and longings which lie beyond the reach of our full comprehension or articulations; he is not laying down a guideline for prayer. We may better understand Paul's apostolic counsel to the Ephesians to be a call to pray in the "faith, hope and love" that are of the Spirit.

It is also not immediately clear what Paul has in mind when he writes to the Thessalonians: "Do not quench the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:19). Both the terms of the exhortation and the context (a series of exhortations: "Rejoice always; pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil") suggest a resisting or restraining the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual believer and the church. But what that working is, or how the resisting is effected, or what the positive translation of the negative exhortation might be is not immediately clear. This should caution us against an easy and simplistic application of Paul's exhortation, e.g., to non-participation in alleged revivals of "Pentecostal fire."

Paul's primary concern in the context is stated in the early part of chapter 5. Identifying his Christian brothers at Thessalonica as "sons of light, and sons of the day" (vs. 5), he urges them to "be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (vs. 8—note his re-emphasis on his famous triad: faith, hope and love). He then reminds them that God has "destined us . . . to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him" (vs. 9f.). For that reason they are to "encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (vs. 12). Then follows his own concluding series of exhortations. When in that series he urges his readers not to "quench the Spirit," he is surely to be understood as having concern that Christian believers not resist those workings of the Spirit in the community that strengthen the "faith, hope and love" that are in Christ. These include mutual encouragement (vs. 11), submission to the admonitions of those who are "over you in the Lord" (vs. 12f), mutual admonition, mutual encouragement and mutual support (vs. 14). These are not to be resisted or restrained.

Perhaps most immediately Paul has in mind the "prophesying" of which he speaks in the next breath: "Do not despise prophesying." What Paul means by "prophesying" can best be learned from I Corinthians 14 where he describes it as speaking "to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (vs. 3). In contrast with speaking in tongues it is a speaking "with the mind" (vs. 19). Moreover, it is a speaking that can be and must be tested in and by the Spirit-filled community: "Test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil" (I Thess. 5:21f; cf. I Cor. 14:29). So both the despising

of prophesying and the refusal to test it, or to submit to the testing, is a "quenching of the Holy Spirit." (See further Section VII.)

When we turn to Paul's exhortation in Romans 8 we seem to find ourselves little better off. Here Paul calls on his readers to "live according to the Spirit," to be "led by the Spirit" (8:13-14). Paul has just said that God in Christ "condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For . . . those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (vss. 4f). And "you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you" (vs. 9). He goes on to say that to have "the Spirit of Christ" is to have "Christ in you" (vs. 10; cf. Gal. 2:20; "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me"). Then come his words about "living according to the Spirit" and being "led by the Spirit." If we do live according to the Spirit we "put to death the deeds of the body" (vs. 13) and are "sons of God" (vs. 14), crying, "Abba! Father!" (vs. 15; cf. Gal. 4:6). And "the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (vs. 16). The fact of the Spirit's indwelling is affirmed, and the effects of the Spirit's working, if we "live according to the Spirit" ("walk by the Spirit," "are led by the Spirit") are elucidated. But Paul does not explicitly clarify *how* believers are to walk according to the Spirit. Once again he seems to take for granted that this was a matter sufficiently well-known to his readers.

Nevertheless, close attention to Paul's developing argument sheds light on the matter. The key themes of his discussion have been on the one hand: law, sin and death; and on the other hand: grace, righteousness and life. The one complex of themes relates to the "old nature" (the man in Adam) who is of "the flesh"; the other complex of themes relates to the "new nature," the man "in Christ." The gospel is the offer of grace, righteousness and life to those under law, sin and death. What God has done in Christ provides the objective "work" on which the new possibilities offered in the gospel are grounded. It is faith that appropriates what the gospel offers; human efforts (the "works" of the "old nature") remain enmeshed in the complex of law, sin and death.

But in Romans the "righteousness" that is offered in the gospel is more than forgiveness ("justification" in the narrow sense); it is also being "dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (6:11), being liberated from the "dominion" of sin (6:14). It is being "set free from sin" and becoming "slaves of righteousness" (6:18). This is the work of the Holy Spirit: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death" (8:2). He is "the Spirit of God" (8:9, 14) who "raised up Jesus from the dead" (8:11) and who is the author of our salvation. He is also the "Spirit of Christ" (8:9) by whom "Christ is in us" (8:10). Therefore the Spirit, in contrast to "the flesh," works in the believer a "mind" that is in accord with the will of God (8:4ff.).

What Paul means by this can probably be clarified from Galatians 5:16-26: the mind of the Spirit produces the "fruit" of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control; against which there is no law" (vs. 24). The Spirit liberates the believer from the "mind of the flesh" and works in him "the mind of Christ." Hence when Paul exhorts to "live by the Spirit," be "led by the Spirit," he is not urging his readers to denigrate the physical, nor to follow impulses received in some ecstatic moment of intense religious experience (as some who overvalue ecstasy have assumed), but rather to heed those impulses that are in accord with the "fruit" of the Spirit, while rejecting those that are in accord with "the works of the flesh . . . immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like" (Gal. 5:19ff). Paul's concern once again is with the moral quality of the believer's life—with "righteousness."

Meanwhile, all these exhortations have in common the assumption of the powerful, dynamic presence of the Spirit working in the hearts of believers in such a way that salvation becomes a profound and joyous experience of peace with God, liberation from bondage to sin and death, power to work the works of God—faith, hope and love. Where these are not present the gospel has not yet been received as "the power of God unto salvation." "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9b).

Let the church ever be reminded that wherever the gospel has not been experienced as a powerful transforming reality in the heart, where the human spirit has not been moved by the Spirit to cry, "Abba! Father!" where Christian truth is merely assented to as a system or religious dogma—of that soul it cannot yet be said, "Salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). But let those who are excessively pre-occupied with the Holy Spirit, who glory in (if not enter into a new bondage to) subjective religious experience—who thirst for ecstasy—let them forever remember that the gospel is the good news of that which God has done in Jesus Christ for our salvation: grace, righteousness and life.

The remaining canonical epistles add nothing essentially new to the Pauline teaching concerning the Spirit, *but they ascribe or assume no less*. He is the agent of revelation (Heb. 9:8; 10:15; I Pet. 1:11-12; II Pet. 1:21); the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached "by" (or "in") him (I Pet. 1:12); he "bears witness" of Christ to the believers (I Jn. 5:7ff); and God confirmed the reality of the salvation proclaimed by the primal witnesses to Christ "by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts (*merismoi*—distributions) of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). Believers themselves are "partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 6:4); are "sanctified" by the Spirit (I Pet. 1:2); know that Christ abides in them "by the Spirit he gave them" (I Jn. 3:24; cf. 4:13); and are blessed in spite of persecutions, because "the spirit of glory and of God rests on them" (I Pet. 4:14). By their anointing with the Spirit they have knowledge of the truth (I Jn. 2:20-21; 27), and they are able to "distinguish the spirits" by the fact that the Spirit of God "confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (I Jn. 4:2). Beyond this, Jude exhorts his readers to "pray in the Holy Spirit" (vs. 20), and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews warns of the punishment of him "who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood

of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29).

#### B. The Holy Spirit in the Reformed Confessions

John Calvin left his imprint on the churches of the Reformed faith in his elaboration of the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit. In Book III of the *Institutes*, Calvin wrote:

Of the manner of participation in the grace of Jesus Christ, the fruits we derive from it, and the effects which follow it.

In Chapter 1 of Book III, Calvin emphasized the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in the application of the redemptive work of Christ. The title of Chapter 1 is:

That the things which have been mentioned above (i.e., in Books I & II) concerning Jesus Christ are made profitable to us by the secret operation of the Holy Spirit.

We may summarize this opening chapter as follows:

1. By the Holy Spirit, Christ unites us to himself, and communicates to us his graces.
2. In Christ the Mediator, we receive the fulness of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
3. Faith is the masterpiece of the Holy Spirit.

This important chapter ends with these words:

This is why Saint Paul magnifies the ministry of the Spirit (II Cor. 3:6-8), because it would be in vain for the preachers to proclaim the Gospel, if Jesus Christ the Sovereign Master, did not work from within to attract those who have been given to him by the Father (John 6:44). Therefore, as we have said that all the fulness of salvation is found in Jesus Christ, he also, in order to make us participate in it, baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16); regenerating us in such a way that we become new creatures. Finally, he purifies us from all stains and impurities in order to consecrate us to God as holy temples. (Translated from the French edition of 1560.)

The official documents which have been handed down to us from the early days of the Reformation manifest Calvin's deep interest to give all the glory to God's Holy Spirit in the area of man's benefiting from the salvation accomplished by Christ. We shall consider first the *Belgic Confession* and the *Confession of La Rochelle* (known also as the Gallican Confession).

Even before it considers the application of Christ's work, the *Belgic Confession* mentions the Holy Spirit in several instances. For example, in Article 3 the Holy Spirit is set forth as the primary author of Scripture. As to the crucial matter of "Whence the Holy Scriptures derive their dignity and authority," we are told that we believe "all things contained in them, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God."

The same emphasis is found in the *Confession of La Rochelle*. Article 4 reads:

We recognize that these books are canonical and the most sure rule for our faith, not so much by the common agreement and consent of the church, but by the inward testimony and persuasion of the Holy Spirit, who makes us distinguish them from the other ecclesiastical books, which useful as they may be, cannot be the foundation for any article of faith.

Thus quite early in these Reformed creeds, the important work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized. The evangelical Christian places all his hope on the Bible's witness, and this hope is not the product of wishful thinking, but the result of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his heart. When the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is confessed in Article 8 of the *Belgic Confession*, and explained in Article 9, we are informed that the "Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, by his dwelling in our hearts." The indispensable work of the Holy Spirit in liberating man's will is taught in Article 14.

Coming specifically to the application of the work of Christ in the life of the Christian, both confessions (Articles 22) teach us:

We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him (*Belgic Confession*).

We believe that by this faith we are regenerated unto a new life, since we are by nature enslaved to sin. For we receive by faith the grace to live in holiness and in the fear of God by receiving the promise which is offered to us by the Gospel, namely that God will give us his Holy Spirit (*Gallican Confession*).

Article 24 of the *Belgic Confession* reiterates the biblical doctrine that true faith is wrought in man "by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit." When the catholic church is defined in Article 27 of the same creed, we find an equal emphasis on the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit:

We believe and profess one catholic or universal church, which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

The two confessions of faith reflect Calvin's insight into the nature of the two sacraments. We are told that they are:

visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit (*Belgic Confession*).

We recognize only two, common to all churches: the first, which is baptism, is given to us as a testimony of adoption, because in it [baptism] we are engrafted into the body of Christ, in order to be washed and cleansed by his blood, and then renewed in holiness of life by the Holy Spirit (*Gallican Confession*)

In setting forth the doctrine of communion, the *Belgic Confession* avoids the sacramentalism of Luther and the mere symbolism of Zwingli. This was accomplished by confessing the role of the Holy Spirit in making the sacrament a real communion between the believer, the church and Jesus Christ, the Lord. Article 35 states it this way:

Now, as it is certain and beyond all doubt that Jesus Christ has not enjoined to us the use of his sacraments in vain, so he works in us all that he represents to us by these signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Spirit are hidden and incomprehensible.

The *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Catechism of Geneva* manifest the same emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. This is seen in the first answer of the Heidelberg Catechism. The believer confesses a beautiful and glorious confession which is not the result of auto-suggestion but echoes the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart: "Wherefore by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready, henceforth to live unto him."

In the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism it is pointed out that regeneration is essential in order that we may do good, and that this is accomplished by the Spirit of God (Q. 8). Faith is wrought in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Q. 21). In the Geneva Catechism we are clearly taught that what has been accomplished for us does not become a part of us or in us except by the Holy Spirit. Section 14 of the Geneva Catechism states:

As the blood of Jesus Christ is that which purifies us, the Holy Spirit must water our consciences with that blood in order that we may be effectually cleansed. The Holy Spirit regenerates us and makes us new creatures, in such a way that through him we receive all the treasures and all the gifts which are offered to us in Jesus Christ.

Saving faith, according to the Geneva Catechism (Section 18) does not come from ourselves: "Scripture teaches us that it is a special gift of the Holy Spirit."

Since the Reformed Faith has avoided the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of the body of Christ, how are we to think of the presence of Christ in the world today? The Heidelberg Catechism gives us this answer:

Christ is true man and true God: with respect to his human nature, he is no more on earth; but with respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and Spirit, he is at no time absent from us (Q. 47).

In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ is present with us by the Holy Spirit. The Heidelberg Catechism emphasizes the importance of the ascension of Christ in such a way that the Holy Spirit becomes the One through whom we attain our goal: "He sends us his Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we seek the things that are above where Christ is" (Q. 49).

In Lord's Day 20 in which the Heidelberg Catechism deals specifically with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the believer not only confesses the

deity of the Holy Spirit, but speaks of the gift of the Spirit in these personal and intimate words: "that he is also given me, to make me by a true faith partaker of Christ and all his benefits, to comfort me, and to abide with me forever."

The same emphasis which the confessions gave to the Holy Spirit working faith in the hearts of God's people is found also in the catechisms, as we have already noticed. However, this does not take place apart from the preaching of the Word of God. In Question 65 of the Heidelberg Catechism we learn that saving faith comes from "the Holy Spirit, who works in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments." The Geneva Catechism emphasizes again the unique importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

We must receive the Word of God with complete assurance of conscience, as a truth which has come to us from heaven, submit to it with all meekness, loving it with a true and complete affection, and engraving it on our hearts in order to follow it and conform to it.

In order to show that the above mentioned matter is not within our power, the Geneva Catechism gives the following answer to the question: "Is all that within our power?"

"In no way; but it is God who works within us in this fashion by his Holy Spirit" (Sections 35-44).

The same catechism stresses the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments.

"It is the office of the Holy Spirit to seal the promises of God in our hearts. . . . You understand therefore that the power of the sacraments does not consist of the external element, but that it all proceeds from the Spirit of God? Yes. . . ." (Section 46).

It is very instructive that the Heidelberg Catechism emphasizes the equal importance of the blood of Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit. Notice this emphasis in Questions 72 and 73. In our participation with our fellow members of the church in the sacrament of communion, we do not only embrace all that Christ accomplished for us, but we also "become more and more united to his sacred body." How does this wonderful thing take place? The answer is: "By the Holy Spirit who dwells both in Christ and in us."

The third part of the Heidelberg Catechism which deals with gratitude, begins with an equal emphasis on Christ redeeming us "by his blood," and on the Holy Spirit renewing us after Christ's own image. When dealing with the seventh commandment, both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Geneva Catechism speak of our bodies as "temples of the Holy Spirit."

Why does God "want the ten commandments" to be "preached so strictly?" We are told in the Heidelberg Catechism that this is necessary to know our sinfulness, seek the remission of our sins, and that "we may constantly endeavor, and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit" (Q. 115).

Why should Christians pray? To manifest their thankfulness to God? Yes, but more: "Because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with hearty sighing unceasingly beg them of him and thank him for them" (Q. 116).

The *Canons of Dort* reflect the same emphasis on the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the elect. In the First Head of Doctrine, article 7 (I. 7), we read that God effectually calls the elect "and draws them to his communion by his Word and Spirit." In the Second Head, article 8, the Holy Spirit is the giver of faith as well as of "all the other saving gifts." In Heads Three and Four, article 3, we are told that "without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit" all men "are neither able nor willing to return to God." Neither "the light of nature nor the law" can give us saving grace. But God does, "by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation" (III & IV, 6).

Article 11 of the same Head of Doctrine speaks at length of the tremendous work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the elect. "He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit . . . but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit he pervades the inmost recesses of man."

Almost every article of the Fifth Head of Doctrine which deals with perseverance, attributes the glorious and comforting reality to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the elect. As to those who deny this doctrine under the pretext that it creates indolence and is injurious to godliness, the answer is: "For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit."

A study of the Reformed confessions and catechisms which have come down to us from the early days of the Reformation brings to light a wonderful balance and genuine sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. The concern of these Reformed symbolical documents was not theoretical but practical. They helped the persecuted believers to verbalize in biblical and confessional words the experience of those who have tasted the salvation of the Lord by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. They continue to provide the church today necessary guidelines for elaboration of the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit within a milieu which has known the rise of neo-Pentecostalism. Not that the Reformers of the sixteenth century and their immediate successors have said the last word on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the symbolical books which they have left us. Progress in the understanding of the Christian faith is a continuing matter; but it will be an authentic progress only if it builds on the foundation left for us in the confessions of faith and the catechisms of the Reformation era.

The Christian Reformed Church—its members, officers and theologians—must continue to search the Scriptures together with a view to advancing the church's common understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit beyond that which is set forth in its confessions. But those of its members who are involved in the present "charismatic renewal" and who

are given to speaking of the "baptism in/with the Holy Spirit" as a kind of "second blessing" (or "third blessing") received by some believers in addition to and subsequent to conversion are reminded that the community of Reformed Christians, since the Reformation, have not found it necessary, in the light of Scripture, to speak confessionally in that manner. They are cautioned, in the light of this history, to examine their language carefully as they testify to the grace of God, that their confession, witness and proclamation be first of all in accord with the Scriptures and not controlled by the subjective experiences of a minority of their fellow believers, and that they continue to submit their own understanding of the Scripture and of their experience to the discernment of the whole Spirit-filled and Spirit-gifted community of faith.

That the life of the church today needs renewal very few would deny. Such renewal is to be found, however, in the rediscovery of the Christ-centeredness of Holy Scripture. This discovery will take place only through the grace of the Holy Spirit whose mission is the glory of Christ, the salvation and preservation of the believer, and the building up of the body of Christ unto the redemption of the whole creation.

#### V. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Traditionally we have spoken of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian in terms of regeneration and sanctification. This limitation has been challenged by Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements. They claim to experience still another blessing of the Holy Spirit, commonly called "the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit." They emphasize the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a second experience distinct from and subsequent to conversion which gives power for witness and which manifests itself through the special "gifts" of the Spirit.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the most distinctive (and often the most precious) doctrine to the Pentecostals. The desire for this Spirit-baptism sweeps every other doctrine into its vortex. The experience of this Spirit-baptism is described in different ways, but usually in superlatives. Those who claim to have experienced such a baptism refer to it as the most beautiful experience they have ever had. They speak of an extraordinary sense of God's reality and presence. They lay claim to a praise and adoration of God hitherto unknown to them. They testify of greater capacities to witness to the gospel; in all aspects of life they claim a deeper love, joy and peace. Moreover, they also testify of having received a number of special "gifts," in particular, the gift of speaking in tongues. The gift of tongues-speaking is believed to be sure proof of having had an authentic baptism of the Holy Spirit. There seems to be a general consensus that this Spirit-baptism occurred *within* their Christian life. They claim to have been believers before receiving the "baptism," and they interpret this baptism as something more (or beyond). This new and exciting life in the Spirit may occur after extended prayer and seeking. Christians are urged, therefore, to seek this baptism in the Holy Spirit and become empowered for service and witness.

The basic question is: Are there sound reasons for assuming this distinct and different act of the Spirit? The Pentecostals and some neo-

Pentecostals claim that Scripture requires this of us. The Bennetts, for example, state categorically: "The normative pattern in the New Testament was to accept Jesus, receive water baptism, and be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (*The Holy Spirit and You*, p. 34). Another writer summarizes the Pentecostal position as follows: "The basic dogma of Pentecostalism, the one that distinguishes it from other branches of Christianity, is the dogma of 'the baptism in the Holy Spirit.' Sometimes it is called 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit.' Whatever preposition is used, this term refers to a decisive, usually for the Christian a second, encounter with God. This encounter empowers the Christian for service to the Lord, it is claimed, and in a way that nothing else can. Without this a Christian is 'only saved.' With it, he is an effective servant of Christ" (Peter Doyle, *The Theology of Episcopalian Pentecostalism*, p. 2).

The Book of Acts is regarded as the main source for this doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Five passages are recognized as particularly important. These texts are: 2:1-42; 8:4-25; 9:1-18; 10:11-18; 19:1-7.

The Pentecostal expression "baptism in/with the Holy Spirit" does not, however, occur in Scripture. Instead Scripture records the prophecy of John the Baptist that Jesus "will baptize with the Holy Spirit." This change from a verb to a noun is in itself probably unimportant, but it is important to note where the words are found. They are found either in the prophecy of John the Baptist concerning Jesus (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), or in the promise of Jesus to his disciples (Acts 1:5; 11:16). In every instance these words point to the contrast between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus.

Does this prophecy that speaks of being baptized with the Holy Spirit establish a basic pattern that must be repeated in the life of every believer, viz., faith, water baptism, and then baptism with the Holy Spirit? Not at all. The prophecy points rather to the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise and the establishment of the new covenant. John the Baptist stands on the bridge between the old covenant and the new. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets, the messenger preparing the way, the Elijah who must come. Although he heralds the dawn of the messianic age, John the Baptist himself stands within the old covenant. His mission occurs prior to the fulfillment of the promise concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and his baptism is only a baptism with water.

Jesus establishes the new covenant. Through his ministry the kingdom of God breaks in a new way into human history. During his earthly life the kingdom of God is present in his own person, and Jesus alone has had the Spirit poured out upon him (anointed with the Spirit *at his baptism*). By his life and death, Jesus opens the way so that all may enter the kingdom and live in the new age of the Spirit. After his glorification, Jesus gives the Spirit to all who believe in him (John 7:39).

Such is the meaning of Pentecost. Pentecost signals the beginning of that new age for people of all nations. No longer are the promises given primarily to one people but to the nations of the world. Jesus is now drawing all men to himself and thereby he is re-establishing the unity of

mankind (even Babel's divisions are overcome by the gift of tongues at Pentecost).

The Book of Acts presents these two themes of universalism and unity in a very graphic manner. Acts 1:8 states the theme when it points to the expansion of the church from Jerusalem to Samaria and to the end of the earth. As the church expands to Samaria and to the Gentile world, it is significant that at these points events are recorded that are similar to the events of Pentecost.

In this way the Book of Acts underscores the significance of these turning points in the mission of the church. The *universality* of the church and the *unity* of the church is seen in the description of the Samaritan converts who, although baptized by Philip, had to wait for the apostles before the Spirit was received by them (Acts 8:12-17). In the case of the first Gentile converts, the Spirit fell on them immediately, prior to being baptized (Acts 10:44-48). Although there are some baffling aspects to the incident at Ephesus, the event is a transition from John's baptism to Jesus' baptism (Acts 19:1-7). Thus Acts reveals that the new covenant is for all men; both Jew and Gentile alike participate in the new age of the Spirit. Those present at Pentecost have no advantage over those who enter the new covenant at a later point. All equally receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47; 11:17).

Is there some pattern in all this to be repeated in the life of every believer? For example, as Jesus was born of the Spirit (Virgin Birth) and later empowered by the Spirit (baptism), so believers must be born of the Spirit (faith/conversion) and later empowered by the Spirit (Spirit/baptism)? Or since the disciples already believed during the earthly ministry of Jesus and only later received the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost, so now in the life of every believer the occurrence of faith and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit are similarly distinct events. Is there such a pattern? By no means. The events of Jesus' life are unique precisely because they prepare the way for the establishment of the new covenant. And one should note that the faith of the disciples prior to Pentecost was not a faith that fully comprehended (cf. Mt. 16:16, 23; Jn. 2:22, etc.). Although the disciples had a special relationship to Jesus during his ministry, they did not fully enter the new age until Pentecost. We live after the establishment of the new covenant. And we can no more repeat the sequence of those events in Jesus' life and in the lives of the disciples than we can repeat the transition from John's baptism to Jesus' baptism. Those events occurred before the establishment of the new covenant. We live after the establishment, and now to be in the new covenant is to have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

But is there perhaps some precise sequence of events necessary for receiving the Holy Spirit? Can a normative pattern be derived from the conversions recorded in Acts? Apart from the demand of faith, there appears to be no fixed sequence. In several instances the gift of the Spirit seems to be related to or to follow upon water baptism. But in two of the five accounts in Acts, the sequence is faith, baptized with the Spirit, and then water baptism. Thus there is no normative sequence in Acts.

If then the Holy Spirit is given to all who enter the new age and is

the means by which they enter the kingdom, does it follow that there are no new experiences of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers? Of course not. The Holy Spirit continues to reveal his presence in various ways and at times in a decisive manner. The congregation in Jerusalem, which had received the Spirit at Pentecost (or subsequently), experienced another decisive manifestation of the Spirit during a time of persecution (Acts 4:31). But this is called being "filled with the Holy Spirit." And the Apostle Paul can exhort Christians to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Thus being filled with the Spirit is a repeatable event. As believers live under the new covenant, they must seek to be continually filled with the Spirit.

Although not in agreement with the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal teaching on the Baptism in the Spirit, we like to state emphatically that every Christian should take seriously the work of the Holy Spirit. We are challenged to discover anew the meaning of the Spirit's work in the believer and the church. We gratefully acknowledge that the Pentecostals have focused attention on the Spirit, whose work has all too often been overlooked or ignored by the established churches. No renewal is really possible without acknowledging the Spirit: his nature, promises, action and gifts. We may not cease to recognize and pray for God's great gift, the Holy Spirit.

Those who have experienced what they call "the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit" show a remarkable change in their lives, eager to be vibrant Christians. We are grateful and praise God for any and every manifestation of newness in Christ Jesus. We question, however, the terminology that is used to describe their change. It confuses our people and leads to misunderstanding and (at times) division among fellow believers.

How then can their experience be described? John Calvin, the theologian of the Holy Spirit (as Warfield described him) has written some remarkable and noteworthy lines on the work of the Holy Spirit in the first and third Books of the *Institutes*. His ideas have perhaps not been adequately explored by the Reformed churches. Calvin's stress on "daily regeneration," for example, deserves our close attention (cf. Book III, ch. XV). The Holy Spirit introduces us to the enjoyment of Christ and all his benefits and restores us to newness. "This restoration, however, is not accomplished in a single moment, or day, or year; but by continual, and sometimes even tardy advances." Christians may experience periods of spiritual back-sliding. A renewed yielding to the Spirit causes a re-affirmation of the commitment to Christ made at an earlier time. Such renewal of Christian fervor should not be interpreted as "a baptism in/with the Spirit." It is a new filling of the Holy Spirit in a Christian life that beforehand has known only the beginning of the riches of Christ. The Apostle Paul exhorts all believers to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). And it is possible to be a follower of Christ and yet to grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) or to quench the Spirit (I Thess. 5:19). All true believers have the Spirit dwelling within them (cf. Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 12:13), but it is possible for believers not to continue in being filled with the Spirit. The call to daily repentance must be heard and answered in

our lives. Our hearts must be open to the full riches of union with Christ and be filled daily with his Spirit.

### Speaking in Tongues as Primary Evidence of Spirit-baptism.

According to Pentecostal and often also neo-Pentecostal teaching, speaking in tongues is thought to be the primary evidence of "the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit." It is commonly believed in Pentecostal circles that the baptism of believers is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking in tongues. This tongues-speaking is to them a highly desirable and very valuable kind of evidence for Spirit-baptism. Believers are urged to pray for it and develop a deep-felt desire for this unique manifestation of the Spirit's presence and power.

We wish to point out that in the book of Acts speaking in tongues is mentioned only on three occasions: namely, at Pentecost (2:4), at the conversion of Cornelius (10:46), and at the establishment of the church in Ephesus (19:6). The paucity of such incidents is noteworthy. There are nine instances in Acts where people are described as Spirit-filled where no mention is made of speaking in tongues (4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52). There are twenty-one instances in Acts where people are described as coming to salvation but are not said to have spoken in tongues (2:41; 3:7-9; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 8:36; 9:42; 11:21; 13:12; 43, 48; 14:1, 21; 16:14, 34; 17:4, 11-12, 34; 18:4, 8; 28:24). We do not find ample evidence, therefore, to say that tongues-speaking is an indispensable evidence that one has received the Holy Spirit.

The primary section in the New Testament that deals with speaking in tongues is I Corinthians 12-14. To insist that tongue-speaking is a necessary proof that one has been baptized in the Spirit is to overlook Paul's clear statement in I Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." Only some of the Corinthians spoke in tongues (cf. I Cor. 12:8-10). Yet all of them, Paul declares, were baptized by one Spirit. It is unwarranted, therefore, to teach and insist that speaking in tongues is an indispensable sign of having received the Spirit.

The meaning of speaking in tongues will be discussed in a different section of this report. We wish only to emphasize here that the New Testament does not support the Pentecostal claims about tongues-speaking as a necessary evidence of Spirit-baptism.

## VI. BAPTISM AND "BELIEVER'S BAPTISM"

Some members of our churches who have had the experience called "baptism in the Spirit" have subsequently desired to receive "believer's baptism." Since they are members of a Christian church in the Reformed tradition, their desire is a desire for *rebaptism* and as such necessarily raises questions concerning the validity of infant baptism and the understanding of the covenant.

It is instructive to note that not all neo-Pentecostals feel this compulsion for rebaptism. Those whose associations are with the Catholic neo-Pentecostal movement are a prime example of this fact. Since Roman Catholics hold firmly to a doctrine of infant baptism, they are compelled to interpret "baptism in the Spirit" differently than do those whose the-

ology teaches only believer's baptism. The Catholic neo-Pentecostals are presently interpreting "baptism in the Spirit" in terms of their doctrine of confirmation, i.e., that this is a releasing of the power of the Spirit given one in infant baptism.

The above example is important because it underscores the fact that this experience is open to more than one doctrinal interpretation. Those who assume that the neo-Pentecostal experience requires rebaptism as a necessary accompaniment, should recognize that they have accepted a *Baptist* understanding of baptism. Although they may claim that this is the clear and obvious teaching of Scripture revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, they should be aware that not all neo-Pentecostals agree, that the Reformed churches certainly do not agree, and that in fact a large majority of Christians throughout the ages have not agreed.

However, since this issue has been raised by members of our churches, we think it is necessary to say a few things about baptism. Our statement will be brief and should not be construed as a complete statement on this matter. Because of the present turmoil in Protestantism and because our people are increasingly exposed to a wide variety of doctrinal opinions, this may be a good time for the church or its teachers to issue again a thorough presentation of the doctrine of baptism. But we do not consider this our task. Instead, we shall point to a few perspectives that are important for a Reformed understanding of baptism.

The desire for "believer's baptism" is prompted usually by what the person sees as "the clear and obvious pattern of Scripture." The demand of Scripture is always "believe and be baptized." Thus, they say, the prerequisites for baptism are repentance and faith. Such conscious acts are the acts of an adult and not of an infant. It is only when one consciously repents and claims the promises in faith that baptism can have its full meaning. Hence they claim that the pattern of Scripture requires "believer's baptism."

No one disputes the fact that the pattern of repentance, faith, and baptism is clearly present in the New Testament. The only question is whether this is an exclusive pattern which must now be duplicated in the life of every individual believer. In the missionary situation in which the New Testament is written, the pattern of *adult conversion* is predominant. Before an adult can be accepted as a member of the people of God, he must first repent and believe. Only then can he receive the sign which declares that the promises which God guarantees to his people apply also to him. And that is still the case today. Adults existing outside the New Testament people of God (the body of Christ) can enter only by way of repentance and faith, and thus be entitled to the promises and their signs which God gives to his people.

But does God consider as members of his household only those persons who have consciously repented and believed? Does God deal in grace only with the mature individual? Or does God, still in the New Testament era as in the Old, deal graciously through the corporate relationships in which we exist, especially through that of the family? From our reading of the Old and New Testament we find it impossible to assert that parents who enter the body of Christ through faith do so

without their children. It is our firm conviction that God still works corporately in the New Testament era.

I Corinthians 7:14 can be understood in no other way: "Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy." Here the apostle Paul declares that children who are born of a believing parent are holy. This does not mean that they are without sin. The term "holy" is covenant language and designates one as a member of the people of God.

Perhaps ancient Jewish practice may help to clarify this. When a Gentile became a Jew (a proselyte), he and his children had to be baptized first and then circumcized. The question was asked whether a child who was conceived before his Gentile mother became a proselyte but who was born after the mother changed religion should be considered to be a Gentile or a Jew. In other words, should that child be baptized first (proselyte baptism as a Gentile) and then circumcized? The answer was given in the negative because that child was "holy," i.e. born in holiness. He was thus a member of the people of God by virtue of his birth from a believing mother and was directly entitled to the sign of the people of God (i.e. circumcision as a Jew without prior baptism).

In I Corinthians 7:14, the apostle Paul is making the same claim for children born of a believing parent. Such children are members of God's people, i.e. they are holy. Although Paul is not speaking directly concerning baptism in this passage, what he says lays the only basis that there is for receiving baptism. One must be holy, i.e. a member of the people of God. An unbelieving adult becomes such only through repentance and faith; a child born of a believing parent is considered to be such by virtue of his birth.

The same perspective is seen in the use of "household" which is mentioned in connection with baptism (cf. I Cor. 1:16; Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 11:14). Although it is impossible to prove the presence of infants or minor children in each of these instances, it is equally impossible to prove their absence in each of these instances. But that is unimportant. The simple fact that the New Testament continues to use the term "house" or "household," which is a corporate and not an individualistic category, indicates that the pattern of God's dealing with his people has not changed. If the New Testament authors had wished to declare that there is now a drastic shift in the way God deals graciously with men (i.e. individualistically and no longer corporately), they would not have continued to use the term "household." For that term had received its meaning already in the Old Testament, and there it included all members of the corporate unit including infants (cf. Genesis 17:23ff; Gen. 45:18; I Sam. 22:16ff). The household is a unity in the sight of God. The faith of those who represent the household (viz., father and/or mother) embraces the children.

This corporate dimension of family life which the Bible teaches and honors is of immense significance for understanding infant baptism. For the objections that the infant cannot present itself, cannot consciously repent and believe, and that consequently baptism is not a declaration on the part of the infant which testifies to an actual inward change, are

all objections which stem from a highly individualistic understanding of the sacrament. As such they are quite beside the point. For the sacrament of baptism is not primarily an arrangement between God and separate individuals. It is rather an arrangement between God and his covenant people. The sacrament is a symbolic presentation of the promises of God (forgiveness, cleansing, new life) given to those who are members of the New Testament people of God. The sacrament is not first of all a guaranteed promise of what has happened or will happen to a particular person (neither is it an evidence of what has happened); rather, it is a guaranteed promise of what God has done and will do for his household. And at every administration of the sacrament, God's household is reminded of God's promises and is called to appropriate the reality of that which has been promised in baptism by living each day in faith. God's people are reminded that their baptism stands continuously "as an appeal to God for a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21). As such, and not in any magical way, it saves them.

From this perspective the situation of the adult baptized after his conversion and that of the baptized infant is essentially the same. Both receive the sacrament because they are members of God's household. Both are recipients of the same promises because they belong to the same household, and both are called (the adult immediately and the child as he matures) to appropriate by faith what is given/promised in baptism. In neither case does baptism save the recipient automatically. Individuals are saved only as they live as faithful (believing) members of God's household.

Although the desire for believer's baptism (with its implicit rejection of infant baptism) is sincerely motivated by the belief that it is demanded by Scripture, it is our judgment that this desire stems from a reading of Scripture which fails to take into account the continuing corporate workings of God's grace in the New Testament era. In addition, it stems from the belief that there is only one pattern of Christian experience described in the New Testament, which must be followed by all. Thus, for example, the fact that Jesus was baptized as an adult is seen as proof that we must be. But such an interpretation represents a failure described elsewhere in this report (Section V), the failure to read the Scriptures as a record of the history of salvation. In particular, it is the failure to understand that Jesus lived in a unique stage of that history and his life brought into being the new era. Hence the stages of our Christian experience need not, and in fact cannot, parallel his, because all of us enter the history of salvation at a significantly different point.

In conclusion, the rejection of infant baptism and the desire for "believer's baptism" is based not so much on an understanding of this text or that; rather, it is rooted in a basic perspective on Christian experience and the purpose of Scripture. We call this basic perspective "individualism," an individualism familiar to us in the past as a prominent ingredient of American fundamentalism and present today in many forms of neo-Pentecostalism. We would therefore encourage our pastors to

emphasize again the corporate dimensions of God's grace and our Christian experience, as well as the history-of-salvation perspective in the reading and understanding of Scripture.

## VII. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Central to the experience and practice of neo-Pentecostalism are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The entire movement is sometimes identified with one of these gifts; viz., speaking in tongues, or glossolalia. Neo-Pentecostalism is also frequently identified as the "charismatic movement"—the *charismata* being gifts of grace. It should be noted that the book of Acts never uses the word *charisma* and that when Peter on the day of Pentecost promises the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the gift which consists of the Holy Spirit himself and not, as is sometimes assumed, the gift of tongues), he uses the more general Greek word for gift, *dorea* (Acts 2:38; cf. 8:20; 10:45; 11:17).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit, or spiritual gifts, should be distinguished from spiritual fruit. Spiritual fruit is also the result of the Spirit's indwelling in the believer, but unlike spiritual gifts, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is essential to the life of faith. Every true believer has the Holy Spirit in his heart. This presence is a gift from God as well as a benefit of the accomplished work of Jesus Christ. From this presence of the Holy Spirit follows the fruit which authenticates the Christian life (Gal. 5:22). This pluriform fruit does not necessarily appear dramatically or suddenly in a believer, but it grows and matures as does fruit. Without the fruit of the Spirit, and especially without the fruit and way of love (I Cor. 13), the gifts of the Holy Spirit are useless. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the result of that regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit in the individual believer which joins the believer to the body of Christ. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the result of the Spirit's pentecostal outpouring upon the body of Christ, as a result of which individual believers are gifted for the enrichment and empowering of the body.

What are the gifts?

As has already been noted in this report, the New Testament records several lists of gifts. In Romans 12:6-8, the apostle lists the following: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, contribution, giving aid, acts of mercy. In I Corinthians 12:4-11 he lists: utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, various kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues. In I Corinthians 12:28-30 he lists the following and assigns an order to some: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues and interpreters of tongues. In I Corinthians 13:1-3 he lists these: tongues of men and of angels, prophetic powers, understanding of mysteries, knowledge, faith, contribution and sacrifice. In Ephesians 4:7-22 we find these listed: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. In I Peter 4:11 two are mentioned: speaking and service.

Two things are immediately evident: sometimes the listing is in terms of the gifts themselves, and sometimes in terms of the gifted persons. Secondly, the lists are not given in any particular order of value, except where indicated in I Corinthians 12:28-30. It is hazardous, therefore, to begin to evaluate the gifts according to their relative merits, except where Scripture gives warrant for this. And even if we were to assign relative values to them and find one or two which are less valuable, that would not therefore mean we should minimize these or any other gifts, since their source and distribution is the work of none other than the Holy Spirit. None of God's gifts may be despised or downgraded.

The variety of gifts mentioned in the Scriptures and the various differences of the lists indicate also that there was not in New Testament times an unchanging or fixed catalogue of gifts. It may well be, therefore, that since the giver of the gifts is the Holy Spirit and he dispenses the gifts according to his sovereign good pleasure, there are additional gifts which may surface from time to time in the church, according to the need of the hour. The gifts enable the church to perform its task, and though the central tasks of the church remain the same, time and circumstance may call for additional gifts while some of the traditional gifts fade because there is, in the mind of Christ, no immediate need for them. The virtual absence of the gift of tongues for long periods in the history of the church may well be a case in point.

Are the gifts of the Spirit still present today?

Among Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike, it is common practice to divide the gifts of the Holy Spirit into spectacular and non-spectacular gifts, or extraordinary and ordinary gifts. It can easily be seen that the abilities to teach, to rule, to give mercy and like gifts are abilities widely present in the church, and no one questions their validity or necessity. Other gifts, such as speaking in tongues and healing, have been more controversial, less widely present and are considered more dramatic and spectacular. Their validity is often questioned. We should make certain, however, that we question them for good reason. If the Scriptures do not distinguish between "more" or "less" spectacular, may we arbitrarily introduce such a distinction and rule out the use of some of these gifts for today's church and not others?

It is of the more spectacular kind of gifts that it has long been common to say in Reformed theology that they ceased to function with the death of the apostolic circle and the completion of the canon of Scripture. In line with this conviction, it is said that God's special revelation in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures is complete and finished and awaits the final revelation of Jesus Christ in his second coming. The life of Christ from his incarnation to his ascension, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, were *einmalig* (once for all), and this includes the miraculous signs that attended Christ's ministry and Pentecost. Just as we do not look for a repetition of the events that secured our salvation, we do not look for a repetition of the accompanying miracles.

This argument focuses especially on the revelatory dimension of the work of Christ and the Spirit. According to this argument, Christ came

to announce and initiate the kingdom of God and enforced his proclamation with signs and miracles meant to demonstrate his authority as King and the nature of his kingdom. Now that Christ's kingdom has been initiated, its nature demonstrated, and the King ascended to royal power, it is the task of the church to proclaim the kingdom and to obey the King. We may not expect a repetition of the kind of signs and miracles that accompanied the kingdom's introduction.

The argument continues to say that miracles were seen not only in the ministry of our Lord, but also accompanied the ministry of the apostles and the apostolic circle. In addition, the written revelation of God, the New Testament, still needed to be written after the ascension of Christ. These facts do not negate the contention that Jesus Christ was God's final revelation, because the apostles and their work were part of that revelatory event (John 14:26; 16:13). It was necessary that the message of the birth, death and resurrection of Christ be preserved and interpreted in a written word. In addition, the initial expansion of the church took place in a hostile Jewish and pagan environment, necessitating confirmation of the message and authentication of the messengers by means of signs and wonders. Once the church was established and the Scriptures were completed and the rule (canon) for faith and life closed, the need for further signs and miracles ceased. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only and sufficient means of making known to us the mighty acts of God.

It is arguments such as these that have led the church in the past to disavow the continued need for and existence of some of the more spectacular gifts. This view has been held and defended by theologians of great eminence and ability. As long as they judged the gifts to be virtually absent from the church, these arguments appeared to explain this absence. The rise of Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism, however, has occasioned a new look at the Scriptures with respect to the more controversial gifts of the Holy Spirit. Such a study makes it clear that Scripture itself does not demand the thesis that these gifts belonged only to the apostles or their age, or that their purpose was solely to function as signs (see our discussion of the gifts).

Whereas the traditional argument places great emphasis on the thought that the gifts authenticated the apostles, we would add that the gifts also authenticated the gospel, whether preached by an apostle (Acts 3:6; 10:46) or by a deacon-evangelist (Acts 6:8). Furthermore, the gifts, as listed for example in I Corinthians 12, are not for the purpose of authentication but for the building up of the body of Christ. When we see in the New Testament that in a hostile Jewish and pagan environment the Lord granted "spectacular" gifts, we may well ask whether situations cannot exist today in which the more "normal" means of communicating the gospel are ineffective or badly used and gifts are given to demonstrate in a special way that the kingdom of God remains a kingdom not of talk but of power (I Cor. 4:20). We do well to maintain a strong emphasis on the necessity of the Spirit's work in regenerating the hearts of the elect, without which no one shall see the kingdom of God (John 3:5). At the same time we do well not to impoverish our citizenship in that kingdom by asserting that the same Spirit who

led us into that kingdom cannot or does not grant the same gifts to us as he did to believers of the first century.

We may not discredit the sufficiency of Scripture (II Tim. 3:15, 16; II Peter 1:18-21) or the finality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2). On the other hand, we affirm that there is nothing in Scripture which compels us to believe that the Spirit's sovereign disposition of his "more spectacular" gifts is impossible today or that these gifts were meant only for the first century. When, therefore, one or more of the first century gifts are claimed today, we may not lightly dismiss this, but must search the Scripture to see whether these things are so.

In addition, there is great need today for a gifted church, a church which shares the anointing of Christ and all his benefits. As the Apostle Paul indicates in I Corinthians 13:8, there will be a day when prophecies and knowledge will pass away and tongues will cease. That day will come when "the perfect" has come, when we see face to face and understand fully (I Cor. 13:10-12). For the church on earth that day has not yet come.

#### A variety of gifts

It is of some significance to note that Paul uses four parallel expressions which all mean the same thing (cf. Section IV, above). In I Corinthians 12:4-7 he emphasizes the source of the gifts by saying that the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God give varieties of *gifts, service, workings and manifestations*. Not every one receives the same gifts, but the Spirit "apportions to each one individually as he wills." Some Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals (but not all) teach that especially the gift of tongues is for every believer, and their literature contains a variety of descriptions on how that particular gift may be received. But Paul teaches specifically that the Spirit apportions as he wills (I Cor. 12:11; cf. Heb. 2:4). He even specifically denies that all will speak in tongues (I Cor. 12:30).

It is sometimes countered that in I Corinthians 12 Paul is not speaking of the gifts as such, but more specifically of the *use* of the gifts in the public gathering of the church. We take exception to this view. In I Corinthians 12 the apostle begins a general discussion regarding the Spirit's manifestations, not just about the church when it meets together. He describes the variety of gifts in which the Spirit manifests himself and emphasizes that the Spirit deals sovereignly with each individual (vss. 4-11) whether in or out of a worship meeting. Nowhere does he say that every believer ought to have or may expect to have every gift described, or that every believer ought to have at least the gift of tongues. The apostle then goes on to explain that it is necessary for the proper functioning of the body of Christ that every believer participate in the Spirit (vs. 13), but that the specific gift or manifestation given to individuals differ (vs. 12ff). He is clearly speaking of the body of Christ wherever and however it functions. To limit the application of I Corinthians 12 to the use of gifts in communal worship is to exhaust the meaning of the body of Christ in only one of its aspects. In I Corinthians 13 Paul writes his celebrated description of the more excellent way of love, a way which no one would wish to limit to the public

gathering of believers in worship. It is not until I Corinthians 14 that the apostle gives direction for the use of some gifts in worship; viz., the gifts of tongues and prophecy.

The sovereign disposition of the gifts by the Spirit, however, does not mean that the believers should be passive. Paul says in I Corinthians 14:1 that the Corinthians should "earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophecy." It would appear, therefore, that since spiritual gifts are given for the "the common good" (I Cor. 12:7), every believer ought to desire spiritual gifts in order to contribute to the church as an active and working member of the body. The assumption of the apostle is that every believer will contribute to the church and will have, therefore, some manifestation of the Spirit. The desire to have a gift is met by the sovereign good will of the Spirit. But it is the Spirit who decides what gift or gifts a believer will receive, so that the body of Christ will not be all hands or all feet but "many parts, yet one body" (I Cor. 12:20).

In this connection we would point out that excessive emphasis on one particular gift has led some believers in our day to furiously seek after that gift in the belief that without it one cannot have the assurance that he is filled with the Spirit. The result of such furious pursuit may well be that if something is received, it is an *imitation* of a real gift, or if nothing is received, the believer may become spiritually disheartened and lose even the precious assurance that he is a child of God. Such seeking after a particular gift may become an obsession which makes it impossible for a believer to live a life of joyful trust in the Lord, thus canceling also the effectiveness of his daily witness and share in the work of the body. In addition, we warn against the legalistic requirements which are sometimes listed as necessary for receiving a particular gift. Not only is this, again, a denial of the sovereign good pleasure of the Spirit, but it is another form of the Galatian error which Paul called "another Gospel" (Gal. 1:6, 7), and which he countered by teaching: "For freedom Christ has set us free: stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

According to the picture of the church drawn in I Corinthians 12, when one member has a particular gift, all the members benefit, since the body is one. It is the inescapable conclusion of Romans 12:3-8, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:7ff and I Peter 4:10 that "Believers, all and every one, as members of Christ, are partakers of him and of all his treasures and gifts; (and) that every one must know himself bound to employ his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and salvation of other members" (Lord's Day XXI). In the light of Scripture and the confessions it is clear that when spiritual gifts become occasion for strife and division within the church, there is either lack of recognition of these gifts or an abuse of the gifts—or both. A careful reading of Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 12:14-26, and a believing obedience to these inspired instructions, should exclude both spiritual pride by those spiritually gifted and indifference to the gifts given the church whereby it may powerfully serve the Lord.

### Some gifts described

It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss at length every spiritual gift mentioned in the Scriptures. Some of the gifts, however, are very much a part of the neo-Pentecostal controversy and these we now identify and describe. It should be noted that among Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals there is a wide variety of opinion regarding the nature of the gifts. The literature on the subject is large and growing rapidly; each author appears to derive as much knowledge from his or her personal and observed experiences as from the Scriptures. Both interpretation of Scripture and personal experiences vary widely. There is to our knowledge no single author either within or outside neo-Pentecostalism who is widely recognized as having a commonly accepted interpretation. There is, in fact, great need to "discern the spirits" in this respect.

We wish to say also that our comments and descriptions of the spiritual gifts should not be taken as either final or definitive, but as a contribution to the discussion and, hopefully, as an incentive to further study.

The gifts on which we focus are the nine gifts described by Paul in I Corinthians 12:4-11. At the outset, it appears there is both overlapping and connection between the gifts, which makes precise definition and description difficult. For convenience sake, we have grouped the gifts in three series of three gifts each.

### *Gifts of Speech: Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Prophecy*

#### Speaking in Tongues:

Much of the controversy surrounding neo-Pentecostalism ranges around the gift of tongues. It is frequently a strongly-held belief that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of Spirit baptism and, conversely, that no one is Spirit-baptized who has not spoken in tongues. In some Pentecostal churches this is a distinctive point of doctrine. We have already pointed out that this teaching is denied by the specific statements of Scripture in I Corinthians 12.

The fact remains, however, that the gift of speaking in tongues is clearly reported in Scripture and that it was a gift given to the company of 120 believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:15; 2:4), to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:46) and the group of Ephesian believers (Acts 19:6). In each of these events, a result of the Spirit's coming upon those in the group was speaking in tongues. The result of the Spirit's infilling on other occasions was that the friends of Peter and John (Acts 4:23) "spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31), that believers praised and extolled God (Acts 10:46) and prophesied (Acts 19:6). In the case of the apostle Paul, we are told that Ananias came to him, "That you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Paul's first public act thereafter is to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus. From Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we learn that he also practiced speaking in tongues (14:18), but no mention is made of this in Acts.

The gift of speaking in tongues is the ability to speak in sounds and

utterances previously unknown to the speaker. Whether the gift was the same on the day of Pentecost and later instances in the Book of Acts as it was in the church of Corinth is often debated. The fact is that phenomena occurred which Scripture calls by the same name. The apostle recognizes "various kinds of tongues" (I Cor. 12:10). Again, in our day, believers report that they have received this gift.

Linguistic studies indicate that contemporary tongues speech does not violate the mother tongue of the speaker in terms of the kinds and patterns of sounds that are used. Such tongues speech as has been recorded and analyzed is not, according to linguists, language in any conventional sense. On the other hand, there are scattered reports that tongues speakers have communicated to someone in that person's native language, which the tongues speaker has never learned or heard. This controversy over whether or not tongues speech is language reminds us of the old controversy of whether what happened on the day of Pentecost was a miracle of speech or of hearing—or both.

The results of linguistic studies are valuable and useful as an aid to our understanding and we are grateful for them. However, our final judgment may not be based solely on the limited range of phenomena that are subject to scientific investigation. Sufficient room must be left for the mystery of the Spirit's sovereign manifestations. It may be of some significance in this connection that Paul speaks of "various kinds of tongues" and says, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels . . ." (I Cor. 13:1).

The purpose of speaking in tongues does not appear to be communication to men, but communication of praise and prayer to God. The first use of tongues on the day of Pentecost causes the hearers to be perplexed and filled with wonder and amazement, "Because we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). Repentance and faith are the result, however, only after Peter preaches the gospel in intelligible language (Acts 2:14-42). Paul says that the person who speaks in a tongue speaks to God (I Cor. 14:2) and that speaking in tongues may also serve as a sign for unbelievers (I Cor. 14:20). In connection with the sign value of tongues, it should be pointed out that it is reported that many Jews are being converted today in so-called charismatic meetings where tongues-speaking is practiced.

Paul does not discourage speaking in tongues (I Cor. 14:5) and thanks God that he speaks in tongues more than the Corinthians (I Cor. 14:5). But he severely limits and regulates the public use of tongues-speaking (I Cor. 14 *passim*). We receive some further insight into the nature of tongues-speaking when he says that in it "the mind is unfruitful" (I Cor. 14:14). We do not take this to mean, however, that the speaker is merely a passive tool through whom the Spirit is speaking—an assumption all too easily made by some glossolalogs. The speaker is in control of the gift, uses it to give thanks to God and to edify himself and should be able to hold his tongues-speaking in a public meeting and reserve its use for private devotions (I Cor. 14 *passim*). Phrases such as, "I'm just an empty shell," fail to do justice to the whole person made in God's image and the accountability that goes along with that.

Modern testimony regarding tongues-speaking is that it is a spiritually

edifying experience which gives great rest and peace of heart. The initial experience may come in the company of other tongues speakers, or it may come in the privacy of the prayer closet. It is a popular misconception that it is necessarily a very emotional experience. Frequently the gifted person will make praying in tongues a part of his devotional life, along with Bible reading and regular prayer.

We believe that where speaking in tongues is initially a spontaneous experience, the recipient of this gift should accept it in thanksgiving and practice it both in love and according to biblical regulations. And although we do not wish to bind the Holy Spirit, we would strongly discourage tongues as "learned behavior" in which a person is coached at length, often under strong pressures and emotional duress, and asked to produce a kind of babbling or endlessly repeat "Thank you, Jesus" in order to "get the gift going." As most neo-Pentecostals realize, tongues-speaking appears in the Mormon religion and is not unknown in other non-Christian religions. This alone should tell us that glossolalia can be a spurious experience, and not a gift from God the Holy Spirit.

We also agree that tongues can be "another gospel" when the balance of Scripture is not observed, the emphasis of the Bible on a life of whole-hearted, intelligent service to Jesus as Lord is under-emphasized, and experience becomes the norm for the Christian life and the interpretation of Scripture. Some overly zealous neo-Pentecostals have fallen prey to the temptation to equate the biblical injunction to be filled with the Spirit with "you must speak in tongues." Another example of such excess is when our Lord's declaration, "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:25), is taken to mean that we must worship God in tongues and in Christ. Such excesses can only lead to heresy and dissension and rob the church of its central message: Jesus and him crucified.

We would also call attention to the express statement of Paul, "Do not forbid speaking in tongues" (I Cor. 14:39).

#### Interpretation of Tongues:

The Apostle Paul counsels that he who prays in tongues edifies himself (I Cor. 14:9), and that if tongues are to be used in a setting of public worship, the tongues speaker should pray for the gift of interpretation (I Cor. 14:13). The gift of interpretation is the Spirit-given ability to convey one's own or someone else's tongues into known language, so that all who are present may be edified (I Cor. 14:5).

Today, it is frequently found that the interpretation consists of phrases from the Psalms and other doxological expressions from the Scriptures—which fits well with the nature of tongues as primarily prayer and praise. We find no evidence in Scripture for specific messages to individuals first spoken in tongues and then interpreted.

#### Prophecy:

In the minds of many people today prophecy necessarily means predicting the future. Among adherents of neo-Pentecostalism this is also a frequently held belief. The Scriptures show us otherwise. The Old Testament prophets spoke the word of God in application to national or

individual situations. They exposed evil conditions, interpreted Scripture, pronounced the judgments of the Lord, brought words of hope and comfort—in short, they spoke the mind of the Lord. As a part of that task, they also foretold the plan of God. So we find that after the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah “was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.” The old prophecy that follows consists to a large extent of echoes from the Old Testament. It is a prophecy that blesses God, edifies the hearers, and prepares their hearts for the coming Christ (Luke 1:67ff).

So too we find that the opinion of some of the Jews was that Jesus was “one of the prophets” (Mark 7:28). At this point in his ministry Jesus had done, as far as is known to us, little “predictive prophecy.” He spoke authoritatively and interpreted the Word of God.

In Acts 21 we hear of Philip’s four daughters, who prophesied (vs. 9), and of Agabus, “a prophet” (vs. 10). Agabus has a message from the Holy Spirit for Paul. Paul will be given into the hands of the Gentiles by the Jews in Jerusalem. (Note, however, that Agabus comes from Judea to deliver his message and that there was considerable unrest in Jerusalem about Paul’s preaching (vss. 20-22), a fact with which Agabus was undoubtedly acquainted.) Nor is this the first time Paul is told what will happen to him in Jerusalem. Already earlier he had said, “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me” (Acts 20:22, 23). Nevertheless, we have in the case of Agabus an instance of predictive prophecy by someone so gifted (cf. Acts 11:28). Agabus’ message does not tell Paul what to do. Some of the people around Paul interpret the prophecy as a warning that he should not go to Jerusalem. Paul, however, is “ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem” (Acts 21:12-13), and goes his way.

In I Corinthians 14, Paul describes the desired effects of prophecy as the upbuilding, encouragement and consolation of the bearers. The prophets are subject to each other, their words are to be tested. Their message may take the form of a revelation. The purpose of prophecy is again described, this time as “learning and encouragement.” It is evident that Paul places great value on prophecy. He advises the Corinthians to seek especially the gift of prophecy. The prophet is greater than the tongues speaker, because the former edifies the church, whereas the latter edifies himself. It is significant to note that this is the case only when there is no interpretation of tongues. When there is interpretation, prophecy and tongues-speaking are of equal value to the church (I Cor. 14:1-5). All this would indicate that the gift of prophecy is not so much the foretelling of events as the forthtelling of God’s word as it has come to us in the Scriptures and in Jesus Christ. We should affirm, therefore, that preaching is prophecy—or, more fully, the proclamation of God’s word by a Spirit-filled believer, in which the word is so spoken and applied that the hearers are taught, encouraged, edified and comforted is prophecy.

This is especially so in the light of the biblical conviction that, “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets;

but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus Christ is the conclusive Word of God. Every prophecy today, as in Paul's day, is subject not only to the other prophets, but ultimately to the Scriptures. No prophecy can deny what Scripture teaches, for God cannot contradict himself. Since the words of the prophets are subject to testing, they do not have the measure of inspiration, infallibility and authority that Scripture has. The sufficiency, uniqueness and normativity of Scripture needs to be fully maintained.

Much is made among Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals of the spontaneity that is supposed to be the hallmark of a spiritual gift. The well prepared sermon which is based on careful study of text in its original languages and which takes into account the best exegetical principles cannot be prophecy, according to this view, though it may contain prophecy when the speaker departs from his prepared manuscript and "is led" to make more spontaneous remarks. We do not believe, however, that such a distinction between "prepared prophecy" and "compelled prophecy" is a scriptural distinction. "Prepared prophecy" may be equally compelled as previously unrehearsed remarks.

Moreover, the frequently stated or implied definition of prophecy as "supernatural speech in known language from the Spirit and not from the intellect" contradicts everything we know about the prophets from the Bible, and does not honor the biblical teaching that our minds are subject to (not cancelled out by) Christ. If the aforementioned definition of prophecy were correct, the result would be at least equal to the authority of Scripture, and therefore not in need of testing. Nor could it be said by Paul, as he does, that our prophecy is imperfect (I Cor. 13:9).

On the other hand, we caution against a too facile identification of preaching and prophecy. For preaching to be prophetic, it must stand the test of fidelity to Scripture and compelling application to and insight into the contemporary needs of the people of God. Such prophetic preaching is, indeed, much to be desired today.

The preponderant emphasis on prophecy as forthtelling need not exclude altogether, however, the possibility of prophecy as foretelling such as in the case of Agabus. Any utterance, however, must be subject to the full range of biblical teaching as well as to communal scrutiny (I Cor. 14:32) and the inner assent of those to whom this prophecy is directed. To allow for this may appear to be opening the door to all kinds of aberrations and excesses. Indeed, there are people who have made this kind of thing their claim to fame. Naive believers may easily be taken in by supposed direction from the Lord for a certain course of action, such as happened to the Thessalonians (II Thess. 2:2). However, sufficient guidelines and limitations are given in the Scriptures (e.g., Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 32:6-9; I Cor. 14 and I John 4:1-6) so that the people of God who are truly willing to follow the way of the Lord as revealed in Scripture may be confident that they will discover that "God is not a God of confusion, but of peace" (I Cor. 14:32).

We would also call attention to the words of the Apostle Paul that even though "our prophecy is imperfect" (I Cor. 13:9), he says, "So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophecy" (I Cor. 14:39) and, "Do

not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything" (I Thess. 5:19). In addition, we would urge the church to continue diligently to search the Scriptures and to be always on guard against false prophecy.

### GIFTS OF POWER: *Healing, Miracles, Faith.*

#### Healing:

Next to speaking in tongues, this is probably the most frequent topic of controversy. Whereas Paul lists healing as a specific gift given to some, James assigns to the elders of the church the task of praying for the sick, "and the prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:13-18). It has long been the practice of our churches to pray for the sick. It is the regular task of our pastors to visit the sick and to pray with and for them. Every church can testify of answers to such prayer. Sometimes, such healing is by means of the God-given skills of physicians and "miracle" drugs. At other times, the medical profession has had to confess that a healing has taken place which is beyond its skill and understanding. In every case, thanksgiving and praise belong to God.

Our Lord devoted much compassion and energy to the healing of the sick. The apostles, too, had a ministry of healing. The purpose of these healing miracles is often overlooked today. The author of the book of Hebrews states that they are God's witness to the gospel (Hebrews 2:4). The apostle John calls Christ's miracles "signs." They attest to the nature of the kingdom Christ came to bring and the deity of the King. In the disputed ending of the Gospel of Mark we read that following the ascension of Christ, the disciples "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by signs that attended it." It should be noted that not only healing, but the gifts of the Spirit in general have this "sign" character (Heb. 2:4). Wherever divine healing is promoted for its own sake, therefore, and not as a confirmation of the gospel of salvation and a manifestation of the kingdom of God, we have a distortion of the teaching of Scripture.

In fact, healings, miracles and exorcism may even be done under the power of Satan, as Jesus Himself testifies when he says, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers" (Matt. 7:21-23). So too the coming of the anti-christ will be marked by "pretended signs and wonders" (II Thess. 2:9). These warnings alert us to the possibility of demonic healing, magical healing and mediumistic healing. A few years ago we might have dismissed this as medieval superstition and psychological manipulation. The phenomenal rise of the occult and Satan worship have robbed us of the luxury of dismissing these things so lightly and should lead us to take with renewed seriousness the spiritual hierarchy of evil headed by Satan to

which frequent reference is made in Scripture (e.g., John 14:30; Eph. 2:2; 6:2; II Cor. 11:14; Col. 1:13; I Tim. 3:7; II Tim. 2:26; I Peter 5:8; I John 3:8; Rev. 2:9, 13 and 3:9).

It is not within our mandate to discuss the occult. We simply warn that healing and the occult may in certain instances be related and that such occult healing may be camouflaged under the guise of the gospel. Jesus' warning is much to the point: "False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But take heed; I have told you all things beforehand" (Mark 13:22). These warnings, however, ought not to dissuade us from taking seriously the teaching of Scripture regarding divine healing, or the testimony of those who witness to being so healed.

The witness of James 5 is that divine healing may take place in the context of divine forgiveness—a pattern that is evident in the ministry of Christ as well. In some instances in Christ's ministry, he attributes the healing to the faith of the person healed (Mark 5:34) or the faith of the person who brings the need to Jesus' attention (Mark 7:29). At other times, no mention is made of faith at all (Mark 8:22ff). On the occasion of the healing of the boy with a dumb spirit, the boy's father says to Jesus, "If you can do anything . . . help us." And Jesus replies, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." To which the father responds, "I believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9). In connection with this same healing, Jesus stresses the necessity of prayer.

It would appear that faith, forgiveness and prayer play an important role in the lives of those who receive the Lord's healing. At the same time, such healing can occur without the presence of any of these—precisely because such healing is a sign pointing to the power of God both to heal and to save. While James 5 posits a relation between sin and sickness, it is clear that not all instances of sickness are related to the sin of the person afflicted (John 9:3). Rather, we should say that sickness entered the world as a result of sin. Sickness is also a part of the curse of the law (Deut. 18:15-22, 27-29, 35, 58-61). But "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). Other Scripture passages testify that sickness can be ascribed to the oppressive powers of Satan (Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; II Cor. 12:7). Satan, however, always works within the permissive will of God (e.g., Job). It may also be the love of God who uses illness to discipline his children in order to yield in them, "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

It is a common belief of neo-Pentecostals that all sickness is from the devil and that God does not want sickness. We would respond that adversity may come from the hand of the Lord to chasten us and keep us humble and dependent upon him. It is true that in the paradise that was and in the paradise that is to come, spiritual, moral, mental and physical wholeness go together. Where the spiritual and moral realm are in disobedience to the Lord, the *shalom* of life is gone and physical illness may follow (I Cor. 11:30). For the people of God, however, this is the Lord's chastening and not the devil's doing: "But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (I Cor. 11:32).

God is a God of healing: "I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex. 15:26) and "I will take sickness away from the midst of you" (Ex. 23:25). Psalm 103 places forgiveness and healing side by side (vs. 3). The ministry of our Lord, of the apostles, and the teaching of James 5 show that these are not promises restricted to the Old Testament.

On the other hand, Paul had to be content to keep his thorn in the flesh so that God's strength could be perfected in Paul's weakness (II Cor. 12:9). Timothy had a digestive problem and Paul recommends a common remedy by suggesting "a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" (I Tim. 5:23). In Philippians 2:25-30 we are told of Epaphroditus, a fellow worker with Paul, who had been seriously ill and "near to death." The impression is left that Epaphroditus recovered following a lengthy illness and without recourse to a miracle of instant healing.

In the light of all this we would warn against the possible errors involved when healing is always made to depend on the sick person's faith, when healing becomes identified with a healer instead of with Christ, and when laying on of hands is always insisted upon. In addition, we find that overemphasis on divine healing can involve an impatient desire to usher in the perfected kingdom of God. We are saved in hope and must wait with eager longing for the glory that is to come, the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:18-25). The kingdom of God does break through here and now, but not in its fulness.

We conclude that we should accept in praise and thanksgiving to God the advances of modern medicine as well as the direct intervention of the Spirit in healing as gifts from God, meant to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4) and to demonstrate to us the perfection of his kingdom, the truth of the gospel and the glory of his Name. Believers ought diligently to pray for healing for each other and themselves, elders in particular ought to pray for the sick, and all should pray believing that the Lord who sent the Spirit is still the Lord whose power can astonish us beyond measure and who does all things well (Mark 7:37). At the same time, the threat of the occult, the warnings of our Lord, and the still partial unfolding of God's kingdom, should spur us on to hold fast the word of life and not to believe the lies of the kingdom of darkness, even when they come under the guise of the gospel.

### Miracles:

Much of what has been said of healing can also be said of miracles. Examples of miracles abound in both the Old and New Testaments; the exodus out of Egypt, the forty years of wandering in the wilderness and the entrance into the promised land, the ministries of Elijah and Elisha are all periods in which many miracles are recorded. The ministry of our Lord was marked by numerous miracles such as the turning of water into wine, the feeding of the five thousand, the miraculous catch of fish and the stilling of the storm. During the time of the apostles, also, miracles are recorded. Peter and John are set free from prison by an angel and Paul struck Elymas the magician with temporary blindness. In the wider apostolic circle, too, miracles are recorded: "Stephen,

full of grace and power did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8).

In this connection, we wish to emphasize the biblical teaching that miracles are signs and that they should not be and may not be sought for their own sake. It is particularly John's Gospel which stresses the sign character of the miracles (including healing). These signs come from God and point men to God (3:2; 9:16) and may result in faith (2:11; 2:23; 20:30f). Such faith is acceptable to God (10:37; 14:11), but it is clearly an inferior kind of faith. Indeed, Jesus repudiates faith that rests primarily on signs (4:48). The signs are in the first instance valuable as establishing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and may thus serve to confirm the superior kind of faith which is awakened by the spoken or written word. The signs elicit praise for God (Luke 9:34) and manifest the glory of God (John 2:11).

When the Pharisees wish to test Jesus and ask him for a sign, Jesus answers, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (Matt. 16:4; Luke 11:29f), indicating his death and resurrection. Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to emphasize the necessity of repentance on the basis of the written word: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). To those who already believe or to those who are weak in faith the signs confirm the spoken and written word and strengthen faith. But nowhere does the New Testament encourage us to seek for or yearn after signs.

The task and emphasis of the church is the proclamation of the good news (Luke 14:23), and discipleship (Luke 14:25-34). The Scriptures have been given us as the written witness "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Jesus pronounces a special blessing on those "who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:24). Paul says that "Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:22, 23).

It is a concession to our weakness that God grants signs, and even then they may be misunderstood. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him" (John 3:2). Yet the signs were insufficient because Jesus has to say to Nicodemus, "But you do not receive our testimony" (John 3:11). Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one understood the sign and returned to give praise and thanksgiving. Upon this one Jesus pronounces the benediction, "Your faith has saved you" (Luke 17:11-19).

We should, therefore, reject those who come with promises of "miracle revivals" instead of with the preaching of the cross. On the other hand, nothing in Scripture forbids us to believe that the Lord may work signs and miracles in our day. This is still the New Testament era, the Holy Spirit is still sovereign in the church and may strengthen faith in whatever way he chooses. He who is at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think—not for the glory of men or a cause identified with human effort, but to the glory of God

(Eph. 3:20, 21). Only, let the priorities and emphases of Scripture not be violated.

#### Faith:

Faith is listed as one of the spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12. This kind of faith may well be the kind of faith which trusts God to heal and perform miracles and may therefore be closely related to the other spiritual gifts. This faith should be distinguished from the faith by which alone a man is righteous before God (Rom. 1:16, 17). Paul describes faith that is a spiritual gift as the kind of faith that removes mountains (I Cor. 13:2; cf. Matt. 7:20). Daniel's courage in the lion's den and Peter's act of walking on water may be example of this kind of faith. As a spiritual gift, it cannot be expected that every believer has this kind of faith, though all may pray for it. Many pastors will be able to testify of believers in their congregations who in the face of very adverse circumstances are able to praise and extol God and see his hand in every part of their lives. These believers, too, may have received this kind of faith.

#### GIFTS OF UNDERSTANDING: *Utterance of Wisdom, Utterance of Knowledge, Distinguishing Between Spirits*

##### Utterance of Wisdom:

Christ promised his disciples that he would give them "a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict" (Luke 21:15). So we find that when Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin to give account of themselves after the healing of the man born blind (Acts 3:1-10), they give a good defense of themselves. We read that the Sanhedrin saw "the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, (and) wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13; cf. Acts 6:8-10).

The utterance of wisdom, then is the Spirit-given ability "wisely to manage the gospel in its administration unto the advantage and furtherance of the truth" (John Owen). So Peter, speaking of Paul's epistles, says that they were written "according to the wisdom given him" (I Peter 3:15). Paul writes that in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). We conclude, therefore, that the utterance of wisdom is to give the mind of Christ, especially in defense of the gospel so that the hearers are convinced of the truth expressed, or harden their hearts against it.

It should be obvious that this in no way relieves the church and individual believers from responsible Bible study and exegesis. It is a comforting thought, however, that especially in times of persecution and great opposition to the gospel, those who are called upon to give account of their faith, may pray for this gift and be sure that the Lord will not forsake them (cf. James 1:5).

##### Utterance of Knowledge:

As is the case with the "utterance of wisdom," the New Testament

does not define what the "utterance of knowledge" is. We therefore need to tread carefully in speaking of it.

It is necessary for every believer to have a measure of knowledge of the revelation of God, especially as that revelation has come to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We usually call this a saving knowledge of the gospel, which is another way of describing faith. This knowledge must be confessed or uttered in words by every believer (Rom. 10: 10). The "utterance of knowledge," however, is a spiritual gift and as such is granted to some but not to all believers.

Paul may be claiming the gift of knowledge when he writes in Ephesians 3:

"When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power."

No one today will have this gift in the same way or in the same measure or for the same reason the apostles had it; viz., to reveal and explain the plan of God as it had come to expression in Jesus Christ. This revelation, explanation and knowledge is sufficiently and infallibly contained in Scripture. The "utterance of knowledge" in the church, we suggest, is a heightened insight and understanding of the Scriptures and the ability to communicate this to others in teaching. As such it is a gift always needed in the church and no one should assume the ministry without it. Again, this gift does not preclude the necessity of careful and diligent exegesis of the Scriptures. But careful and diligent study of the Scriptures should accompany this gift if it is to be used for the building up of the household of God.

In Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal literature, the utterance of knowledge is seen by some as a teaching gift (Donald Gee). Others associate it with divine guidance. Dennis and Rita Bennet, for example, define it as "the supernatural revelation of facts past, present or future, which were *not learned through the efforts of the natural mind*" (emphasis theirs). Siegfried Grossman defines this gift as "the charismatic application of God's Word to a current situation." In most of the literature, utterance of wisdom and utterance of knowledge are closely associated. The Bennets say, for example, "The 'word of knowledge' is supernaturally revealed information, but the 'word of wisdom' tells how to *apply* the information."

We would emphasize again that our description of this gift is no more than a suggestion. When Paul mentioned it in I Corinthians he must have known exactly what he meant by it and, we assume, his readers did also. We, however, cannot know this with such certainty, and therefore we challenge the easy claims which are made relative to this gift.

#### Discerning of Spirits:

The Apostle John writes, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but

test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God . . . Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (I John 4:1-3, 6).

Because of the danger of false prophecy and because Satan is ever the great imitator, there is always need for the church to be gifted in "distinguishing between spirits." Since such discernment is listed among the gifts of the Spirit, it follows that from time to time individuals within the church are given ability to discern above that of their fellow-members. Such ability may well be connected with utterances of knowledge and wisdom. In addition, Paul points to a kind of communal discernment (I Cor. 14:29, 33).

The test of a spirit as given in the above quotation from I John cannot be applied naively or simplistically. Jesus foresees that not all who say, "Lord, Lord" will enter his kingdom, "but every one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Our Lord applies this especially to those who claim to possess spiritual gifts and have used them in his name (Matt. 7:21-23). Obedience to the will of God as we know it from Scripture, therefore, is another test (cf. I John 3:10).

Although there is always need for discerning of spirits, this is especially so today when we are being bombarded on every side with an explosion of literature on the person and work of the Holy Spirit as well as on the occult. We should, therefore, pray for the gift of discernment and add an obedient ear to the Scripture.

Part of the church's arsenal for discerning spirits is the work of the theologian to defend the church from error. We see the Apostle Paul doing this in his painstaking exegesis of the Old Testament against the Judaizers in Galatia. There is an unfortunate tendency in neo-Pentecostalism to dismiss theology as "man's words" and to accept as nearly divine the oral and written testimonies of experiences by those who claim a special Spirit baptism and the gift of tongues. The church must maintain, in the face of this, that experiences must always be subject to and tested by the total witness of the Scriptures as none other than the words of the Holy Spirit himself (Heb. 3:7a). For this we require the effort of faithful biblical scholars as much as the insight of the simple Christian.

The excesses of the neo-Pentecostal movement alone should teach us to be wary of elevating experience above scriptural discernment. Such excesses may be found in the unbiblical use of tongues, in the fellowship not based on truth, in denial of the unity between Old and New Testaments (e.g. the question of baptism), in the claim that the Bible is no longer necessary for the Spirit-baptized Christian (based on I John 2:27), in denial of the sovereignty of God, in refusal to heed a plain teaching of Scripture on moral questions (out of fear for legalism or because the Spirit has not yet "spoken") and even in a wrong view of the Trinity such as is found among the "Jesus Only" Pentecostals. We emphasize that these are excesses and that they are not essential charac-

teristics of neo-Pentecostalism. Nevertheless they are present and are often uncritically accepted, and as such are evidence of the great need for spiritual discernment. While we do not wish in any way to deny that the Christian faith needs to be experienced in all its riches, we would warn the church to be on its guard, lest experiences are elevated above Scripture and we become trapped in the snares of Satan.

In concluding this section of our report, we call attention to two matters which appear to be related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit: guidance and exorcism.

#### Guidance:

The Scriptures are rich in promises for daily guidance by the Lord. The Psalmist, for example, prays

Make me to know thy way, O LORD;  
teach me thy paths.

Lead me in thy truth, and teach me,  
for thou art the God of my salvation  
for thee I wait all the day long. (Psalm 25:4, 5)

and, as if in answer, confesses,

Good and upright is the LORD;  
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right,  
and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and testimonies. (vs. 8-10)

Isaiah says,

If you take away from the midst of you the yoke,  
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness;  
if you pour yourself out for the hungry  
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
then shall your light rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be as the noonday.

And the LORD will guide you continually. . . . (Isaiah 58:9-11).

The prayer of Paul for the Colossians is "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9-10). The well-known words of Paul in Romans 12:2 present the two aspects, which invariably go together: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." In other words, the daily practice of righteousness and knowing the will of God go together. We may not expect the Lord to lead us while we openly defy his commandments. As the Psalmist says, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3).

Prayers for guidance by the Holy Spirit are a regular part of congregational prayers from the pulpit and at the opening of our ecclesiastical assemblies. In declining or accepting calls, our ministers will often use language such as, "I have (not) been led to accept your call." We

acknowledge, therefore, the need and reality of God's guidance in our individual and communal activities.

Among neo-Pentecostals there is frequently a heightened awareness of guidance, usually called "divine guidance" or the "guidance of the Holy Spirit." Expressions such as "the Holy Spirit told me" or "I have been led" are common. Sometimes the biblical terminology of "waiting upon the Lord" is used in seeking guidance (Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 40:31). We do not take exception to these things, but commend our neo-Pentecostal brethren for their desire to be led by God in all their decisions.

However, there are features of the way in which guidance is sought or the way in which guidance is claimed to which we do take exception. It is especially the claim or search for *special* guidance that is questionable. For some neo-Pentecostals, at least, the normal processes of decision-making are felt to be insufficient and "spiritual" or "supernatural" guidance is sought. The Bible is opened at random, for example, in the expectation that the first verse upon which the eye falls will give definitive information upon which to base the decision to be made. Or one waits for "inner light" or an "inner voice" or a message spoken by way of "prophecy" or tongues in a meeting. A supposed hallmark of the best guidance is often that it must be spontaneous as opposed to deliberated or thought out.

Not only can such guidance involve an almost magical use of Scripture, but it introduces an unwarranted dichotomy between what is "spiritual" or "supernatural" and what is natural or guided by the ordinary processes of the heart and mind. Whether consciously or not, this downgrades Scripture and calls into question the teaching of Paul that, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16). At its worst, this seeking after special guidance denies the radical transformation which the Holy Spirit works in regeneration (John 3) and by which we are declared to have "put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col. 3:10), which new nature is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

The guidance of God, we suggest, comes by way of his gracious providences and by way of using regenerated hearts and minds by which discernment is taught according to the will of God, i.e., his commandments (Rom. 12:1, 2). Prayer will play an important role in biblical guidance (James 1:5) as will the advice of trustworthy fellow believers (Prov. 12:15; 19:20) and of the church (Acts 15:1-29).

We do not wish to deny that guidance may come, from time to time in unusual ways. But we would emphasize that normative and sufficient guidance are given us by the Spirit-inspired Scriptures and the renewed image of the Spirit-filled and Spirit-regenerated believer. Wherever unusual guidance appears to be given, it would still have to be in accordance with the teaching of Scripture, for God does not contradict himself, and Satan can deceive us by appearing as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14). We regret to say that some have been so deceived and have claimed divine guidance for decisions directly contrary to the

commandments of God. What is worse, such deception is then credited to God and the person who has been misled disclaims all responsibility, because "the Holy Spirit led me!"

In concluding this admittedly summary statement on guidance, we would point to the biblical teaching on wisdom, from which we learn that the fear (love and obedience) of God is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10), that the seat of wisdom is the heart or mind (I Kings 3:9, 12) and that wisdom is not a matter of abstract theorizing but of practical daily living (Proverbs). Wisdom that is not guided by the revelation of Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all knowledge and wisdom (Col. 2:3), is foolishness at best (I Cor. 1:18, 19) and demonic at its worst (James 3:15). "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity" (James 3:17). The people of God must find the source of life in all its abundance in Christ Jesus, "Whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30).

#### Exorcism:

The ministry of our Lord was marked not only by numerous healings and miracles, but also by frequent contact with "unclean" or evil spirits. Among the numerous examples of Jesus' opposition to the power of Satan, we note two. Following his baptism, Jesus is led "by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). Of these temptations, three are told us. Each time, Jesus defeats Satan's designs by making reference to Scripture and saying, "It is written" thus demonstrating the power of God's word over Satan (Matt. 4:1-11). In another instance, Jesus meets the man known as the Gadarene Demoniak (Mark 5:20). The man is possessed by a legion of demons who torment him so that he is forced to live among the tombs. The demon(s) cries out to Jesus, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." Jesus, however, exorcises the demon(s) and allows them to enter a herd of swine, who plummet to their death into the sea.

When Jesus sent out the seventy, he "gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1). Already during the ministry of Christ, his name is used to cast out devils by persons other than his disciples (Mark 9:38-41). The Gospels distinguish between ordinary illness and demon possession (e.g. Matt. 4:24) and similarly between healings and exorcism. On the basis of the Gospels, we cannot deny the reality of Satan and of spiritual beings hostile to God and to men.

The ministry of Jesus is an eschatological event—it ushers in the last days and the eventual defeat of the kingdom of darkness. It is during Jesus' ministry, therefore, that the demonic world attacked with unprecedented force and vigor. But everywhere, the demons must retreat before the divine majesty and power of Christ (Mark 3:22-27). If no further reports of demon possession and exorcism were found in the New Testament, we might conclude that the demonic world suffered a complete and definitive defeat at the hands of Christ. But demonic

activity and exorcism continue after Pentecost (Acts 19:11-20). Demon possession has been reported throughout the history of the church, especially in places where the gospel was making initial inroads into pagan areas.

Again in our day and in the western world, there are reports of demon possession and exorcism. We express great reservation about some of these reports and the indecent eagerness with which some gospel practitioners "diagnose" cases of demon possession, when the difficulties are cases of hardened sinfulness, character weakness, natural resistance to the gospel, self-induced fears, mental illness or diseases such as diabetes ("sugar demon"). All of these are serious and the Christian counselor, minister or physician must and can deal with them according to biblical insight.

We find there are two things common to cases of demon possession that are described in Scripture in any detail: the affected person is helpless to deal with it and the demon(s) speak independently of the person's volition. In such cases, prayer and a believing command of exorcism in the name of the Lord Jesus relieves the sufferer and casts out the demon(s). Sane Christians who have met with demon possession have also noted that whenever there is doubt whether or not one deals with a genuine instance of demon possession, there will be immediate and sometimes violent opposition to the mention of the name of Christ.

We believe that as the last days draw to their close, there may be a noticeable increase in demon possession. We caution against the too hasty assumption that most cases of moral lapse and resistance to the gospel are instances of demon possession, but we call upon the church to exorcise such cases of true demon possession as may come to its attention with unerring fidelity to Christ and the Scriptures.

The entire subject of demon possession and exorcism leads into consideration of the occult, which is beyond our mandate. We hope, therefore, that the above brief consideration is sufficient to lead the church into greater awareness and some insight into these things.

#### VIII. NEO-PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC, INDIVIDUALISM AND EXTRA-ECCLESIAL KOINONIA

In our study of neo-Pentecostalism "in the light of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit," we encountered, in the available literature and/or in real situations in the life of the Christian Reformed Church, several related matters which demand our attention: 1. neo-Pentecostal hermeneutic\*, 2. a tendency toward individualism, and 3. a widespread practice of extra-ecclesial *koinonia*. These related matters are generally not discussed in the available literature. They may serve as clues, however, to help us identify and delineate the perspective within which, consciously or unconsciously, neo-Pentecostalism operates. Because they are integrally related, No. 1 and No. 2 will be discussed simultaneously; No. 3, extra-ecclesial *koinonia*, will be treated separately.

\* By "hermeneutic" we mean the perspective and the interpretive principles involved in the interpretation of the Bible.

### A. *Hermeneutic and Individualism.*

We have noted already in our report our appreciation for the frequently reiterated emphasis on the Bible in neo-Pentecostal literature. The neo-Pentecostal testifies that the experience of "baptism with/in the Holy Spirit" stimulates one to go back to the Bible, to immerse himself in the Bible, to "read, learn, mark and inwardly digest" the Bible. For neo-Pentecostals the Bible is an exciting book. For this the church can only be grateful. When one examines how the Bible functions among the neo-Pentecostals, however, his enthusiasm for their insistence upon the necessity and importance of the Bible is dampened somewhat. Neo-Pentecostal interpretations of specific sections of the Bible frequently reflect a private or individualistic reading. A good illustration of the technique of Bible interpretation found among neo-Pentecostals can be found in Dennis and Rita Bennett's, *The Holy Spirit and You* (Plainfield, New Jersey, Logos International, 1971, p. 199).

Therefore, spend part of your time reading the Bible just waiting for the Holy Spirit to speak to you from its pages. When you do this, be prepared for some surprising insights, and some unexpected interpretations! The Holy Spirit can use the Scripture very freely and allegorically when he chooses. You may see a factual description of some aspect of the Temple, or an unlikely spot in a long list of names, may suddenly strike you with spiritual significance. When you try to share it with someone else, they may look at you blankly—but don't be disheartened by that. *That* little morsel was for you! The Rev. J. A. Dennis, of Austin, Texas, tells in his testimony how he was healed by laying hold of a promise for him from the Scripture. He was suffering from stomach trouble, and the Holy Spirit showed him the text: "I will take sickness away from the *midst* of thee!" (Exod. 23:25, KJV) "That's for me!" said J. A. Dennis. "In the midst of me, in my stomach, I've got trouble. God will take it away!" And God did take it away, and healed him completely! Later on, the Rev. Mr. Dennis told this to a well-trained Bible scholar who laughed and said: "But *that* isn't what that verse means!" J. A. Dennis was healed, just the same, because the Holy Spirit said: "That's what *I* want it to mean to you, to build your faith!" This kind of inspiration is for blessing, not for doctrine.

J. A. Dennis' reading of Exodus 23:25 reflects a hermeneutic in which the private, immediate enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is the (only) important ingredient in the reading of the Bible. When one's understanding of a biblical passage is attributed to the private, immediate (un-mediated by the clear intent of the biblical words in context) enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the authenticity, authority and validity of this interpretation cannot be questioned since, from the neo-Pentecostal point of view, to attempt to challenge the validity of this reading places one in opposition to the Holy Spirit.

When we write about "the *immediate* enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we intend to point out that, in the neo-Pentecostal literature we have investigated, the words, phrases and sentences of the Bible serve as cues which precipitate a direct encounter between God and the individual.

This God-man encounter does not take place in isolation from the Bible, but the Bible functions in only a very limited way in this encounter. The Bible serves as a tool through the use of which one experiences God himself—directly. God speaks *directly* to the individual. He instructs the individual; he shows himself to the individual.

Historically the Reformed community has repudiated the possibility of a *direct* encounter with God. The Reformed community has confessed that we encounter God only in God's works in our world on our behalf (his works in creation, providence and redemption). We recognize and confess God, the Redeemer-Creator, in what Calvin called the "signs of his presence." The Bible is indispensable to this recognition and confession. The Bible is the norm, the standard to which all experience of God must conform. We communally look at our world through the spectacles of the Bible. When we do so, we recognize and confess God, the Redeemer-Creator, as he has acted and acts in our world on our behalf. This recognition and confession are not autonomous acts. They are acts which are initiated and precipitated by the Spirit of God. As the Holy Spirit leads the church in the interpretation of the Bible, he works by means of and in conformity with the content of the Bible; he does not work outside of the framework of the content of the Bible. We understand this to be the thrust of John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:12-15.

In the literature we have investigated, moreover, the neo-Pentecostal experience of God himself which is said to be effected by the Holy Spirit through the words, phrases and sentences of the Bible takes place in the space-time continuum, but is different from and other than a historical experience. It is a "spiritual" experience. In this context, we judge that the term "spiritual" functions as the antithesis to "physical," to that which pertains to life in the physical and cultural realm of this world. It is a *direct* experience of "another world," a "different realm." This experience is effected by the Spirit by means of the words, phrases and sentences of the Bible, but the content of the experience is not necessarily controlled by the content of those words, phrases and sentences as this can be deduced through historical and grammatical exegesis of the Bible.

When one's interpretation of the Bible is attributed to the private, immediate enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, no criteria are available to the Christian community by means of which the interpretation may be evaluated. Consequently, the Christian conduct which this kind of interpretation of the Bible stimulates is private, individualistic conduct. (We limit ourselves at this point to Christian conduct because that is the limitation which the Bennetts place upon this kind of Bible reading or interpretation: "This kind of inspiration is for blessing, not for doctrine.")

We urge our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters to be sensitive to the danger involved in attributing one's individual interpretation of a specific section of the Bible to the private, immediate enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. This kind of Bible interpretation endangers the communal character of the Christian church in which the *one* Spirit operates in all the members of the organism of the church for the welfare of the body of Christ. Paul tells us that "you (plural) are the body (singular) of Christ and individually members of it" (I Cor. 2:27).

We question, moreover, the analysis which the Bennetts make of J. A. Dennis' case. This case contains evidence which is adequate to indicate that the dynamics operative in Bible interpretation are always complex. The circumstances in which J. A. Dennis found himself conditioned his interpretation of the Bible. This is what J. A. Dennis' friend, a "well-trained Bible scholar," tried to tell him. J. A. Dennis' interpretation of the Bible was not an *immediate* act of the Holy Spirit. It was a mediated act. It was, moreover, a private, individualistic act of J. A. Dennis. He was so conditioned by his circumstances that a text from the Bible was lifted out of its linguistic and historical context. It was then interpolated into the framework of his life. J. A. Dennis, we remind our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters, is a member of the Christian community. As such, he *shares* the *one* Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, who is given to each one individually as God wills. The Spirit apportions, however, to each member of the Christian community for the purpose of the common good (I Cor. 12).

We find no evidence in the Bible to warrant the conclusion that there are two kinds of activities of the Holy Spirit in the Christian church: one which is directed to the individual's "blessing" in isolation from the community of Christ, and a second which is operative in the individual but which is directed to the welfare of the total community of Christ.

The Bennetts advise Christians to "spend part of (their) time reading the Bible just waiting for the Holy Spirit to speak to (them) from its pages. In this technique of Bible interpretation, the Christian uses no tools to discern the meaning of the Bible, to interpret the Bible. The Christian is passive. He is a tablet upon which the Holy Spirit, through the vehicle of the words of the Bible, writes God's private, individualistic message to him in the circumstances of this moment. That message may coincide with the meaning of the biblical words, or it may be different from the meaning of the biblical words. We wish to point out that this model of Bible interpretation assumes an atomistic model of the church of Christ in which each individual stands alone and immediately in the presence of God. We wish, furthermore, to raise two questions at this point.

1. Although this model of Bible reading seems to emphasize greatly God's role in illuminating and directing Christians, does not this model do violence to the biblical picture of man as God's covenant-partner who is answerable to God always for his faith and conduct? The Bible's picture of man is one in which man is not isolated from the historical, political, social and economic factors which are operative in his environment. God does not speak to him in isolation from these. Man's thought processes, moreover, are not ignored in the Bible's picture of the God-man covenant partnership. (Cf. Adam's naming the animals.) These processes, too, are God's work. The neo-Pentecostal hermeneutic does violence to God's work. It does not honor God as much as it, at first glance, seems to.

2. Does not this model of Bible interpretation violate the mediated activity of God in revelation and in the production of the Bible, the inscripturated Word of God? We can state this question in another way: Does not this model of Bible interpretation violate the model which has

been operative in the Reformed community under the names of "historical revelation" and "organic inspiration"?

In some neo-Pentecostal literature the private, immediate enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is stated in a crass fashion which seems more objectionable than that found in the book of Rita and Dennis Bennett. One must ask, however, if the crassly stated perspective differs significantly from the perspective operative in the Bennetts' book. Walter Hollenweger, (*The Pentecostals*, p. 298) provides us with an illustration which is found in the Full Gospel Union *Manual*.

God has not confined himself to the written word. He still speaks directly to his children as the Bible plainly teaches he has done in the past. He does not direct anyone contrary to the standard of righteousness as taught in the Bible, but in his direct leadings he often makes known his will to a person entirely apart from any written statement of scripture known to that person.

We summarize the problems involved in the position maintained in this quotation.

1. The quotation ignores the difference between the primary, normative character of the Bible and the secondary, subordinate character of all other historical contexts.
2. If one grants the validity of the position maintained in the quotation, one has no criterion for stating that God does not direct anyone contrary to the standard of righteousness which is taught in the Bible.
3. If one grants the validity of the position maintained in the quotation, how can one confess that the Bible is our only infallible guide for faith and practice?

We recognize that Christians, including those in the Christian Reformed Church, frequently speak of reading the Bible "devotionally." Precisely what this term suggests is difficult to ascertain. We hope that the term is not designed to suggest that reason does not function in the reading of the Bible. We hope, moreover, that the term does not suggest that the meaning of a specific section of the Bible which is derived from a "devotional reading" of the Bible differs from the meaning of that same passage when it is discerned through the use of the linguistic and historical tools which the Christian community has forged through the centuries.

We recognize, of course, that in our individual as also in our corporate reading or interpretation of the Bible we may read a specific section of the Bible ten times or hundreds of times without that passage "speaking" to us. In the changed circumstances of a particular moment, however, that word blazes like the rising sun. A new world opens up. What seemed to be a dead word takes on life and generates life. This phenomenon is quite different from the phenomenon which the Bennetts describe. This phenomenon may in part result from the use of new linguistic or historical insights. It may in part result from a new historical context which is analogous to that of the biblical writer. It may in part result from attempting to read the biblical passage without

some of the barnacles of interpretation which have encrusted the text historically and which have made the text opaque.

We recognize, moreover, that one specific biblical passage may in the present circumstances be a bright light for one person but his attempts to communicate the significance of this passage to another person or group of persons fails. The same word which addressed one powerfully in his circumstances may not address another in his circumstances. The other may be grateful for this evidence of God's activity, but the specific passage of the Bible at this time may leave him untouched. This phenomenon, too, is different from that which is described by the Bennetts. This phenomenon does not depend upon ignoring the linguistic and historical tools forged historically by the Christian community. On the one hand, this phenomenon indicates that Bible interpretation is in part culturally conditioned. On the other hand, this phenomenon indicates that Bible interpretation involves a dimension which can be recognized and confessed but which does not admit of rational description or definition—what the Reformed community has called the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit."

The Reformed community historically has emphasized the necessity and importance of using tools in interpreting the Bible. These tools are the common property of the Christian community and are available to every member of the Christian community as the Bible functions in the community. The Christian community forged these tools. We confess that the Spirit of God operated in the Christian community as these tools were being developed. We should not consider these tools mere human productions which were forged in isolation from God's continued active and faithful presence among men as the Lord. The tools are the tools of the linguist and the tools of the historian. They are God's gift to the Christian community and to the individual Christian. We do not mean to imply that every single believer must be a linguist and a historian. We do wish to emphasize that we interpret the Bible always in the Christian community which is shaped and moulded by the activity of the Spirit who works mediately in the Christian community through the vehicle of these linguistic and historical tools.

In evaluating a particular interpretation of a specific Bible passage, we must take into consideration the tools which the interpreter used and the way in which he used those tools. One does not use tools in a vacuum. The context, the perspective within which an individual operates, influences significantly the way in which one uses his tools what one produces with those tools. The perspective within which he operates, furthermore, does not result from an *immediate* relation between the individual and the triune God which is effected and maintained through the Bible. Rather, God uses the community of faith with its tradition of Bible reading or interpretation to influence and shape the individual. The individual functions within the community of faith. God uses also the shaped and moulded individual to enrich and influence the community of faith. We do not wish to eliminate the Holy Spirit in this process. He operates in the community of faith and in the individual as a member of the community of faith to lead the total community into

the truth. What we are suggesting is that Bible interpretation is a much more complex act than our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters assume.

In conversation with one another relative to Bible interpretation, we must articulate clearly and carefully the perspective within which we operate and the tools which we use. Communication breaks down when we fail to do this. We talk past one another. We "live in different worlds." Some illustrations gleaned from the Bennett's book may clarify this point. (We use the Bennetts because of their significance historically in the rise of neo-Pentecostalism, and because they are moderate representatives of the movement.)

'Canst thou by searching find out God?' asks the Scriptures, and the answer is 'No, not by intellectual and philosophical searching can you find God.' You can only seek God by your 'heart,' that is by your inner hunger to meet Him, the personal God, not a set of abstract principles. People say: 'I'm seeking the truth,' but Jesus says: 'I am the Truth!' (pp. 43, 44).

We discern here a factor involved in the Bennetts' perspective which demands, at least, discussion: i.e., the normative role of experience. Experience is, at least, a source and foundation of the "knowledge of God" for the Bennetts. The locale of the normative experience, moreover, is the "inner life." The Bennetts also minimize at best, or eliminate, the role of man's mind in the "inner experience."

In the Bible, as in the entire ancient Near East, "heart" is a symbol denoting man in his totality. We question, consequently, the Bennetts' usage of the term "heart." The discovery of God, the knowledge of God which the Bennetts discuss, is not that which can be articulated clearly or verbalized. It is, rather, an immediate awareness, an intuitive apprehension of God. This insistence upon the *normative* character of personal experience, stems in part from the private, individualistic faith-stance which is common to neo-Pentecostals. How does the neo-Pentecostal arrive at this private, individualistic faith-stance? He reads or interprets the Bible from an individualistic perspective. The perspective with which he operates influences his interpretation of the Bible. His interpretation of the Bible in turn strengthens his faith-stance of individualism. We submit, moreover, that the individualistic faith-stance of the neo-Pentecostal erodes the covenantal orientation of the Bible which has been discerned in the Reformed community and which has been an important factor in Bible interpretation in the Reformed community.

Let us look at another illustration which concerns explicitly a particular reading of a specific Bible passage: Acts 9, which deals with Paul's conversion:

Although the Scripture does not record at this place that Paul spoke in tongues, we know that he did so from I Corinthians 14:19 (RSV). "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all" (p. 32).

The technique of Bible interpretation which is operative here can be stated in terms of a syllogism:

1. Speaking in tongues forms part of the pattern of some New Testament situations which are similar to this one.

2. Speaking in tongues, consequently, could and should have occurred in this situation.
3. Speaking in tongues, therefore, did occur in this situation.

In view of the bad usage which was made of this technique in the Christian Church during the medieval period, we trust that it was not a technique which the Bennetts used consciously.

The texts of the Bible are shuffled around in this quotation as if they were interchangeable pieces of a mosaic. A prior commitment relative to the role of tongues governs the interpretation of the text. All texts, moreover, are stamped from the same die. The specific message of a given text is glossed over. The text is made to say what it did not and can not say. In this illustration, the authority of the Bible operates in a way which is dissociated from the text of the Bible. A formal commitment to the authority and normativity of the Bible is operative, but that commitment is not dependent on the text of the Bible. Whence does this kind of authority originate? We suggest that a particular tradition of the Christian community is the source of this concept of authority, not the text itself. The shuffling of texts found in this illustration is an example, incidentally, of the distortions which can result when one abuses a good Reformed principle of Biblical interpretation: Scripture interprets Scripture, the analogy of Scripture.

The neo-Pentecostal insists that the Bible often functions as God's specific answer to his private problems in the circumstances of the moment. This insistence results frequently in the neo-Pentecostal's abuse of the literary nature of the Bible. This kind of Bible interpretation makes the words of the Bible the Spirit's cues through which he provides a private, immediate, concrete message from God to a specific man which resolves a specific, immediate problem in that man's present. This kind of Bible reading or interpretation negates the history-of-redemption character of the Bible.

The July-August, 1972, issue of *Logos*, a well-known Pentecostal periodical, contains an article written by Jim Handyside which is entitled "The Holy Spirit Comes to Clydebank." In this article, Mr. Handyside describes the process whereby God indicated his approval of Handyside's attempt to obtain a new meeting place for his congregation.

We saw it was time to trust God for a more adequate meeting place where we could meet to worship in a scripturally designated way.

Asking, seeking God long and earnestly, I read the promise in II Samuel 7: 'For Thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant saying, I will build thee an house.' Could it be that this promise to David of old was God's answer to me hundreds of years later? When I discussed the matter with my wife, she confirmed that the Lord had spoken to her very clearly from the same verse a year earlier, and with such divine impression that she had noted it in her Bible at the time. But why should he build us a house? . . . (p. 39)

One need not be a specialist in biblical studies to note that there is a play on the word "house" in II Samuel 7:27. David wished to build a house for God, but God promised, instead, that he would build a "house"

(a dynasty) for David. God would reserve the throne of Israel for David's family. David's lineage constitutes the house God will build, not brick and mortar.

The Bennetts write that "this kind of inspiration is for blessing, not for doctrine." This kind of Bible interpretation is designed for the individual Christian as he reads and interprets the Bible privately, as God speaks to him *through* the Bible relative to the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Inherent in this private use of the Bible is always the possibility that it will influence one's apprehension of the "teaching" of the Bible. The insert *Agape Power* in the July-August, 1972, edition of *Logos* contains an article by Kathryn Kuhlman entitled "God's Word Has the Answer." This article illustrates that a private, individualistic reading or interpretation of the Bible which is thought to be the product of the immediate activity of the Holy Spirit can move easily from the area of private conduct into the area of "doctrine." The "doctrine," moreover, is bad. It has not been subjected to the critical evaluation of the Christian community and is in conflict with the Christian community's historical interpretation of the Bible. This "doctrine" ignores the hermeneutical question: the influence of the Bible's historical milieu on the meaning or content of the Bible's word, statements, method of narrating a story and describing events.

Is God a Spirit, or does he have a body?

I believe that we have scriptural proof that God does have a body. You and I are made in the image and likeness of our great Creator. I like to know that when I look up at my heavenly Father, I'm not talking just to Spirit. I'm talking to my heavenly Father who has a body.

You want further scriptural proof? You remember that Moses and God were very close. One day Moses made a request of God. He said, 'I pray thee, show me thy glory.' And he said 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord . . . . While my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my faces shall not be seen' (Ex. 33:18-23). Therefore God speaking of himself speaks of his face and his hands; and Moses saw the hinder part of the body of God. God is more than Spirit; God has a body.

This reading or interpretation of Exodus 33:18-23 isolates a single passage from the context of the entire Bible. In this interpretation all of the language which is used in the Bible is located on the same plane. It is "straight" language identical to that used when one makes the assertion, "Today is Friday," or, "It is now 11 a.m." This interpretation ignores the nuances of language which become visible when one considers the literary forms in which a particular piece of literature is presented and the historical context within which a particular piece of literature was written. This interpretation, moreover, ignores the way in which the Christian church historically has dealt with the so-called anthropomor-

phisms and opts for an interpretation which the Christian church has rejected consistently. This interpretation considers the language used in the Bible relative to God to be straight descriptions, informational language. This position the Christian church has rejected consistently throughout her history.

Neo-Pentecostalism rejects any attempt to "study" the Bible with the linguistic and historical tools which have been developed in the church. These, they suppose, smack of infidelity to the Bible. They indicate an unwillingness to subject oneself corporately and individually to the Word of God. Walter J. Hollenweger (*The Pentecostals*, p. 298) states that among Pentecostals one still encounters the view that "the Word of God is not taught in his church to be discussed but to be obeyed." We deny that these should be viewed as alternatives. All study of the Bible in the Christian community has faithful discipleship as its objective. The use of linguistic and historical tools in the study of the Bible is ultimately for the purpose of discipleship. Scholarship is pressed into the service of discipleship by the Christian community under the guidance of the Spirit of God. The Reformed community has never rejected the use of linguistic and historical tools for the purpose of aiding the Christian community to live in conformity with the Word of God. Historically the Reformed community has insisted that the tools of scholarship are to be used in a way which is compatible with our commitment to the Bible as Word of God and to the practice of discipleship which is compatible with the Gospel.

"Report 44" was given to the Christian Reformed Church by the Synod of 1972 to provide "guidelines for our understanding and further discussion of the nature and extent of biblical authority" (*Acts of Synod*, 1972, p. 66, Recommendation No. 3). In Part V of the report (entitled "Pastoral Advice") "Synod encourages the churches to see to it that biblical studies are carried on in a careful and disciplined way, submissively rethinking the thoughts of scripture itself; and accordingly warns against the use of any method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question either the event-character or the revelational meaning of biblical history, thus compromising the full authority of scripture as the Word of God" (*Acts of Synod*, 1972, p. 541, No. 5). In explicating this advice, the report states; "Biblical scholarship can be carried on *critically*, if we make clear that 'critical' does not imply a refusal to submit our thinking believingly to the authority of Scripture or a refusal to respond wholeheartedly to the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit who gave us the word. Biblical studies can be carried on *critically* if we understand 'critical' to mean a careful, disciplined, analytical rethinking of the thoughts of scripture itself.

"Thus understood, historical-critical studies, in harmony with the doctrine of organic inspiration, have contributed to a richer appreciation of the real human and historical dimension of Scripture as God's Word to man. Such scholarly approaches to Scripture have highlighted in exciting ways a better understanding of the historical setting and cultural context of the biblical message" (*Acts of Synod*, 1972, p. 541).

The perspective relative to biblical studies which is found in "Report 44" differs fundamentally from the perspective operative in the illustra-

tions of biblical interpretation among neo-Pentecostals which have been used to discern the hermeneutic operative among neo-Pentecostals. Although it is true that these illustrations stem from private, individualistic reading or interpretation of the Bible which is designed for private, individualistic "blessing, not for doctrine," the illustration taken from Kathryn Kuhlman's article indicates that there is no clear line of demarcation between the two "areas." We question, moreover, the validity of a disjunction between private reading or interpretation of the Bible for "blessing" and another kind of reading (a public, communal?) for "doctrine." This disjunction is incompatible with the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day XXV, Question and Answer 65: "Since, then, we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence comes this faith? From the Holy Spirit who *works it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.*"

The neo-Pentecostals seem to emphasize private reading of the Bible as the means of grace *par excellence* and to downgrade the preaching of the word and use of the sacraments as the means of grace. This phenomenon, in our judgment, results from the individualism which operates as an unexamined assumption among neo-Pentecostals. The biblical warrant for this individualism has not been demonstrated. We suggest that this individualism may owe more to the spirit of the Enlightenment movement in the 17th and 18th centuries than to the activity of the Holy Spirit. We do not wish to minimize private devotional exercises involving Bible reading and study, prayer, etc. We do wish to affirm, however, that even our private devotional exercises are the acts of one who is a member of the body of Christ. We wish to emphasize the interdependence which characterizes the organism of Christ. The individual in turn contributes the uniqueness which is his as God's unique creation to enrich the community of Christ. Interdependence is a term which may be useful in describing the relation between the one and the many in the Christian community.

Frequently neo-Pentecostal sources distinguish biblical studies which use established linguistic and historical tools from biblical studies which are the result of the immediate, private enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The former is then rejected and the latter lauded. Mel Tari, (*A Mighty Wind*, pp. 32, 33) indicates that textual criticism, too, is offensive to many neo-Pentecostals when textual criticism robs the neo-Pentecostal of one of his favorite texts.

Praise Jesus for the simplicity of the Gospel. Our Gospel is often fooled around with. When we read Mark 16, we begin to question why we don't find it in the most ancient manuscripts. So we begin to dig a hole here and dig a hole there for God's Word. We study it ten years and say, 'Oh, in this manuscript we have it and in this manuscript we don't have it, so we must ponder it and think it over before we make any decision.' We in Indonesia are not smart enough to do that. The missionaries brought us the 'Black Book' and told us that the whole Bible was the Word of God and we were to believe it. So we believed it. And if we were stupid to do so, God used even our stupidity for his glory, for by his power he proved

to us that his word is true. I praise God that no matter what scholars in America might say about some verses, we in Indonesia have experienced all the things in Mark 16 by the power of his Holy Spirit.

The Bennetts in a more modest, more sophisticated statement make the same point relative to the text of Mark 16:9ff.

We are quite aware that this passage at the end of Mark has been questioned by scholars, and put down by many as a 'later addition.' In some popular modern translations it has been 'demoted' to a footnote at the bottom of the page. A friend of ours, Mr. George Gillies, a capable leader in small-group ministry, says of this: 'Even in a footnote, it still *works*!'

It doesn't take any great scholarship to see that there is a break between the 8th and 9th verses of Mark 16—but whoever supplied the 'lost ending' of the Gospel of Mark, whether it was Mark himself or someone else, it came from the earliest period, and was accepted in the early days of the church. It became a part of the canonical Scripture. While this 'lost ending' is missing from the two earliest extant documents we have, it is present in many others. Everything in it is confirmed elsewhere by other incidents of Scripture. We say of this passage: 'It may have been a "lost ending", but somebody found it and stuck it back in our Bible! Apparently the Holy Spirit wanted it there!' We must be very careful about following the teaching and textual criticism of those scholars of the liberal-modernist tradition, who would like to 'desupernaturalize' the Scripture as much as possible (p. 58. note No. 2).

We now summarize our findings relative to the hermeneutic discernible from the literature of neo-Pentecostalism and the individualism which is visible as an operating assumption among neo-Pentecostals.

1. Both in the neo-Pentecostal groups and in the Reformed community, the Bible has a unique significance and importance. The Bible is the Word of God, our only infallible rule for faith and conduct.
2. Among neo-Pentecostals the Bible functions differently from the way in which it functions in the Reformed community. Neo-Pentecostals emphasize a private, individualistic reading of the Bible which is the result of the direct, immediate enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. This kind of reading stems from the commitment of neo-Pentecostals relative to individualism. They assume the believer stands as an isolated individual in the presence of God, who confronts him directly. In this confrontation and enlightenment the Bible serves as the necessary and indispensable vehicle; however, the enlightenment of the Spirit is dissociated from the "meaning" of the Bible.

In the Reformed community Bible reading or interpretation has always had a communal dimension. The Spirit is given to the total community. The individual participates in the one Spirit as a member of the community, not in isolation from the community. The Spirit's operation in the community, moreover, is mediate, not immediate. Relative to biblical interpretation, the tools of the linguist and the historian constitute means used by the Spirit to lead the

community into the truth of the Bible. The interpretation or reading of the Bible is not to be dissociated from the linguistic structures, the cultural context and the historical framework within which the biblical books were written.

3. Among neo-Pentecostals the historically conditioned character of both the Bible and the community's interpretation of the Bible is minimized or rejected. The neo-Pentecostal's concern is the immediate message of God for the individual—God's "blessing."

The Reformed community is aware of, accepts and affirms the historical conditioning of both the Bible and the community's interpretation of the Bible, although there is no uniformity of viewpoint in matters of detail.

4. Among neo-Pentecostals the Bible seems to have two distinct roles which are independent of one another: the Bible is the source of "doctrine" and the source of "blessing." "Doctrine" seems to mean simple gospel: Man is sinner; God provides for the salvation of the sinner in Christ, etc. "Blessing" refers to the immediate message of God given directly to a specific man through the vehicle of the Bible's words but dissociated from the "meaning" of the Bible. "Doctrine" may be a communal matter. (There is, however, very little literature one can explore to understand the meaning of the term for neo-Pentecostals.) "Blessing" is a private, individualistic matter.

In the Reformed community, "doctrine" and "blessing," faith and conduct, form and content, the corporate and the individual have not been dissociated as polarities. This is because the Reformed community has discerned God's covenantal pattern of operation. God uses the Christian community as his hands and voice. The individual is molded by the community, and in turn the individual molds or influences the community as he discharges his role of disciple. Mutual characterizes the life of the Reformed community.

5. Among neo-Pentecostals there is a distrust of linguistic and historical tools for the purpose of understanding the Bible. This includes the science of textual criticism. These are human tools forged by men, and they obscure the work of the Spirit of God.

Although the Reformed community recognizes that someone who uses historical and linguistic tools may be "practicing" unbelief as he uses his tools, the Reformed community nevertheless appreciates the tools of the historian and the linguist. The Reformed community, recognizing and affirming the mediate character of God's self-revelation, knows no other way of comprehending the Bible than the way of using the historical and linguistic tools which have been forged. Report 44 (Acts of Synod, 1972), provides us with the framework within which linguistic and historical tools can function legitimately.

## EXTRA-ECCLESIAL KOINONIA

Because the "baptism with/in the Holy Spirit," with the exercise of the accompanying gifts of the Spirit, distinguishes neo-Pentecostals from the rest of the members of the Christian community, neo-Pentecostals

tend to meet together in groups of varying sizes. Most of these groups are relatively small. These meetings frequently are ecumenical in nature in the sense that they embrace neo-Pentecostals from various Protestant denominations and from the Roman Catholic Church. These meetings, moreover, are usually in addition to and not competitive with the regular worship services of the established congregation. The structure of these meetings varies widely. Each group tends to develop its own character. Praise, prayer, group singing, Scripture reading, exhortation, the use of tongues and prophecy are common to the groups, although not all these rubrics are found in each and every session of a given group. There is a greater informality in these meetings than one usually finds in the worship service of the established congregation in the Reformed community.

The concern for growth and maturity in Christ evident among the participants in these groups we must applaud. The sharing of one's Christian experience and the communal praise to God present in these groups demand our expression of thankfulness to God. Some of the changes visible in those who participate in these groups prompt us to thank God for the evidence of his grace.

That there are dangers both potential and real to the welfare of the Christian community in extra-ecclesial groups of this type we must recognize. If the extra-ecclesial groups of neo-Pentecostals in assembly become judgmental relative to the whole Christian community, and if they use their own "spiritual life" as the criterion of judgment, such groups will become divisive. They will fragment the Christian community. The very uniqueness of the groups' members may produce a polarization which will threaten the unity of the Christian community. We consequently give the following guidelines to the churches to serve as pastoral advice in dealing with extra-ecclesial groups of a neo-Pentecostal orientation.

1. We urge all the congregations to be patient with and to exercise love over against those whose Christian faith and conduct have assumed contours differing to varying degrees from the Christian life-style to which we have become accustomed. We urge all the congregations to remember that at other times in the history of the Christian church the established structure of the church repudiated new structures and forms which later were demonstrated to be the work of the Spirit of God.
2. We urge our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters to exercise patience and love over against those of us who profess to have received the Holy Spirit in our baptism and confession of faith; who do not feel the need for a second experience subsequent to and different from our confessing Jesus and water baptism because we do not read the Bible as declaring this to be the pattern of the Spirit's working among us; who feel neither the need to possess nor to seek the particular gifts of the Spirit which are emphasized and highly prized by the neo-Pentecostals: e.g., tongues, prophecy and divine healing; and who emphasize the significance of the gifts of the Spirit such as administration, teaching and exhortation.

3. We can neither approve nor endorse extra-ecclesial assemblies. To do so would be to admit that the church lacks the flexibility and the resources to provide the context in which the total organism of Christ can grow and mature in the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. If the interactions of a small group are found to be beneficial to and productive of the Christian nurture of the members of the organism of Christ, the established churches are urged to provide the opportunity for small groups to meet together for praise, for mutual encouragement and support, for prayer, for listening obediently to the Bible, for sharing the experiences in which the gospel has become embodied in the lives of men and women and children.
4. We urge our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters, if they feel compelled to participate in extra-ecclesial groups, to exercise restraint in those meetings, lest assemblies which are designed to promote the welfare of the Christian community actually erode the unity of the community. We urge them to conduct their extra-ecclesial meetings with a sensitivity to Paul's words: "You (plural) know, do you (plural) not, that you (plural) are the temple (singular) of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you (plural)? If anyone (singular) destroys the temple of God, him (singular) God will destroy. For the temple of God is holy, who you (plural) are" (I Cor. 3:16, 17).
5. We urge our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters to recognize and accept the Bible's full spectrum of the gifts of the Spirit. What seem to be the established churches' superficial activities and pedestrian administrative and pedagogical roles are, according to the Bible, gifts of the Spirit: i.e., service, teaching, exhorting, contributing, giving aid, doing acts of mercy (Rom. 12:6-8); teachers, helpers, administrators (I Cor. 12:28); pastors, teachers (Eph. 4:11). We urge our neo-Pentecostal brothers and sisters to remember the thrust of Second and Third John: Unless order, structure and apostolic teaching are maintained, the church will die. The structures of the church are God's creations. A society, a group, cannot exist without structure, organization and order. These, as they are expressed in the Christian community, may be bent and distorted by men; they are, however, God's creations. In the Reformed community we should remember that John Calvin was not averse even to an episcopal structure as long as the episcopate subjected itself to the Bible. There is room for flexibility and for diversity within the framework of the community that lives in subjection to the Bible.
6. We urge all the congregations and extra-ecclesial neo-Pentecostal groups to remember that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Let all commit ourselves corporately and individually once more to the Lord of the church whose we are and whom we will to serve. Let us together commit ourselves to obedient discipleship in the service of him who is able to use a variety of structures in the organism which in his body to achieve his purpose—to make visible the family which God has engendered in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that the world will know and believe that the Father has sent the Son for the salvation of the world.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS.

A. That synod recognize Rev. Dirk Hart as spokesman for the report, in addition to the reporter of the committee.

B. That synod receive the report of its study committee and recommend it to the churches.

C. That synod address to the churches the following counsels:

1. **Counsel to the neo-Pentecostals among us:**

a. Remember that all your Christian brothers and sisters have received the Holy Spirit as well as you: "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, bond or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9b).

b. Remember that all religious experience is to be judged by the Word of God in Holy Scripture, as discerned by the Spirit-enlightened community of believers.

c. Remember that the Spirit of God is sovereignly free to work as he will, and there is diversity in his working. Do not presume, therefore, to know the manner of the Spirit's working the grace of God in the hearts of your Christian brothers and sisters. Do not suppose that the Spirit's way with you constitutes a pattern that he follows in every believer.

d. Live together in love, patience and full acceptance with those of your fellow-believers who claim with you the baptism of the Holy Spirit but who do not testify to a "second experience" of the Spirit subsequent to conversion or different from growth in grace, and who do not seek those particular gifts of the Spirit you so highly prize, but tend to stress rather the gifts of administration, discernment, teaching and exhortation.

e. Be discerning about the gifts of the Spirit and be sure that the claims of such gifts are confirmed by the presence of the fruit of the Spirit. Be grateful for the gifts of the Spirit you have received, but receive your gift(s) with modesty, remembering that there are many gifts of the Spirit. Acknowledge with equal gratitude and modesty the gifts received by others.

f. Do not glory in your gift(s), or in those who are gifted, but only in Jesus Christ and in the salvation that you have in him. "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" (I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17; cf. Jer. 9:23, 24). "For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (I Cor. 4:7). "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

g. Remember that the gifts of the Spirit are for the good of the whole body of Christ. Exercise your gift(s) with prudence and love. Where the gifts of the Spirit are not used out of love for the Christian brotherhood, and in the wisdom of the Spirit, they come to nothing (I Cor. 13).

h. Remember that the gifts of the Spirit are not achievements or rewards or endorsements; they are verily *gifts*—not for honor but for service.

i. Do not let your seeking the gifts of the Spirit be governed by the spectacular character of some of the gifts but by their usefulness for the

upbuilding of the church in faith, hope and love. "Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church" (I Cor. 14:12). "Earnestly desire the higher gifts" (I Cor. 12:30).

j. Do not single out any one of the gifts of the Spirit, be it speaking in tongues or any other, as the touchstone for being filled with the Spirit.

k. Remember that those to whom have been given the more "spectacular" gifts are not necessarily gifted in the interpretation of Scripture or in understanding "what the will of the Lord is." Study the Scriptures within the company of the whole Spirit-gifted church and discern the will of the Lord within the fellowship of the whole brotherhood.

l. Those of you who are pastors, elders or deacons we counsel and warn not to use your gifts in the church as a commission or license from the Lord to impose the exercise of a particular gift on the congregation or God's people in which you serve, if they fail to recognize that gift or their need for it. Love and prudence must guide you at all times.

m. In your use of Scripture remember that what the Spirit has to say to the church and to the individual members of the church is only to be learned by way of a disciplined listening to the Scriptures within the fellowship of the whole church and in a manner which acknowledges the grammatical, historical and literary character of the Scriptures. Only in this way is the Bible truly honored as the inscriptured Word of God.

n. Be guarded in the "language" you use as you testify of the grace of God and proclaim the gospel, so that you may speak out of "one mind" with the whole church, as the Apostle Paul wrote: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5f). See to it, therefore, that all your speaking is in accord with the Confessions of the church.

o. Those of you who aspire to an office in the church, whether that of pastor, elder or deacon, remember that the church remains judge of what gifts of the Spirit are most needed for the exercise of these offices in any time or place. It is the Spirit-gifted church that appoints to office, in the name of Christ the King of the church.

p. In all things seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, but remember that the Spirit leads through the teaching of Scripture, the counsel of wise and godly men, the accumulated wisdom of the church, the experiences of your own life, and your Spirit-sanctified and enlightened mind and conscience. Although the Spirit may indeed guide us at times in strange and wonderful ways, to seek "special guidance" by signs or portents or revelations is to distrust the Spirit's normal workings, to render yourself a victim to subjective whims, self-deception and arbitrary directives, and to seek escape from your own responsibility before God for decision-making in accord with the will of God—a responsibility which by no means can be escaped. Do not confuse sudden insights with "special revelations," but receive them gratefully and examine them carefully in the light of Scripture and the accumulated wisdom of the church.

q. Be on your guard against those who claim to be agents of the Spirit in the "last days" and who seek to confirm their claims by "signs and wonders" but do not speak out of "one mind" with the church, or even exalt themselves over against the church. From the early years of the church there have been those who are "false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds" (II Cor. 11:13-15). Be warned that their activities are "with all power and with pretended signs and wonders" (II Thess. 2:9).

r. Remember the reality of the kingdom of darkness and be aware of the dangers facing those who give in to this kingdom or who become involved in occult practices.

s. If you feel the desire or need to participate in extra-ecclesial fellowship, be sure to exercise all due restraint in those meetings so that gatherings of believers designed to promote the welfare of the Christian community may not actually erode the unity of the church. We urge you, therefore, to remember Paul's words to the church: "You (plural) know, do you (plural) not, that you (plural) are the temple (singular) of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you (plural)? If anyone (singular) destroys the temple of God, him (singular) will God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, and you (plural) are that temple" (I Cor. 3:16, 17).

t. We urge you to recognize and accept the Bible's full spectrum of the gifts of the Spirit. What may seem to you to be only the established church's superficial activities and routine administrative and teaching roles are, according to the Bible, gifts of the Spirit: e.g., service, teaching, exhorting, contributing, ruling, doing acts of mercy (Rom. 12:6-8); teachers, helpers, administrators (I Cor. 12:28); pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). We urge you to remember the thrust of Second and Third John: Unless order, structure and the apostolic teaching are maintained, the church will die.

u. Finally, we urge you in the words of the Apostle Paul; "Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:2-4).

## 2. Counsel to the churches:

a. We urge the whole church—members, officers and theologians—to continue to search the Scriptures together in order to bring the faith and life of the church into full accord with that which they testify and teach relative to the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

b. We affirm and testify that according to the Scriptures a believer receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the time of his conversion, as the Apostle Paul declares: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13), so that in Christ we all "have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18) and "are builded together for a

habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22, ASV). (Cpr. John 3:5f; Acts 2:39; Rom. 8:1-17; 15:13; I Cor. 3:16f; 12:3; II Cor. 1:21ff; Gal. 3:2; 5:16-26; I John 1:20, 27; and see also *Heidelberg Catechism* Questions 49, 51, 53, 55.) We reject, therefore, the teaching of some that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a "second blessing" received subsequent to conversion.

c. We urge the whole church, and every member, to live in close fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to "quench" (I Thess. 5:19) or "grieve" (Eph. 4:30) the Holy Spirit but to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) and to "live" (Rom. 8:13), "walk" (Gal. 5:25), and "be led" (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18) by the Spirit, according to the admonitions of the Apostle Paul, so that the joy of salvation and the fruit of the Spirit may be ever more evident in their lives. (See Section on "Exhortations Concerning the Spirit.")

d. We urge the whole church, especially through her teaching and pastoral ministries, to renew her awareness of and desire for the gifts of the Spirit in accord with the Scriptures, "for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12f).

e. We call on the church to recognize the freedom of the Spirit to bestow his gifts according to his will, and that the Scriptures do not restrict the *charismata* spoken of by the apostolic witness to the apostolic age. Let the church be open to an acknowledgment of the full spectrum of the gifts of the Spirit.

f. We urge the churches within their communal fellowship to provide for the free exercise of all genuine gifts of the Spirit, so long as all things are done "unto edifying" and in "good order." "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (I Cor. 14:33). Provide also full opportunity for Christian service in ministries appropriate to the gifts received by the members of the congregations.

g. We urge the churches to fully accept in love and patience those of their members who claim a "second experience" of the Spirit subsequent to conversion and different from the more ordinary growth in grace, and to give thanks for every working of the Spirit that leads to a fuller manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit.

h. We urge all pastors, elders and deacons to deal lovingly, patiently and wisely with those members of the churches who claim "charismatic" experience and/or who engage in extra-ecclesial fellowship. Disciplinary procedures should not be contemplated so long as these members evidence the fruit of the Spirit and do not disturb the peace and unity of the church.

i. We call on the churches to be aware of the errors involved in much of today's practice of divine healing and urge the whole church, but especially the elders as well as the pastors, to a ministry of prayer on behalf of and with those who are ill.

j. We counsel the church—members, elders and deacons—whose pastor claims "charismatic" experiences to accept the brother fully in the performance of his office, so long as he manifests the fruit of the

Spirit, employs his gifts wisely for the upbuilding of the church and does not disturb the unity and peace of the church. Should the welfare of the congregation require it, the council should seek a dissolution of the pastor-congregation relationship according to the Church Order and the regulations of synod.

k. We urge the churches to safeguard "the unity of the faith in the bond of peace," acknowledge that "just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. . . ." "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one" (I Cor. 12).

D. Synod declare this report and its pastoral counsel to the churches to be its reply to the overtures of Classis Sioux Center and Classis Chicago South, and to the request of Mr. H. J. Jongsma.

Neo-Pentecostalism Committee

John H. Stek, Reporter

Michael De Vries

Dirk Hart

David Holwerda

Leonard Sweetman

## A DISSENT FROM THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE MAJORITY

Dear Brothers:

The undersigned has worked with the other members of the study committee on neo-Pentecostalism in the preparation of the report now being offered to synod. While agreeing with much of the studies found in the report, I am unable to endorse it in its totality. To dissent from the view of the majority is not a pleasant thing; however, I am constrained to take a different stand on certain conclusions found in the report and which are of extreme practical importance.

In the section of the report entitled: *Are the Gifts of the Spirit Still Present Today?*, we find the following statement: "Other gifts, such as speaking in tongues and healing, have been more controversial, less widely present and are considered to be more dramatic and spectacular. Their validity is often questioned. We should make certain, however, that we question them for good reason. If the Scriptures do not distinguish between 'more' or 'less' spectacular, may we arbitrarily introduce such a distinction and rule out the use of some of these gifts for today's church and not others?"

How are we to understand the statement: "The Scriptures do not distinguish" or "Scripture itself does not demand . . ."? Do we mean that the Scriptures should have spoken directly and clearly about every problem which would arise in the church until the end of time? Utmost care should be exercised when we make the statement about what the Scriptures say or do not say, allow or do not allow.

The Bible makes a distinction between the more or less spectacular gifts. For example, when a miracle of healing took place in biblical times, it was recognized as having occurred through the intervention of God or Christ. See for example the miracles of healing related in Matthew 8. People in biblical times, were not unaware of normal or regular ways of healing. When events happened in an extraordinary way, they looked upon them as miracles or wonders. No one wonders about the usual or the familiar. If we erase the line which separates the ordinary from the extraordinary, we run the risk of making all things miraculous or just the opposite.

In the report, it is stated that the traditional arguments for the cessation of the spectacular gifts prevailed for a long time and were defended by "theologians of great eminence and ability." It is also stated that: "as long as these theologians judged the gifts to be virtually absent from the church, these arguments appeared to explain their absence. The rise of Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism, however, has occasioned a new look at the Scriptures with respect to the more controversial gifts of the Holy Spirit. Such a study makes it clear that Scripture itself does not demand the thesis that these gifts belonged only to the apostles and their age."

Protestant theologians have looked at this subject from the point of view that the special gifts belonged to the apostles and their immediate fellow-workers upon whom they had conferred the gift. At the same time, these theologians were fully aware of the miracles which were claimed in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. From as early as the third century A.D., many lay and ordained members of the church claimed miraculous powers and deeds. The heretical groups made also the same claim. Thus, the rise of Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism cannot mean that for the first time, the church is facing groups which claim extraordinary gifts and powers. The new element in the situation today is that certain people who have espoused views and practices which were confined in the past to Pentecostalism, are eager to remain within their own communions in order to revive them.

The church must always be studying the Bible and testing its doctrines and practices by this infallible rule. While to some Bible students today, it is "clear that Scripture itself does not demand the thesis that these gifts belonged only to the apostles and their age," to others, this is not the case. They are still convinced of the validity of the traditional Protestant view. The question is not at all about the authority of the Word of God, but about our "reading" or understanding of the Bible.

What the Scripture says or does not say about a subject which is being debated in the church involves the teachings of the entire biblical revelation. This revelation has been studied and expounded since the early days of the church. It has been summarized and confessed in the symbolical books of the church. As members of a confessional church, can we engage in a serious discussion of the teachings of the Bible without giving due attention to what the church has taught from the Bible pertaining to certain doctrines and practices? The church today is not the whole church, i.e., the catholic church of the Apostles' Creed; it is only one segment of it. A true ecumenical spirit demands an equal emphasis

on the teachings of the church in all ages as well as on the labors of Bible scholars today. Any major shift in the doctrinal stand of the church cannot be made without injuring our unity with the church of all ages.

When the Bible gives us a description of the life of the church in apostolic days, it does not necessarily mean to tell us that all the practices and experiences of that church are normative for all time. When we reflect briefly on the life of the church in Corinth in the days of Paul, we discover that certain practices or customs were not intended as models for later generations. For example, Paul neither condemned nor condoned the baptism on behalf of the dead, see I Corinthians 15:29. May we encourage such a "biblical practice" on the mission fields? Is Acts 2:41-47 to be construed simply as a divine injunction for a Christian commune?

In the *description of certain gifts*, and specifically, the gift of speaking in tongues, the report states: "We believe that where speaking in tongues is initially a spontaneous experience, the recipient of this gift should accept it in thanksgiving and practice it both in love and according to biblical regulation." The report assumes that today, in certain cases as reported by those who are part of the charismatic movement, speaking in tongues occurs initially as a spontaneous experience. This assumption cannot be proven; it simply depends on the testimony of the one who speaks in tongues. To the latter, its genuineness as a gift of the Holy Spirit is not in question. The speaker believes that the Bible is on his side; after all, it was part of the church life of the apostolic age. The fact that very little is known about the exact nature of the speaking in tongues in the Corinthian church does not bother him. The complete silence of the other apostles and evangelists on the subject is irrelevant to the one who has the gift today.

We are not denying the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit when we view his activities today as functioning in the life of the church and applying quietly, yet powerfully, the benefits of Christ's work of redemption. The charismatic movement has placed undue emphasis on the historical elements in the church of Corinth as described in I Corinthians 12 and 14. Not enough emphasis is placed on the teaching of our Lord about the work of the Holy Spirit as we find them in John 14:15-31 and 16:5-15. From these passages we learn that the activities of the Holy Spirit during the present age are in the area of the application of the redemptive work of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter and the Advocate of the people of God.

Under the subject of *prophecy*, the report leaves the door slightly open for prophecy as foretelling to take place today. "The preponderant emphasis on prophecy as forthtelling need not exclude altogether, however, the possibility of prophecy as foretelling such as in the case of Agabus." That God guides his people today as he did in the past is not a point in question. But now that we have the full revelation of God in the Bible, we cannot say that he still guides his people in an immediate way in the sense that a believer may say that he has a "direct line" which puts him in touch with God. God's guidance of his people is mediated and includes the written Word and the providential events which remain at all times under the control of God. By leaving the door slightly open for

prophecy as foretelling, one runs the risk of giving the green light for a revelation beyond Scripture. It is practically impossible to guard such a "gift" or preserve it from excesses.

Under the heading of *Miracles*, the report makes the statement that "nothing in Scripture forbids us to believe that the Lord may work signs and miracles today." Certainly, no Christian wishes to put limits to the power of God or his present-day activities in the world. However we must remind ourselves of the *raison d'être* of the miracles which were wrought by Christ and his apostles. Christ's miracles pointed to the basic nature of his mission: redemption. The miracles of the apostles accredited them as the sent ones (messengers) of the Messiah. When one contrasts the miracles of the Old and New Testaments with the ones which have been claimed by many members of the church since the third century A.D., it becomes manifest that there is a great gulf which separates the two kinds. Post-apostolic miracles tend to be more of a legendary type, and often attribute great deeds to certain saints and heroes of the faith—years after their death.

In the section of the report which deals with *Extra-Ecclesial Koinonia* (i.e., fellowship), we find an urgent plea for patience and the exercise of love over against "those whose Christian faith and conduct have assumed contours differing to varying degrees from the Christian life-style to which we have become accustomed." Then, we are reminded that we must remember "that at other times in the history of the Christian Church the established structure of the Church repudiated new structures and forms which later were demonstrated to be the work of the Spirit of God."

That the church should exercise love and understanding in its dealings with members who have espoused new doctrines and practices, is generally accepted. But the church is not an open society in the sense that it should have a limitless tolerance towards those who teach and spread doctrines which are not in harmony with the Word of God as confessed and understood by the confessional standards of the church. John, the last apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaimed in all of his writings the equal importance of truth and love. We may not minimize the one or the other. The teachings and practices of neo-Pentecostalism are not of a peripheral nature; they have implications for all areas of life and are related to every point of Christian belief.

It is certainly true that throughout history, the established structure of the church repudiated new structures and forms which later were demonstrated to be the work of the Spirit of God. But this historical fact need not be brought into the picture as more than a warning lest, in doing the work of the church, we find ourselves fighting against truth or the renewal of the church. It must not be allowed to stand in the abstract or made into a general rule. Of course, when the "established church" is no longer living out of the Word of God and when its traditions no longer reflect the teachings of the Bible, it fights against "new structures and forms." For example, this happened in the days of Christ and during the Reformation. We all know that the church today is not perfect; it needs renewal. It must close the gap between its confession and the daily life of its members. The church has erred in the past and

is still liable to error today. But all this does not mean that the church should remain hesitant in dealing, in an unambiguous way, with the rise of movements which profess and propagate wrong doctrines and practices.

A generation ago, the church faced a tremendous challenge in the form of a dynamic movement: dispensationalism. When the latter was studied in the light of the Bible and the historic creeds, it was found erroneous in its basic thrust. Wherever this movement and its method of "rightly dividing the word of truth" triumphed, it wrought havoc in the life of the churches by fostering a one-sided, other-worldly piety. The biblical teachings about the kingdom of God were made wholly futuristic. Those churches which were affected by dispensationalism completely bypassed the many and complicated problems of 20th century man. The field was left open for the secularists and their false gospels.

Neo-Pentecostalism is a greater threat to the church today than was dispensationalism to the church of a generation ago. Its differences with the historic Christian faith are not matters of secondary importance, and therefore cannot come under the subjects treated by Paul in Romans 14 and 15 where mutual tolerance and acceptance are advocated. The report itself, when dealing with the neo-Pentecostal "reading" of the Bible showed clearly the deep cleavage between the neo-Pentecostal hermeneutics and the one commonly used in the churches of the Reformed faith.

The divisions within the church are not always occasioned by people who set out to divide the church. They often occur because of honestly held and believed different ways of "reading" the Bible. It would be wonderful if all Christians "read" the Word of God in the same way—in accordance with its intended meaning. The sad fact is that they do not read the Bible alike. Some take the Bible and read it as if it has just been given to them from heaven, or as if the church has hardly done any serious Bible study during the last 1,900 years. It would not be doing the church a great service, if we try and build the biggest umbrella possible under which fundamental and divergent ways of Bible "reading" may co-exist.

Church history, both in its apostolic and post-apostolic days, teaches us that those who feel they have discovered the truth, or have re-discovered a neglected or lost truth, develop a dynamic way for the spread of their understanding of the truth. Today, those who believe they have discovered the tremendous power of the Holy Spirit according to the neo-Pentecostal way, find it impossible to keep silent. They will speak the truth as they have experienced it and will do their utmost to reform the church and revitalize it—in accordance with their vision. In these chaotic days, they are convinced that God is calling them to offer the entire church a map for its spiritual recovery and the accomplishment of the unfinished task of the church: the evangelization of the world.

However, in taking a long view of the charismatic movement, one who is committed to the Word of God as interpreted in the historic creeds of the church cannot but view with great alarm the teachings and the practices of neo-Pentecostalism. This movement forms a radical disjunction in the history and beliefs of the church. Actually, we are not left today to choose between renewal à la charismatic way and no re-

newal at all. We do have an alternative; it is in the whole-hearted return to the historic Christian faith as it finds its most balanced and biblical exposition in the creeds and other symbolical books of the Reformed Churches. The Reformed faith has managed to escape the imbalance which one observes in the teachings of many other Protestant communions. Specifically, it has taught a wonderfully biblical balance in the area of the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. In the spirit of Calvin we may say that the masterpiece of the Holy Spirit is the gift of faith to man. By this living and dynamic faith, we take hold of all the promises of God, we are justified, united to Christ and sanctified. This is not an autonomous faith, it is the beautiful work of the Holy Spirit.

The rediscovery and the vital embracing of the Reformed emphasis on the unique role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and the individual believer is of utmost necessity today. This, coupled with the emergence of a dynamic and prophetic preaching of the whole counsel of God, is the most sure way for the revitalization of the church and her equipment for the work of missions at home and to the ends of the world.

#### *Recommendations:*

A. That synod declare that the report of the study committee is not sufficiently clear with respect to the distinctive teachings of neo-Pentecostalism and therefore does not accomplish the mandate given to it by the Synod of 1971.

#### *Grounds:*

1. The report fails to adequately recognize the uniqueness of the apostolic age and the special manifestations of the work and the gifts of the Holy Spirit during that age.

2. The report fails to emphasize adequately the consequences of the incompatibility of the two divergent ways of biblical interpretation, namely: the Reformed way and the neo-Pentecostal way; and the equally incompatible guides to Christian life and piety as prescribed by the two ways.

B. That synod declare that neo-Pentecostal teachings and practices are not permitted in the Christian Reformed Church.

#### *Grounds:*

1. Neo-Pentecostal teachings and practices are not in harmony with the Scriptures as understood in the Reformed creeds.

2. Neo-Pentecostal teachings and practices occasion unrest and divisions within the church.

C. That synod urge all members of the Christian Reformed Church to seek the renewal of the church in a whole-hearted commitment to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and to interpret Christian experience in accordance with the teachings of the Reformed faith.

D. That synod urge all office bearers who hold to neo-Pentecostal teachings to reconsider their espousal of these teachings and to endeavor to work for the renewal of the church in accordance with the teachings of the Reformed faith.

E. That the undersigned be permitted to represent the minority opinion before synod and its advisory committee.

Bassam M. Madany

## X. REBAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### A. *Expanded Mandate.*

Rebaptism confronts the Christian Reformed Church not only with a doctrinal question but also with a very practical matter. How should the church respond to persons who no longer accept its teaching concerning the very basic doctrine of infant baptism? Can rebaptized persons still be considered members of a Reformed church? If they can, are there conditions to be attached to their membership? If they cannot, how does the church proceed in removing them from membership?

This practical matter of the effect of rebaptism upon church membership was before the Synod of 1972 in connection with a protest against an action of the Council of the Clinton Christian Reformed Church (cf. analysis below). In this context the Synod of 1972 decided:

"That synod broaden the mandate of its study committee on neo-Pentecostalism to include in its mandate the formulation of practical advice to the churches confronting similar problems.

#### *Grounds:*

- a. The problems faced in Clinton arose in connection with neo-Pentecostal teachings and practices.
- b. The problem is not confined to one local area, but is a denominational matter because it appears elsewhere as well.
- c. Appropriate general advice can best be formulated in the context of a general overview of the problem such as the study committee on neo-Pentecostalism may be expected to gain in the course of its study" (*Acts*, 1972, Art. 73, II, C 3, p. 102).

### B. *Analysis of Previous Synodical Actions.*

The problem confronting us in this section is primarily one of church order. How does rebaptism affect membership in a Reformed church, and how should the church respond to those of its members who have been rebaptized? The issue is not whether churches should allow members to be rebaptized. In rejecting the appeal of Mr. H. J. Jongsma vs. the Montreal Consistory and Classis Eastern Canada for denying him permission to receive "believer's baptism" in a neighborhood church, synod affirmed that granting such a request "would mean approval of a teaching and practice which are not in accord with the teaching of Scripture and the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church" (*Acts*, 1971, Art. 171, p. 162).

The problem concerns only the effect of rebaptism upon membership in the Christian Reformed Church. This issue was before synod in the case involving an action of the council of the Clinton CRC of Ontario, Canada. It is not necessary to give a complete history of the case for such can be found in Report 34, *Acts*, 1972, pages 389-392.

The essence of the matter as it confronted the Synod of 1972 is as follows: Several members of the Clinton church in connection with their "baptism in the Spirit" had submitted to a rebaptism with water. In response to this action the church council publicly announced that "those members who submit themselves to rebaptism can no longer be considered members of the Clinton Christian Reformed Church." In a further explanation of their action, the council declared that they were merely affirming in this statement what the rebaptized members had done to themselves, i.e., "by their act of having themselves rebaptized they withdrew from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Church" (cf. Communication 2, re Report 34, p. 2, submitted to Synod, 1972). In addition, since these rebaptized members met separately and actively propagated their views to other members, the council judged that such action was destroying the peace and unity of the congregation (cf. Communication 2, p. 2).

However, since the Clinton council did not follow the road of discipline and excommunication set down in Church Order, Article 86, Mr. J. C. Bakelaar requested classis to declare the action of the council to be illegal. Classis Huron, however, acquiesced in the decision of the council but only as a particular action applying to these persons. This acquiescence was not to be construed as the adoption of a general policy applicable to all rebaptized persons. The ground given for this limited acquiescence called attention to the separate meetings held by these persons to which others were invited, an action which classis judged to be "of a schismatic nature disruptive of the unity of the church" (Report 34, *Acts*, 1972, p. 392). Mr. Bakelaar then protested this action to the Synod of 1971.

The Synod of 1971 appointed an *in loco* committee to assist in adjudicating this matter. This committee recommended to the Synod of 1972 that the appeal of Mr. Bakelaar be sustained and affirmed that membership can be terminated by a council only through the action of excommunication. In turn, this recommendation was presented to the synod by its Advisory Committee but it was rejected by the synod (*Acts*, 1972, Art. 73, pp. 101, 102). Since this action of synod was a negative one, i.e., a rejection of a recommendation to sustain the appeal of Mr. Bakelaar, synod in effect supported the action of Classis Huron and the Clinton council without stating its own grounds for doing so. It then adopted the recommendation to broaden the mandate of its study committee on neo-Pentecostalism (*Acts*, 1972, Art. 73, p. 102).

Since synod gave no grounds for its action, it is now possible to translate this action into a statement of policy. Did synod mean to say that there is an intermediate step between a person's actively resigning his membership and his being excommunicated, *viz.*, that an action of his can mean *de facto* a withdrawal from membership which a council then acknowledges even though the person involved does not? Synod did not say so explicitly, although this is one of the grounds given as the basis for the action of the Clinton council. If this were the case, then synod would be stating a general principle, *viz.*, that rebaptism is a *de facto* severing of relationships with the Christian Reformed Church. But synod did not say so, and Classis Huron explicitly stated that this was

not the general principle it was adopting. Or was the basic reason for synod's support of the Clinton council the matter of schismatic action noted by Classis Huron? Again synod did not declare itself on the matter.

Hence we can only conclude that synod sustained the fact of the action taken by the Clinton council without declaring itself concerning the grounds for this action. Thus we do not feel that the specific grounds given by the Clinton council for its action need be taken by us as general principles which bind our recommendations.

In the past, synod has expressed itself concerning church membership and a denial of infant baptism. In 1888 synod affirmed that persons could not be accepted as members if they denied infant baptism. However, if persons who were already members refused to present their children for baptism, due to conscientious objection, such persons should be patiently instructed and warned and eventually disciplined. (*Acts*, 1888, Art. 57) In 1964, synod rejected a protest against a council which had admitted as members a middle-aged couple of Baptist background even though they still had difficulty accepting our proof for infant baptism. Synod gave the following grounds:

- "1. Article 61 of the Church Order does not deny the right and duty of a consistory to evaluate each case of admittance according to the special circumstances of the persons requesting such admittance.
2. In this case the couple agrees wholeheartedly with the Reformed religion, except on the point of direct biblical evidence for the doctrine of infant baptism, and is willing to be further instructed in the Reformed doctrine of baptism.
3. This couple also promised not to propagate any views conflicting with the doctrinal position of the church" (*Acts*, 1964, Art. 101, p. 63).

In addition, the Synod of 1936 was confronted by a somewhat analogous problem affecting the membership of one who denied the validity of water baptism. The advice finally adopted by the Synod of 1939 was as follows:

- "A. Articles 72 and 76 of our Church Order make adequate provision for appropriate ecclesiastical action in the case of members who deviate from our doctrinal standards.
- B. In case a consistory, after denying the Lord's Supper to a member who errs in doctrine, feels the need of guidance as to further procedure, the advice of classis can be sought" (*Acts*, 1939, p. 75).

In the light of this previous history, we present our position and recommendations.

### *C. Church Membership and Rebaptism.*

The seriousness of rebaptism should not be minimized. We are not here dealing with a minor point of doctrine or a theological nicety. Rather, we are confronted with a rejection of a basic Reformed teaching which is deeply rooted in our understanding of the unity of the Testa-

ments. Since the Reformation, Reformed churches have celebrated infant baptism in obedience to the Word of God and not merely as a sacrament rooted in the tradition of the church. With prayer and with faith we celebrate this sacrament as an action of God. All of this is being challenged by those who have themselves rebaptized. Since no Christian recognizes the necessity or validity of two water baptisms, those who are rebaptized are in effect rejecting the validity of infant baptism and are in effect declaring that this sacrament is not an action of God in the midst of his people.

Nevertheless, does rebaptism with water by a minister of another denomination automatically cancel membership in the Christian Reformed Church? The Clinton council affirmed that it did, and there are others who argue similarly. Some have referred to Art. XXXIV of the *Belgic Confession* which speaks of baptism as that "by which we are received into the church of God," and then have drawn the conclusion that rebaptism therefore makes one a member of that church (i.e., congregation or denomination) in which the rebaptism takes place. Such a person is then no longer a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

But is that type of reasoning correct? Certainly we are received into the church by baptism, but church here means the body of Jesus Christ. Baptism is not a denominational sacrament whereby if one receives it in one denomination he is thereby severed from all others. We view the sacrament ecumenically and have always recognized all official water baptisms using the trinitarian formula. Thus we do not believe that the mere fact that someone has been rebaptized elsewhere automatically severs his relationship with us.

In addition, the fact that a person who was baptized as an infant now erroneously submits to rebaptism in no way cancels the validity (efficacy) of his infant baptism. God's action and promise stand, and the person who has been rebaptized must now be dealt with as one who has acted in error. But the error is not of such a scope as to sever his relationship from the church of Jesus Christ, and therefore it has not severed him either from the Christian Reformed Church.

However, his rebaptism has affected his relationship to the Christian Reformed Church. For it has placed him in the position of rejecting a key doctrinal teaching and practice of the church. Further, if the rebaptized person has been a confessing member, his rebaptism makes it impossible for him to continue the affirmation made at the time of his public confession of faith, viz., that he "heartily believes the doctrine . . . taught in this Christian church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation" and promises "by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this profession" ("Form for the Public Profession of Faith," Question 1).

In addition, if a child is born to that person, his rebaptism with its implicit rejection of infant baptism would make it virtually impossible for him to present the child for baptism. Thus rebaptism places a person in a difficult situation within the Christian Reformed Church, but it does not by itself cancel his membership.

The rebaptized member must recognize, therefore, that it is the duty of the consistory to deal with him as one who is in error. He must

be willing to receive with patience such instruction as the consistory deems necessary to give.

What happens if after such instruction the rebaptized member continues to reject infant baptism? Here several distinctions must be made. If the rebaptized member maintains as a matter of conscience the validity of his rebaptism but agrees to respect the consciences of the other members of the church and the official teaching of the church—and thus not actively to propagate his views—a council could decide not to proceed with further discipline.

If, however, a rebaptized member is so convinced of the validity of his views that he must actively seek to convince others, then it should be pointed out that he has only one way to follow, *viz.*, to submit his position to the judgment of the church. He is not free to hold private meetings and seek to propagate views in conflict with the confessional teaching of the church. If he engages in such activity, he is to be held accountable for disturbing the peace and the unity of the church. As such he is to be subjected to discipline.

#### D. *Recommendations.*

The committee recognizes that its statement on church membership and rebaptism given above, and the recommendations that follow, provide no easy solution to the problems confronting some consistories and congregations. Yet when the church is forced to deal with persons who, although holding to doctrinal error, are considered by all to be fellow members of the body of Christ, the way is never simple. We believe that it is necessary to deal with such persons primarily in a pastoral rather than in a judicial way. (The recommendations that follow are essentially those of Report 34, submitted to the Synod of 1972, *Acts*, pp. 394, 395; and they are in agreement with the judgment of the 1970 Synod of The Reformed Churches of Australia.)

We recommend that synod adopt the following recommendations as its advice to churches confronting this problem:

1. The churches are urged, in order to correct tendencies toward an exclusively individualistic understanding of the workings of God's grace, to preach faithfully and explicitly the biblical doctrine of infant baptism as this is rooted in the covenant and the unity of the Testaments.
2. Members who are attracted to the view of "believer's baptism" are urged to seek the counsel of the office bearers of the church concerning the biblical teaching on infant baptism.
3. Whenever a consistory is informed by a member that he has been rebaptized, the consistory shall officially ask such a member whether he/she still considers himself/herself a member of the Christian Reformed Church and is willing to submit to the teaching and discipline of the Christian Reformed Church.
4. If the reply is in the affirmative and the consistory considers such a member to be a sincere believer, the consistory must faithfully and persistently admonish such an erring member.

5. The consistory should bar such a person from the Lord's table only if, and as long as, it is necessary for the unity and well-being of the congregation.
6. If such members actively disturb the unity and peace of the congregation, the regular steps of discipline should be followed.
7. Since neither the Bible nor the Confessions or Church Order allow consistories simply to terminate membership in the church when such action is not requested by the member, such members as mentioned above can be excluded from the church only if they are worthy of excommunication, which is the act of public declaration by the church that such a person has no part in Christ or in his church.
8. Under no circumstances should members erring in this respect be allowed to hold office in the church.

Neo-Pentecostalism Committee

Bassam Madany, Chairman  
John H. Stek, Reporter  
Michael De Vries  
Dirk Hart  
David Holwerda  
Leonard Sweetman

Dr. Stuart Bergsma, a seventh member of the committee, was not able to attend the last meeting of the committee, when the report in its final form was adopted, and so has decided not to be a signatory to the report.