



**PENTECOSTAL  
CHALLENGE**

**JAN H. BOER, EDITOR**  
**Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria**

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## **Pentecostal Challenge**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND EXPLANATION

This book is a heavily-edited and adapted version of *Neo-Pentecostalism Hits the Church*, a publication of the Christian Reformed Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. We are grateful for their permission to use and republish their book in this way.

That book itself is a popularized summary of a report entitled "Neo-Pentecostalism," which was published in *Acts of Synod, 1973*. The Christian Reformed Church in North America was faced with a crisis in its midst caused by this Neo-Pentecostalist Movement or, as it is also known, the Charismatic Movement.

I am proud of that report. It is honest. It is courageous. It is open. It is based on a broad and Biblical theology. It describes both the weaknesses of the movement as well as its strengths. It is not afraid to acknowledge its positive contributions to the life of the church and calls upon the church to revitalize itself, especially the leadership.

We believe this Nigerianized edition of those materials will greatly benefit not only the Reformed churches in this country, but all other denominations as well, including Neo-Pentecostalists themselves. It is time the so-called mission churches in Nigeria come to terms with the challenge this movement represents within their bosom. They cannot continue to cast it aside out of mere conservative fear. The truth of the movement must be told, while its severe shortcomings must be avoided.

Some time ago one denomination was facing a Pentecostal schism. Instead of examining itself spiritually, it proudly predicted that the schism will fail and its members will in due time return to the fold. The denomination would just fold its arms and watch the failure with pride and glee. Such self-assured pride itself is worldly and probably a major reason the split is taking place to begin with.

Further plans are in the making. It is likely that this book will be translated into the Hausa and Tiv as well as some other Nigerian languages to make it accessible to the village church elder and average member. It is also hoped that this book will be followed up by another one that will explain some of the underlying issues of theology, history and worldview. All of these play their role in the Neo-Pentecostal movement as well as in the Reformed Church, but there was no room for them in this study.

It is my prayer that you may be richly blessed by the reading of this book. May it serve to bring reconciliation between the church and its Neo-Pentecostal members.

Dr. Jan H. Boer, 1996  
Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria  
Theological College of Northern Nigeria

## FOREWORD

Rev. Dr. David Gani Angye

President, Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria

“There is no end to the making of books,” a wise man of old once said. Books are written to enlighten us on issues about which we are in the dark. The church has been facing that need on many issues throughout its history, from the time of the Apostles through the Church Fathers up to today. Time and again the church’s defenders of the faith, her Apologists, have been called upon to enlighten the people on one issue or the other.

Today, the Nigerian Church in general and the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) in particular are affected by the winds of Neo-Pentecostalism. The authors of this book use the term “*big experience*,” (italics mine) and so it is. The wind – or should we call it “storm?” – has caused misunderstandings, rifts and even secession in many churches. Thus, a book on this subject is timely.

This book explicitly spells out both the authentic side and the error side of this “big experience.” This experience centres around the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including Baptism in the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit such as tongues, healing, deliverance and miracles.

The CRCN is aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But, it must be admitted, not much emphasis has been placed on the use and power of these gifts. The author has put it well: “Even though we honour the Father and believe on the Son, how little do we live in the Holy Spirit ... in Nigeria. Too bad, but not too late.” Indeed it is not too late. We can still adopt and adapt. We can still read, listen to and interpret what the Spirit is saying to the churches today. The time is not past. Allow me to illustrate this point by a story I once told at a CRCN youth conference.

Once upon a time there were two young village boys. From early childhood on, they had been trained to grow yams. After the harvest, the boys were sent to the city to sell their yams. After they had sold them, the boys would buy some fried yams called “*gindin kolo*.” These fried yams are very tasty. However, the people in the village could not make them, for they did not know the ingredients.

The boys loved the *gindin kolo* very much. They thought that all life in the city was sweet like those *kolo*. They even talked of staying to live in the city so that they could enjoy *kolo* every day. They boys decided they should learn how to prepare *kolo* so they could make it themselves.

After they had learned how to fry *kolo*, the boys parted ways. One stayed in the city to enjoy himself. The other returned to the village to teach his people how to prepare *gindin kolo*. After some time, the people in the village became experts in this. They became famous not only for their raw yams but also for their fried yams.

The Holy Spirit is given to the church to lead both the church and the believers. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to all believers for the edification of the church and the larger community, the world.

I urge all Christians to read this book. Some books are meant to be read; some to be chewed; some to be swallowed. This book is written to be read, chewed and swallowed all at the same time – and then to be regurgitated once again.

Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria, 1996

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

The Pentecostal Movement is found in all the mainline or mission churches throughout the world, not only in Nigeria. Many of these churches have had to struggle with this movement, because their members had joined the movement. ***These members were bringing new ideas and challenges to them. They also brought new questions that had not been asked before and to which the churches did not have immediate answers.*** Both “ordinary” members of these churches as well as Pentecostal members were wondering whether there was room for them in these churches. And so, these churches had to study this new movement by doing fresh Bible studies as well as taking a new look at their own theologies and traditions.

Sometimes the Pentecostal Movement is also called “Neo-Pentecostalism,” “Neo” meaning “new.” Thus it means “a new kind of Pentecostalism.” It has many things in common with the older Pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God, but there are also important differences.

Originally, Pentecost was the Greek name of a Jewish feast at which the first fruits of the harvest were brought to the Lord (Leviticus 23:15 ff). The term means “fiftieth,” because the feast was held on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Old Testament Passover feast. Christians observe the feast of Pentecost as the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church (Acts 2).

The name “Pentecostal” was given to churches that claimed they experienced outpourings of the Holy Spirit many times. These outpourings often came together with tongue speaking and other works we now commonly associate with the Pentecostal Movement.

In this book, you will find an adapted summary of a study done by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), a member of a large family of Reformed churches throughout the world. One of the Nigerian members of that family is ***The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)*** with its administrative centre in Takum, Taraba State. The publishers of this book, Haske da Gaskiya Publications, are a department of that church. The other member of that family in Nigeria is the ***Church of Christ in Nigeria Among the Tiv (NKST)*** with its centre in Mkar, Benue State. Both of these churches belong also to two other families of churches in Nigeria. The one most of us know is TEKAN, *Tarayyar Ekklisiyoyin Kirista a Nigeriya* or *The Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria*. The other is RECON, the Reformed Ecumenical Council of Nigeria. It is our prayer that this book will be a blessing to all who read it, Pentecostals as well as other Christians, no matter to which church or family of churches you happen to belong.

### ***A DRY SPIRIT***

When a committee of the CRC interviewed some of its Pentecostal members, they made many comments and complaints. Some typical ones are the following:

“We were sick and tired of our weak and dull lives.”

“We were hungry and desperate for God.”

“We had lost touch with a personal Saviour.”

“The church is too much concerned with its traditions, its theology and ways of worship. It seems to have forgotten that we must worship in the Spirit also.”

“Our church is more proud of its traditions than it is of the Lord.”

“The distinctions in the church between the ministers, who are higher, and the lay people, who are lower, are not based on the Spirit of God, but only on education and the church’s General Council.”

“We hear the same prayers and similar sermons almost every Sunday, but our lives are not touched.”

“There are many things missing in the church, such as tolerance for each other, pride and laziness, lack of enthusiasm, Christian love and fellowship.”

“We were drying up spiritually.”

“We were empty, powerless, lonely, without love and grace, unfulfilled, and worldly.”

“We attended worship, but people could not notice afterwards that we had been with Jesus.”

Such was the testimony of many of these people about their earlier lives as Christians and church members. Someone may say that this spiritual poverty was their own fault and not the fault of the church. But is that true? How do you see it?

Now many of these members have had a new experience which they call “the baptism with the Spirit,” in distinction from baptism with water. They now have new beliefs that differ from the ideas held by their fellow church members. Their relationship with their local church is sometimes very difficult. Some like it better to meet in small groups of others like them, most of whom are members of many different denominations. Some continue to attend the regular worship services of their own church, but they are not satisfied.

**A SELF-TEST**

In the following chapters we are going to look at the teachings of the Pentecostal Movement in the light of the Bible. However, before doing so, here is a little exercise for you. Carefully look at the following 10 statements and decide whether you agree or disagree with them. They are loaded statements. That is, they are controversial and you will be challenged by each one of them. Give each of them a number:

If you give a 1, you strongly agree.

If you give a 2, you merely agree.

If you give a 3, you are neutral about it

If you give a 4, you disagree.

If you give a 5, you strongly disagree.

The statements:

1. Only some Christians have received baptism with the Holy Spirit.
2. All Christians who have the Spirit are equally good interpreters of the Bible.
3. Speaking in tongues is a necessary gift of the Spirit which all believers must possess in order to give full service to Jesus Christ.
4. God will give the power of healing any sickness to everyone, provided there is sufficient faith.
5. The church should not rely on human appointments. It works best when it is only controlled by the Holy Spirit.
6. The Bible teaches that all Christians should be filled with the Spirit.
7. Christians who are proud, hateful and divisive have not been baptized with the Spirit.
8. Nobody should question anybody's claim that he is filled with the Spirit, because it is a personal matter.
9. If we are Spirit-filled, we have an infallible source of truth, in addition to the Bible and the official teachings of the church.
10. It is possible that the Holy Spirit speaks to you through a particular Bible verse or chapter and thus giving an insight that has nothing to do with the generally accepted meaning of that Bible passage.

When you have finished reading this book, you should return to these statements. It will be interesting to see if your evaluation has changed after this study.

## CHAPTER 2

## BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT

**TRUTH IS MORE THAN WORDS**

Pentecostals generally insist that truth is more than a doctrine which you can formulate and write on a piece of paper. Truth is not only words; it is also an experience. We agree.

Jesus is the Truth. In John 14:6, Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, according to John 14:17. Everyone who is "of the truth" belongs to Jesus (John 18:27). We must not only "know" the truth (1 John 2:21), but also "do" the truth (1 John 1:6). ***The Christian truth is not only a word to be believed (John 17:17) but also a power that sets us free (John 8:32).***

In Chapter One we read the testimony of people who make a big distinction between doctrine and experience. They complained that in the church they dried up spiritually. The church gave them words, which were nearly always the same, instead of providing them with the experience of being with Jesus.

Those complaints, however, were written ***after*** the big experience had come. Since then, these Pentecostals have experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit in a new and overpowering way. They call it the "Baptism in (or: with) the Holy Spirit."

The following story of John L. Sherrill is typical of the stories told to the committee. Sherrill was first doubtful, but then he began to study the Pentecostal Movement and finally joined it. He wrote:

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. ... 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 five or ten minutes I worshipped Him in a language I never heard before. There was a lull in the praying and singing. The voices around me receded into a quiet murmur. A man's voice: "I believe John (Sherrill) wants the Baptism in the Spirit." I felt more than saw ... five people rise and form a circle around me .... The group moved closer around me. It was almost as if they were forming with their bodies a funnel through which was concentrated the flow of the Spirit that was pulsing through that room ... Now the tongues swelled to a crescendo, musical and lovely ....

I felt a numbness in my lips and a constriction in my throat .... With a sudden burst of will I thrust my hands into the air, turned my face fully upward and at the top of my voice I shouted:

“Praise the Lord!” The floodgate [of the Spirit] opened. From deep inside me, deeper than I knew voices could go, came a torrent of joyful sound ....<sup>1</sup>

### ***A SECOND EXPERIENCE***

Such descriptions of the Baptism with the Spirit could make you conclude that through this experience people become Christians for the first time. But the Pentecostals say this is not so. They say that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second encounter with or experience of God. Before receiving this baptism, a Christian is saved, according to them, but he has no power to serve. ***Only after the baptism in the Holy Spirit can a Christian become an effective servant of Christ. This is the central doctrine of these Neo-Pentecostals.***

From where do Pentecostals get the idea that Christians need a second experience with God? Some say this pattern is seen in the life of Jesus. 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).

Primarily, however, the Book of Acts is seen as the source of this doctrine. The disciples, who were already followers of Jesus, received the baptism in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). The Samaritan Christians believed and were baptized by Philip, but only later did they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:4-25). Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and three days later was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:1-18). Cornelius, one who already feared God, received the Holy Spirit through hearing Peter’s preaching (Acts 10). The disciples in Ephesus had been baptized by John the Baptist, but only through Paul’s preaching and his laying on of hands did they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7).

Some Pentecostals say that there is a pattern in those examples, a pattern in which the baptism with the Holy Spirit is always a second and separate experience. They conclude from this that, now, in the life of every believer, the occurrence of faith and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are always two separate events.

### ***IS THAT WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES?***

Pentecost is indeed the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Peter said that this baptism was the fulfillment of an Old Testament promise. God was pouring out His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17).

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<sup>1</sup> John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues*. Westwood Fleming H. Revell, 1964, pp. 122-123.

John the Baptist baptized only with water. His baptism was only to prepare the way for the coming of the new age. John's mission was to witness to the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Four of the six passages that speak of being baptized in or with the Spirit contain this prophecy of John concerning Jesus (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33). In the other two passages, Jesus picks up John's prophecy (Acts 1:5) and Peter quotes these same words of Jesus (Acts 11:16). Hence the baptism in the Spirit is the fruit of Jesus' work, and those baptized by John the Baptist could not yet receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7. Compare with John 7:39).

A new age or new period entered into human history in the person of Jesus. During his life on earth, the Kingdom of God was present in His own person. Jesus alone had the Holy Spirit poured out upon Him. Through His life and death, Jesus opened 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).

Thus, Pentecost means the beginning of the new age for people of all nations. The Book of Acts records for us how the living Lord gathers His people from all nations and forms them into one body. The message of Acts is the expansion of the church from Jerusalem to Samaria and to all parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). ***Precisely at those points where the church moves into new areas, events occur that are similar to Pentecost.*** When the first Samaritans entered the church, the Lord delayed the giving of the Spirit until the apostles arrived (Acts 8). In this way, the unity of the Samaritans with the Jews in the church is clearly established. The Jews and Samaritans alike, who had always been bitter enemies, have received the one Spirit through the same apostles themselves. When the first Gentiles were converted, the Spirit fell on them immediately, before they were baptized (Acts 10:44-48).

The Book of Acts thus reveals that the New Age or, as it is also called, the New Covenant, is for all people. Both Jew and Gentile alike receive the sign and the reality of the New Age, that is, the baptism in the Spirit. Those who entered the New Age at Pentecost have no advantage over those who enter later. All equally receive the same Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47, Acts 11:17).

Does this history show that baptism in the Spirit is a second experience in the life of every believer? Not at all! The events of Jesus' life which enabled Him to prepare the way for the outpouring of the Spirit, do not present stages through which all must pass. Similarly, although the disciples had a special relationship to Jesus during His ministry and only later received the Spirit at Pentecost, their experience cannot be a pattern all of us must follow. They lived ***before*** the establishment of the New Covenant or Age. We live ***after*** the fact. ***In the New Covenant all believers have received the promise, that is, the baptism in the Spirit.***

Can we find a pattern then in the Book of Acts? ***Apart from the demand of faith, we see no fixed sequence or pattern that is followed at all times.*** Several times the Spirit seems to be related to or follow upon water baptism, but in two of the five accounts in Acts, the pattern is: faith, baptism with the Spirit, and then water baptism. There is no fixed order of events, no pattern, in Acts.

The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe. No believer exists who has not been baptized in the Holy Spirit. All believers have entered the New Age, and the sign and reality of that New Age is the Holy Spirit. All believers have been baptized by the one Spirit into the one body (I Cor. 12:13). As a former professor of mine wrote,

In Neo-Pentecostal literature, the expression “baptism in the Spirit” is used to describe an experience which every believer ought to have. Does the New Testament ever use the expression in this way? Yes, but only once: in I Cor. 12:13.... Does Paul here agree ... that Spirit-baptism is an experience, distinct from conversion, which should be sought by all Christians? Nothing could be further from the truth. “In one Spirit were we all (all of us, not just some of us) baptized into one body.” What Paul says here, in the plainest of words, is that all Christians have been Spirit-baptized. Spirit-baptism is here described as identical with regeneration (being born again) – with the sovereign act of God whereby we are made one with Christ, incorporated into the body of Christ. ***You don’t need to seek a Spirit-baptism as a post-conversion experience, Paul is saying to the Corinthians and to us. If you are in Christ, you have already been Spirit-baptized.***<sup>2</sup>

#### ***HOW DO YOU SEE IT? Questions for Discussion:***

1. What is the significance of Pentecost for the Christian?
2. What does it mean to be “baptized in the Spirit?” When does this occur?
3. Why is it so important to insist that all Christians have been baptized in the Spirit?
4. “I love the Lord, but I just don’t feel spiritually alive. Somehow the joy of knowing Jesus has escaped me. I see other Christians who are excited, turned on, happy, content and I wonder what’s wrong with me. Why can’t I feel that way too?” Is it possible for a person to be a believer, to have been baptized in the Spirit, yet still feel this way? Explain.
5. How do you explain that some lukewarm Christians sometimes experience a sudden, dramatic spiritual awakening? If this is not that second experience – that baptism in the Spirit – then how else can it be explained?

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<sup>2</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, pp. 20-21.

6. Read the story of the disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19: 1-7. Then defend or oppose the following statement: This incident clearly shows that baptism in the Spirit can be a second experience in the life of believers.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The use of the term “Pentecostal” shows how important and central the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to the Pentecostal Movement. Sometimes the term “charismatic” is used in place of “Pentecostal.” That word comes from the Greek word “charisma,” a word used often in the New Testament for the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit.

#### ***WHAT ARE THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?***

When Jesus Christ went up to His Father, He did not leave the church on earth to care for itself on its own power. He sent the Holy Spirit and that Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers. They receive gifts for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ, to enrich it spiritually and to give it power. By means of these gifts the church and Christians in general are able to perform their task both in the church and in all other areas of society. The Holy Spirit gives different kinds of gifts. The following four lists contain most of the gifts mentioned in the New Testament:

#### **Romans 12:6-8**

Prophecy  
Service  
Teaching  
Exhorting  
Contributing  
Giving Aid  
Showing Mercy

#### **I Cor. 12:8-10**

Utterance of wisdom  
Utterance of knowledge  
Faith  
Gifts of healing  
Working of miracles  
Prophecy  
Distinguishing between spirits  
Interpretation of tongues

#### **I Cor. 12:28**

Apostles  
Prophets

#### **Ephesians 4:11**

Evangelists  
Pastors

Teachers	Teachers
Workers of miracles	
Healers	
Helpers	
Administrators	
Kinds of tongues	

Study these lists, as well as the shorter ones in I Cor. 13:1-3 and I Peter 4:11. You will see that the gifts are not listed in any set order. We should not, therefore, try to rank gifts according to their importance, unless Scripture itself does so – and it generally does not. Only in I Cor. 12:28-30 does Paul rank the gifts in order of importance. He writes that prophecy is more desirable than tongues. We should not minimize any of the gifts that the Holy Spirit considers important for the welfare of the church.

Are there gifts by the Holy Spirit which are not mentioned in the New Testament? Yes. Read, for example,

Isaiah 28:24-29 -- When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cumin; caraway is beaten out with a rod and cumin with a stick. Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it. All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.

Here we have in the Old Testament a gift from God – and, after all, the Holy Spirit *is* the Spirit of God and cannot be separated from Him – that many people would describe as secular or natural that has nothing to do with either religion or God. ***So, the varieties of gifts mentioned and the various differences in the lists indicate that there was never an unchanging, fixed or complete list of gifts. The gifts and the order in which they are written seem to have been influenced by the particular situation in view at the time of writing.***

The giver of these gifts is the Holy Spirit who distributes them according to His sovereign good pleasure. Thus there is no reason to deny that there may be additional gifts which appear from time to time according to the particular needs of the hour or day. The task of the church and of God's people in general is always the same. Therefore the same gifts are needed most of the time. But new developments can come up that call for additional gifts. And when there temporarily is no need for even some of the more traditional gifts, they may fade away. But they will reappear when they are again needed. The almost complete absence of the gift of

tongues for long periods in the history of the church may well be evidence of this kind of situation.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: I can accept the above explanation as a partial but not as the full explanation. If you study how the church in the Western world has struggled with the concept of miracles, including healing, you will see that its worldview blinded her and kept her from recognizing them. A combination of philosophy and science kept that Western church from accepting the idea of miracles. This was at a time there was as much need for miraculous healings as there was in Jesus' days. ***So, there are also the factors of unbelief and suppression to be considered, not only that of need.*** Unbelief on the part of the people could even prevent Jesus from exercising His gifts. Mark 6:5-6 – “He could not do any miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. And He was amazed at their lack of faith.” The way the Gospel has been introduced into Nigeria was influenced by that Western situation.

### ***ARE THE GIFTS STILL PRESENT TODAY?***

No one today doubts the presence of what some might call the more “ordinary” gifts. It can easily be seen that the abilities to teach, to rule, to show mercy and similar gifts are widely present today. No one doubts their reality or necessity. But the reality of other gifts, those thought to be more spectacular or unusual, such as tongues, prophecy and healing, that is doubted today by many Christians. Some think that those gifts disappeared when the last apostle died and the New Testament was completed.

Some argue against the continuation of the more spectacular gifts. They say that Christ came to announce and begin the Kingdom of God. Signs and miracles were part of His ministry in order to show His authority as King and to show the nature of His Kingdom. These signs and miracles continued during the days of the apostles in order to show the truth of their message and to prove they were indeed messengers of Christ (II Cor. 12:12). But once the church was firmly founded and the New Testament completed, there was no further need for signs and miracles. The stories we have of them in the Bible are good enough for faith and life.

The view just described has been held and defended by some very good Christian theologians. One of them is Prof. B.B. Warfield, a serious believer and man of God, who, in a book called *Counterfeit Miracles*, written in 1918, wrote that miracles showed the authority (credentials, qualifications) of the apostles as God's real agents. With the death of the apostles, there was thus no further need for miracles and they disappeared.

As long as these gifts were largely absent from the church, such arguments appeared to make sense and to be valid. But today, with the claim that these more spectacular gifts are present,

such arguments no longer satisfy. ***There is a new need to take another good look at the Bible about this question.***

It is true that God gave the apostles powers that served as a sort of qualification. Peter in Acts 9:40 and Paul in Acts 20:9 were enabled to raise people from the dead. Such signs and many others showed that they were messengers from God.

However, the “spectacular” gifts which are listed in I Cor. 12, are not given for the purpose of qualifications or as signs that the apostles were real servants of God. Instead, ***they are given for the building up of the body of Christ*** (I Cor. 12:7, I Cor. 14:3-4).

We should also note that the distinction between “spectacular” and “ordinary” gifts is a distinction we make. The Bible makes no such distinction. Even the “ordinary” gifts are not ordinary in any human sense. According to the Bible, generosity in giving and giving aid cheerfully are not just the result of a type of personality. They are gifts of the Spirit.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: It is no accident that the distinction between “spectacular” and “ordinary” gifts “happens” to run parallel to the lines drawn by some scientists. The “spectacular” ones are those beyond science. If you believe that only what science can show is true, well, yes, then you have to reject the idea of the so-called “spectacular” gifts.

Are spectacular gifts needed today? The Lord once gave signs and miracles to the church so that His followers could show the truth and reality of the gospel to hostile Jews and Pagans. Isn't it possible that in certain situations today, He may do the same to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of power, not of mere talk (I Cor. 4:20)? Of course, the Bible is complete and sufficient for faith and life (II Tim. 3:15-16, II Peter 1:18-21) and God has given His full revelation in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2). ***But there is nothing in God's Word which keeps us from believing that the Spirit of God will no longer give us the more spectacular gifts.*** There is nothing in the Bible that suggests these gifts were only for the first century.

Some day no extraordinary gifts will be needed. There will come a day when prophecies and knowledge will pass away and tongues will cease (I Cor. 13:8). That will be when “the perfect” has come, when we see face to face and understand fully (I Cor. 13:10-12).

### ***SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND SPIRITUAL FRUIT***

Why do the gifts of the Spirit often divide Christians today? Perhaps for the same reason they did in the New Testament church. People easily forget the source of the gift. They become proud and glory in themselves or in the gift, not in the Giver. Paul had to write against spiritual pride:

I Corinthians 4:7 – For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

***Not everyone receives the same gift. The difference leads us to think that some are more important than others in the church.*** This happens especially when we think that our particular gift is greater. In this way we separate the gift of the Spirit from the fruit of the Spirit. But the fruit of the Spirit is essential to the life of faith. Every believer has the Holy Spirit in his heart, and the result is the fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22-23). ***Without this fruit of the Spirit, and especially without love (I Cor. 13), the gifts of the Spirit are useless.***

The apostle Paul speaks very emphatically against the abuse of gifts in the church of Corinth. If gifts are not controlled by love, or if they do not contribute to the common good of all, if they do not build up the church, they are nothing at all (I Cor. 12-14).

The church is brought into being through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The church is preserved, built up and given power for service through the gifts the Spirit gives. ***Genuine gifts of the Spirit can be tested by observing the attitude and works of the person who claims to have the gift. How does she use the gift? Does he use it for the benefit of the church?*** The church is always called to test the spirits. It does so by the standards found in the Bible.

#### ***HOW DO YOU SEE IT? Questions for Discussion***

1. What is the difference between fruits of the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit? Would you agree that if a person has the kind of love found in I Cor. 13, he and his church can get along without the Spirit?
2. Agree or disagree on the following statement: If we admit the presence of prophecy, healing and tongues in the church today, then we are Pentecostals.
3. Read again the last paragraph of this chapter. Compare I Cor. 12:7 and I Cor. 13:1-3. Now try to say in your own words how we can judge whether a gift is genuine or not. Then try to apply the standards to a specific situation.
4. "Charisma" means gift. Is anyone in the congregation without a spiritual charisma? Is it true that some members are "Pentecostals" and others are not?
5. Have each person in your group list the three needs of the church or the needs of Nigeria as a whole which she or he thinks most urgent today. Then, next to each need, write those gifts of the Spirit which we should seek in order to meet that need. Compare the needs and the gifts which the group has listed. Close the exercise by praying for the needed gifts.

## CHAPTER 4

### TONGUES, HEALING, DELIVERANCE AND MIRACLES

Much of the disagreements about the Pentecostal Movement has to do with the gifts of tongues and healing. The gift of tongues itself raises controversy, but this controversy is heightened by the claim that it is the first evidence of baptism in the Spirit. ***There are two reasons healing and miracles bring disagreements among people.*** One is that many so-called modern people simply doubt that they are possible. The second is that it is often said that God wants healing for everyone who has enough faith. What does the Bible say about these gifts?

#### ***SPEAKING IN TONGUES***

The gift of speaking in tongues is the ability to speak aloud and to make utterances in sounds that until now were unknown to the speaker. Speaking in tongues is much like the speech of a baby just learning to talk. It sounds like gibberish.

Are tongues a foreign language? It is said that some tongues speakers have spoken to others in a foreign language the speaker has never learnt. However, analysis by language specialists of modern tongues-speech suggests the opposite. It suggests that tongues-speech is made up of the sounds and patterns of the speaker's mother tongue and that it is not a language in the normal sense of the word.

People ask what the value of tongue speaking is. It is not another language. It is not even understood by the speaker herself. Much of the objection to it stems from the feeling that it is a lot of nonsense.

Those who speak in tongues, however, tell us that it is a spiritually uplifting experience which gives great rest and peace of heart. It is an experience of praise in which Jesus is very near. The fact that tongue speaking is not understood by the mind is no objection to them. Nor was it for Paul. He too knew that in tongues "the mind is unfruitful" (I Cor. 14:14) but he did not for that reason declare it to be nonsense. The apostle recognized that "one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God ... and edifies himself (I Cor. 14:2,4). For that reason, Paul declares that tongue speaking should not be done in public worship services, unless someone

has the gift of interpretation. But Paul does not forbid its private use as a language of prayer and praise (I Cor. 14:28-39).

***Therefore we do not object to speaking in tongues. But we do raise strong objection against the absolute claims made for tongue speaking by some Pentecostals.*** The General Council of the Christian Reformed Church warns against singling out one of the gifts, whether tongues or any other, as the test for being filled with the Spirit.

We object to the fact that many Pentecostals insist that the gift of tongues is for everyone, even though it may be the least of the gifts. In fact, many consider tongues to be the first and necessary sign of baptism in the Spirit. Thus, according to them, if a Christian does not speak in tongues, it is clear that he has not been baptized in the Spirit.

Such a position goes contrary to the New Testament. In the book of Acts, speaking in tongues is mentioned on only three occasions. That is, at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), at the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:46), and at the conversion of the disciples baptized by John the Baptist (Acts 19:6). In addition, Paul tells us in I Cor. 14:18 that he speaks in tongues, but this fact is not mentioned in the story of his conversion in Acts 9. We have already noted that Acts records Pentecost-like events at important turning points in the expansion of the church. But there are many stories in Acts that show people as coming to salvation, as being filled with the Spirit, but there is no mention of speaking in tongues. Acts does not give enough proof for saying that speaking in tongues is an indispensable sign of baptism in the Spirit.

The most important discussion in the New Testament on tongues is I Corinthians 12-14. There Paul insists that not everyone receives the same gift, but the “Spirit ... gives them to each one, just as He determines” (I Cor. 12:11). He even specifically denies that all will speak in tongues (I Cor. 12:30). The argument that in I Cor. 12 Paul is speaking only of the use of gifts in public worship, where not all speak in tongues, does not do justice to these chapters. I Cor. 12 and 13 speak clearly of the Body of Christ wherever and however it functions, not only in public worship. It is not until I Cor. 14 that the apostle gives directions for the use of some gifts in worship, namely the gift of tongues and of prophecy.

***Scripture seems to teach that speaking in tongues is a spontaneous experience. People are not taught how to do it.*** There are many stories of people who have sought this gift during great emotional stress. In some cases, people were advised to produce a kind of babbling or to repeat endlessly the words “Thank You, Jesus,” in order to “get the gift going.” Most Pentecostals, however, are aware that speaking in tongues also appears in non-Christian religions. “Tongues” is thus not always a manifestation of the ***Holy*** Spirit!

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: I allowed this last sentence to stand, because it is probably true. However, I am not sure it follows from the sentence before that. Remember the quotation from Isaiah 28 above. That passage speaks of farmers in general. All of them are considered as gifted or equipped by God, not only His followers.

Speaking in tongues may indeed be a manifestation of the Spirit of God. But it must be strongly emphasized that it is not a *necessary* part of the Christian experience that all believers must possess, either for their salvation or for their full service of Christ. On the other hand, the church today should not be more restrictive than the Bible itself, which says, "Do not forbid speaking in tongues" (I Cor. 14:39). In other words, it should be allowed and joyfully recognized as legitimate.

### ***THE GIFT OF HEALING AND MIRACLES***

Next to speaking in tongues, the subject of healing and miracles is the most frequent topic of debate. Yet every Christian believes that God heals. James assigns 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 the church to pray for the sick. And every church can testify of answers to such prayer.

Why then is there so much disagreement on this subject? There are several reasons, but we shall mention only two. Sometimes it seems today that healing miracles are promoted for their own sake or for the sake of the faith healer. Healing crusades take on the appearance of spectacles which people come to observe to see how many will be healed or how it is done. The Biblical purpose of healing miracles is overlooked, that is, they are a confirmation of the gospel of salvation and a manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible warns against miracles for their own sake. Christian faith is not primarily faith based on miracles (John 2:23-25) but faith in Jesus as the Christ (John 20:29, 31). The Bible also warns that healing and miracles can be done under the power of Satan (Mat. 7:1-23, Mark 13:2, II Thess. 2:9). ***Miracles, we know, can also be performed by people of other religions. So, miracles by themselves prove little about anyone's Christian position.***

A second reason for disagreement about faith healing is the theology on which it is based. Many Pentecostals believe that all sickness is from the devil and that God does not want sickness. They teach that God wills healing for everyone provided there is sufficient faith. Thus, if a Christian is sick, it is due to a lack of faith, according to this doctrine.

This theology of faith healing goes beyond the teaching of Scripture. It is true that God is a God of healing (Ex. 15:26), that He promises healing to His people (Ex. 23:25, James 5:15) and that

healing is a part of God's salvation. It is also true that sickness entered the world as a result of sin, that sickness is part of the curse of the law (Deut. 28:15-22, 27-29, 35, 58-61) and that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). Again, it is true that *sometimes* sickness can be ascribed to the oppressive power of Satan (Luke 13:16, Acts 10:38, II Cor. 12:7).

However, *it is not true that God never wills sickness for His people* (I Cor. 11:30-32). It is not true either that God will always heal if there is sufficient faith. There can be a divine purpose in sickness or bodily ailment (John 9:3). Paul had to be content to keep his thorn in the flesh so that God's strength could be made perfect in his weakness (II Cor. 12:9). It is interesting to note that Paul recommends a common medicine for Timothy's digestive problem (I Tim. 5:23). In Philippians 2:25-30, the impression is given that Epaphroditus recovered following a lengthy illness. In another place Paul admits, "Trophimus I left ill at Miletus" (II Tim. 4:20).

The theology of faith healing is based on a false understanding of the presence of God's Kingdom. Believers in faith healing often fail to take seriously the Biblical teaching that we have but the first fruits of the Spirit and that it is precisely our bodily existence that has not yet received the full redemption promised by God (Rom. 8:18-25). Some day the full redemption which Christ has earned for us will be experienced in the resurrection of the body. Until then we live in hope. According to

Romans 8:23-24 – Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

Until then, sickness, disease and death are a part of our existence in this life. This is also implied in Deut. 15:11 – "There will always be poor people in the land." Poverty is a major cause of sickness. If poverty is not erased, neither will sickness. Miracles of healing can happen as signs that the Kingdom of God is already present. They can also serve as guarantee that the full redemption is on the way. But nowhere does the Bible promise that all sickness will or can be removed before the resurrection of the body.

God heals in many ways. Sometimes healing is by means of the God-given skills of physicians and "miracle" drugs. At other times, the doctors have had to admit that a healing has taken place which was beyond their skill and understanding. In every case, thanksgiving and praise belong to God, but to promise more than the Scripture does can only create confusion and disagreement among Christians. It can also do grave injury to the faith of many.

## **DELIVERANCE OR EXORCISM**

Deliverance is a form of healing and can be considered “miraculous” in the sense that it lies outside the range of medical healing. The traditional Christian term for it has been “exorcism.”

Christ often had contact with “unclean” or evil spirits. After His baptism, Jesus is led “by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Mat. 4:1). We are told of three of the temptations He experienced at that time. ***Each time Jesus defeats Satan’s plan by using Scripture and saying, “It is written.”*** In so doing He demonstrated the power of God’s Word over Satan (Mat. 4:1-11).

Then there is the story of the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:29). The man is possessed by a legion of demons who torment him so that he is forced to live among the tombs in a local graveyard. The demons cry 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, delivers the man by casting out the demons and allowing them to enter a herd of swine, who plummet to their death into the sea.

When Jesus sent out the seventy followers, He “gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” (Luke 9:1). His name is used to cast out devils by persons who are His disciples (Mark 9:38-41). ***On basis of the Gospels, no one can deny the reality of Satan and of other spiritual beings hostile to God and to people.***

The coming of Jesus into the world is the beginning of what the Bible calls “the last day,” another word for “the new age.” It means the eventual defeat of the kingdom of darkness. ***During His days on earth, the demons attacked Him and others with greatly increased force and strength the likes of which had never been seen before.*** But everywhere the demons retreated before the divine majesty and power of Christ. If we had no further reports in the New Testament of demon possession and deliverance, we could conclude that the demonic world was completely and finally defeated during Jesus’ ministry. But we read of demonic activity and deliverance also after Pentecost as in Acts 19:11-20. In addition, demon possession and deliverance has been reported throughout the history of the church, especially in places where the Gospel does not have a strong hold on people or where it is new.

Today we hear of many reports about demon possession and deliverance, especially among Pentecostals. We express great reservations about some of these reports. ***We are especially doubtful of the almost “indecent” eagerness with which some revivalists “diagnose” cases of demon possession.*** In many such cases the difficulties are hardened sinfulness, character weakness, natural resistance to the Gospel, self-induced fears, mental illness or diseases such as diabetes (called by some “sugar demon”). All of these are serious and the Christian counselor, minister or physician must and can deal with them according to Biblical insight and

science without immediately resorting to demonic explanation of the problem and to exorcism. ***Deliverance from these oppressive problems, yes, indeed, always. However, that is not always the same as exorcism – deliverance from demon possession.*** We are *not* saying that the devil has nothing to do with those problems, but they are not cases of possession that need exorcism. Neither are they cases about which the victim or her community can do nothing.

***The Biblical stories of demon possession have two things in common.*** One, the victim is helpless to deal with it. Two, the demons speak through but independently of the victim's will and control. In such cases, prayer and a believing command of deliverance in the name of the Lord Jesus relieves the sufferer and casts out the demons. Some Christians who are familiar with demon possession have noted that ***whenever 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.*** When you are not sure whether or not you are dealing with a case of demon possession, speak the name of Jesus. If it is a real case, there will be an immediate reaction to that name and the situation is confirmed.

“The last days” started with Jesus and we are still in them. As this period moves on there may be a sharp increase in demon possession in different places and at different times. We caution against the too hasty conclusion that cases of moral lapse and resistance to the Gospel are always due to demon possession, though Satan will have influenced the situation. ***But where it is reasonably established to be the case, we call upon the church to exorcise or deliver the victim of demon possession.***

#### ***HOW DO YOU SEE IT? Questions for Discussion:***

1. Which of the following statements about speaking in tongues can be supported by Biblical evidence? Read I Corinthians 14.
  - a. Speaking in tongues is a desirable gift of the Spirit.
  - b. Speaking in tongues is a necessary sign of Spirit baptism.
  - c. Those who speak in tongues should be welcome in any church.
  - d. A minister who speaks in tongues ought to do so during the worship service, so all can benefit from his gift.
  - e. Those who speak in tongues ought not to hold office in the church.
  - f. Those who speak in tongues are emotionally unstable, insecure persons.
2. Read James 5:13-18. Is the advice of :14 often practiced in your church? How do you practice it or how would you follow this rule?

3. What's your opinion of meetings in which large groups of people come forward to be cured by a faith healer? Does Scripture approve of such activities? When are faith healings a real gift of the Spirit?
4. "Miracles by themselves prove nothing." Why?

## CHAPTER 5

### FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Rejection of some of the wild claims of Pentecostals should not lead us to reject those aspects of their teaching that *are* Biblical. The Pentecostal Movement wrongly interprets the Bible's teaching on baptism in the Spirit. It also often makes wild claims about the necessity of certain gifts. ***But its desire to stress a life filled with the Spirit is clearly true to the Bible.***

#### ***THE CHURCH AND THE SPIRIT***

The question we want to ask here is whether or not the church has neglected the Biblical teaching of living in the Spirit. Has the church ignored the person and work of the Holy Spirit? Forty years ago, when I was a teenager, some years before the Neo-Pentecostal Movement had even been heard of, a wise old elder who has long gone to the Lord, told me he felt the church did not pay enough attention to the Holy Spirit. But, he prophesied to me, I should pay attention. It will not be long before Christians will realize their mistake and turn to the Holy Spirit. He was right. Many churches did play down the Holy Spirit and his prophecy came true just as he said when the Neo-Pentecostal Movement was born.

It cannot be denied that the Holy Spirit had been neglected in the lives of individual Christians. Some theologians were aware of the problem. In the Christian Reformed Church, theologian Louis Berkhof wrote a series of articles on the Holy Spirit in the church's official magazine. The titles of the first two articles were "Lack of Interest" and "Long Neglected." Exactly the point the old elder had made. Another famous theologian of the church, Abraham Kuyper, in the year 1888 wrote a very large book on the Holy Spirit – more than 800 pages! It is called *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. Written over 100 years ago and I still have it on my bookshelf in Jos. He

observed, ***“Even though we honour the Father and believe on the Son, how little do we live in the Holy Spirit!”*** Right on! Yes. Even today, 100 years later, in Nigeria. Too bad, but not too late.

### **KNOW YOUR OFFICIAL CHURCH TEACHINGS IN THE CREEDS**

Nevertheless, the same cannot be said of the official teachings of the Christian Reformed Church. The official teachings of this church are found in certain documents known as creeds and confessions. The three main ones are The Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. ***These are also the official teachings of the CRCN and of NKST.*** They have even been translated into both the Hausa and Tiv languages.

These official teachings are written in very careful theological language many of us may not understand very easily. So, it may be well for you to ask your pastor to preach about the truths in these creeds. Even today, the NKST pastors preach on the teachings found in The Heidelberg Catechism every Sunday. In the section below I will reproduce for you the most important parts of the teachings on the Holy Spirit in these three creeds. Though you will lose out if you skip this chapter, reading it is not necessary for understanding later chapters of this book.

#### **A. THE BELGIC CONFESSION**

##### ***Article 11: Who is the Holy Spirit?***

We believe that the ***Holy Spirit*** comes eternally from the Father and the Son. He is neither made nor created. He is the third person of the Trinity – of the same majesty and glory with the Father and the Son. He is true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us.

##### ***Article 3: How did we get the Bible?***

We believe that the Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of men, but that holy men of God spoke, ***being moved by the Holy Spirit***, as Peter says in II Peter 1:21.

##### ***Article 5: The testimony of the Spirit in our hearts about the truth of the Bible***

We believe without a doubt all things contained in the Bible. Not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but above all because ***the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God.***

**Article 8: The place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity**

In keeping with the Word of God, we believe in one God, who is one single essence and in whom there are three persons, really, truly and eternally distinct, namely, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause, origin and source of all things, visible and invisible. The Son is the Word, the Wisdom and the image of the Father. ***The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might.***

Nevertheless, this distinction does not divide God into three, since Scripture teaches us that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each (are) distinguished by characteristics, yet in such a way that these three persons are only one God.

There is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.

**Article 9: The work of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity**

We must note the particular works and activities of these three persons in relation to us. The Father is called our Creator by reason of His power. The Son is our Saviour and Redeemer by His blood. ***The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier by His living in our hearts.***

**Article 24: The Holy Spirit and our Sanctification**

We believe that this ***true faith, produced in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit,*** regenerates him and makes him a new man, causing him to live the new life and freeing him from the slavery of sin.

**B. THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM**

This document contains questions and answers about the Christian faith. Each question has its own number.

**Question 53: What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit?**

Answer: First, He, as well as the Father and the Son, is eternal God. Second, He has been given to me personally, so that, by true faith, He makes me share in Christ and all His blessings, comforts me and remains with me forever.

**Question 4: The Holy Spirit and our good works: But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?**

Answer: Yes, unless we are born again by the Spirit of God.

**Question 21: What is true faith?**

Answer: True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true. It is also a **deep-seated assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit** through the Gospel that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God and have been granted salvation.

**Question 31: Why is Jesus called "Christ" meaning "Anointed?"**

Answer: Because Jesus has been ordained by God the Father and has been **anointed with the Holy Spirit to be**

1. our **Chief Prophet and Teacher** who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance.
2. our only **High Priest** who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father.
3. our **Eternal King** who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom He has won for us.

**Question 32: Why are you called a Christian?**

Answer: Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so **I share in His anointing. I am anointed:**

1. to confess His Name.
2. to present myself to Him as a living sacrifice of thanks.
3. to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life.
4. afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity.

**Question 49: How does Christ's ascension into heaven benefit us?**

The full answer is long. I reproduce only the part on the Spirit:

Answer: ***He sends His Spirit to us on earth as a further guarantee. By the Spirit's power, we make a goal of our lives,*** not earthly things, but the things above where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

***Question 51: How does this glory of Christ our Head benefit us?***

(Note: "This glory" refers to His sitting at the right hand of God.)

Answer: Through His Holy Spirit ***He pours out His gifts from heaven upon us His members.***

***Question 70: What does it mean to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?***

Answer: To be washed with Christ's Spirit means that ***the Holy Spirit has renewed me and set me apart*** to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.

***Question 72: Does this outward washing with water, that is, water Baptism, itself wash away sins?***

Answer: No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.

***Question 86: Since we have been delivered from our misery ..., why then must we still do good works?***

Answer: We do good works because ***Christ by His Spirit is also renewing us to be like Himself,*** so that in all our living, we may show that we are thankful to God for all He has done for us, and so that He may be praised through us.

***Question 109: How is the Spirit-filled life the fulfillment of the seventh commandment?***

Answer: ***We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul,*** and God wants both to be kept clean and holy. That is why He forbids everything which incites unchastity, whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts or desires.

**Question 115: How is the Spirit-filled life the fulfillment of all the commandments?**

Answer: While **praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit**, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.

**Question 116: Why do Christians need to pray?**

Answer: Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because **God gives His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually** and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking Him for them.

**C. THE CANONS OF DORT****Section III-IV Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion:**

When God carries out His good pleasure in His chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, He sees to it that the Gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly. At the same time **He enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit** so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God. By the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, **He also penetrates into the inmost being of man**, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant. He activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

**Section V Article 10: The Holy Spirit Gives Us Assurance**

Assurance (of salvation) does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the word, but from faith in the promises of God which He has very plentifully revealed in His Word for our comfort. This assurance also comes from the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God's children and heirs (Rom. 8:16-17) and finally ....

This is not all the confessions have to say about the Holy Spirit. However, this is enough to show that the creeds emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit. He is the One by whom Christ unites us to Himself. Without the Spirit, there would be no faith, no church, no Christian life.

The creeds, having been written in a different age with different problems, do not use the language of “being filled with the Spirit.” But the substance of what is meant by the fullness of the Spirit is clearly taught and even required by the confessions. The question remains whether or not that teaching has come to life in today’s church or in today’s believers. That’s a question each church and each individual has to answer for herself.

### ***“IN CHRIST” MEANS ALSO “IN THE SPIRIT”***

The expressions “in Christ,” “in Him,” “in the Lord” are used very often by the apostle Paul as a convenient manner of referring to our new mode of living. Although he teaches emphatically that those who are in Christ are under the rule of the Spirit of Christ, he uses the expression “being in the Spirit” only once (Rom. 8:9), at least in the King James and Revised Standard Versions, but not in the NIV. This is in contrast to “being in the flesh.” Compare: “those who live according to the flesh” to “those who live according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). “You are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25).

In Chapter Two we talked about how some Christians make the mistake of thinking that they can come to Christ first, and that later, as a higher step on the ladder, they receive the Spirit as the “second blessing. Christ is dishonoured by such teaching and many sincere people have been thoroughly confused by it.

### ***The general teaching of the New Testament is that every Christian shares in the Holy Spirit.***

Becoming part of the Body of Christ by baptism also means participation in the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). Since we are “one body,” we are also “one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4). You cannot have Christ without having His Spirit (I Cor. 6:17. Compare Rom. 8:9). Of course not! The Lord, the exalted Messiah *is* the Spirit. That is to say, “Where the Lord is, there is the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:17). Whosoever belongs to the Lord, is a partaker of His Spirit.

Our Saviour is now the exalted Lord. By His exaltation, He has inaugurated the age of the Spirit. The Spirit bridges the time between the ascension and the return of the Lord. During the present age, the congregation lives under the regiment or rule of the Spirit, because it is by His Spirit that Christ preserves, governs and empowers His church.

***Any teaching that separates the work of Christ from the work of the Spirit is contrary to the Bible.*** That is true also for any doctrine that places the baptism into Christ and into the Spirit on two different levels. Anyone who wants to be saved by Christ but who refuses to live by Christ's Spirit, deceives himself. ***Christ and the Holy Spirit always are together.***

This same point has already been made in Chapter Two as well. Please look at Romans 8:9-11 and notice how the names of Christ and of the Spirit are used interchangeably. Two times the Lord and the Spirit are the same Person in Paul's writing (I Cor. 15:45, II Cor. 3:17). Paul uses such language because between Christ's ascension and His return, the Lord is present by His Spirit.

### ***FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT***

He who receives Christ, receives the Holy Spirit. ***He who is baptized into Christ is baptized with His Spirit.*** This promise holds for everyone.

***However, being baptized in or with the Spirit is not the same as being filled with the Spirit.*** Christians are never commanded to seek baptism in the Spirit. That is Christ's gift to those who believe (Acts 2:38). But Christians *are* commanded to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). What does that mean?

Luke, the author of both the Gospel of Luke as well as of Acts, often uses the term "to make full." When he tells how the people in the synagogue of Nazareth were "filled with wrath," he is not talking about people who are angry in an ordinary way. He is talking about people ruled by an unrestrained temper (Luke 4:28). In the same way Luke describes people who are completely ruled by a power that descends on them from heaven. When Elizabeth bursts out with a "loud cry" (Luke 1:41) and when Zechariah prophesies (Luke 1:67), they are said to be "filled with the Spirit."

Luke uses the same language in Acts. He describes people who are "filled" with wonder and amazement (Acts 3:10), with joy (Acts 13:52), and with jealousy (Acts 5:17 and 13:45). The power of jealousy can be so great that it rules all that we say and do. But we can also be filled by powers that are good. Dorcas was not a woman who helped only now and then. She was "full of good works and of charity" (Acts 9:36).

In all these instances, people are controlled by that which "fills" them. Some power governs their actions. They do not rule the power, but the power controls them. We still speak this way in respect to the use of alcoholic drinks. When a man has drunk too much alcohol, he is "filled" with that drink. He no longer controls the drink; it controls him. Thus the point of Paul's

warning is clear to us. “Do not get drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). This command is in the present tense. We must continue on a daily basis to be filled with the Spirit so that the Spirit always rules our thoughts, our hopes and our behavior.

The Holy Spirit has been given to all believers. All believers have been baptized in the Spirit. But that does not mean that all believers are always ruled by the Spirit. Believers can fall into sin. They can grieve or sadden the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). In that sense, it can be said that they are no longer “filled” or ruled by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, though all believers have been baptized in the Spirit, they must daily seek to be filled and controlled by the Spirit. Control by the Spirit is the only remedy against being controlled by sin.

### **EVIDENCE OF FULLNESS**

***Dramatic signs may be evidence of being full of the Spirit, but such signs are neither necessary nor are they the most important evidence.***

On the day of Pentecost, dramatic signs accompanied the first baptism with the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Later that day, the same power was given to 3,000 others who accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour (Acts 2:38, 41). But there is nothing in the Bible to show that the same dramatic signs which accompanied the baptism of the 120 also accompanied the baptism of the 3,000. We must distinguish between the things that came along with Spirit-baptism which occurred at key points in the establishment of the church as in Chapter Two and Spirit-baptism itself. The evidence of being baptized with the Spirit or of being filled should not be limited to dramatic signs.

Dramatic signs are not the most important evidence of being filled with the Spirit. That is clearly seen in the conduct of the Corinthian church. ***They had been baptized with the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13), and dramatic signs had occurred in their midst. But they were not filled with the Spirit.*** They were proud, loveless and guilty of dividing the Body of Christ. They were carnal. ***They did not lack the baptism of the Spirit, but they did lack the fullness of the Spirit.*** To put it in different words, they needed to grow up in Christ. The Bible means basically the same when it tells us to grow up in Christ or to be filled with the Spirit.

You may have “received Christ Jesus the Lord,” but then you must “live in Him” (Col. 2:6). The apostle says something similar with respect to the Spirit. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25), or, as the NIV puts it, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Thus Paul makes a distinction between a ***condition*** and the ***resulting walk***. He assumes that it can be said of the baptized congregation in Galatians that “we live by the Spirit.” The result should be a walk or a way of life that must fit that condition: “Let us walk by

the Spirit.” In Gal. 5:26-6:10) he spells out what he means by this practical, Spirit-filled way of life.

To keep this booklet short, it is not possible to describe fully all the evidences of a Spirit-filled life. You must read especially the prayers of Paul which are scattered throughout his letters. Paul asks God that the fullness may be revealed in the actual life of the congregation. At the same time he encourages Christians to seek that fullness. Read Rom. 15:13 and note the words “fill” and “power of the Holy Spirit.” In Eph. 3:14-19 Paul desires that Christ “may strengthen you with power through his Spirit” in order that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Another example is the prayer in Col. 1:9-14. There are several other prayers and exhortations in Paul’s letters all aimed at this fullness. ***This fullness exists already for us by faith in Christ, but at the same time we must restlessly seek it.*** It cannot simply be possessed and assumed that you have it like you have your physical possessions.

If we could choose one word that sums up the main evidence of the Spirit-filled life, that word would be ***love***. There is no greater evidence of being filled with the Spirit or of living in union with Christ than the manifestation of love. This is the test which John, Paul, Peter and the Lord Himself have given us. This love is not merely an emotion, but it must be lived as full obedience to the will of God. Love fulfills the law.

#### ***HOW DO YOU SEE IT? Questions for Discussion:***

1. How can you be sure that you’ve been baptized in the Spirit? Would you be more sure if something spectacular had happened?
2. If the filling with the Spirit is so crucial to the Christian life, what must we do to obtain this fullness? Answer this question both for yourself as well as for your church.
3. Imagine that all the people in your church were “filled with the Spirit.” Then make a list of several of the most significant changes that you think should happen. Compare your list with that of others in your group.
4. If you yourself are filled with the Spirit, make a list of things that you and others see in you as evidence. Be sure to be honest. When you are finished, ask yourself whether you are satisfied with your list. Why or why not?
5. If someone is baptized in the Spirit but does not seek the fullness of the Spirit, is he a Christian? Explain your answer.

## CHAPTER 6

## INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

Enthusiasm for reading the Bible should never be criticized. In fact, it should be praised. ***Most Pentecostals testify that they now find the Bible to be an exciting book. This is something church leaders must be careful not to dampen.*** Pentecostals claim that the experience of “baptism in the Spirit” has stimulated them to open the Bible, to “read, learn, mark and inwardly digest” the Bible. The church must be grateful for such enthusiasm for and interest in the Bible. ***Any church leader that squashes that enthusiasm because he does not like the Pentecostal Movement will one day be called to account for his leadership.*** He has lost his right to be a church leader. He has forgotten his calling.

Nevertheless, some basic questions must be answered. Who interprets the Bible? How should the Bible be interpreted?

**THE RIGHT TO PRIVATE INTERPRETATION**

Who interprets the Bible? Does every Christian do this for himself? What is needed for interpreting the Bible? Only the Holy Spirit? If that is so, ***what can be said to a group of “Spirit-filled” young Christians who say on basis of Luke 14:26 that they no longer recognize their parents as father and mother?*** Is there any way to check whether an interpretation is correct?

Sometimes people turn to I John 2:20 to defend the position that each individual interprets the Bible for himself. This verse in the King James version reads, “You have been anointed by the Holy Spirit, and you know all things.” This verse is then interpreted to mean that since every Christian has the Holy Spirit, his interpretation of the Scripture must be correct. Disagreements in interpretation mean either that the other person or group does not have the Spirit, or that the Spirit can make a passage mean several things. In either case, there is no possibility of checking the correctness of your interpretation. Almost any interpretation must then be accepted.

The more accurate translation of I John 2:20 reads, “You have been anointed by the Holy One and you all know.” This is the reading of the Revised Standard Version, Good News for Modern Man, American Standard Version, The New English Bible and the Jerusalem Bible. All Christians know the Truth, that is, they know Jesus Christ. Therefore, they should not be misled by false teachers. The verse does not teach that all Christians are equally good interpreters of Scripture.

Did the Reformation not establish the right of private interpretation? No, it did not. When the Reformers stressed the clarity of Scripture and the priesthood of all believers, they meant only that Scripture is so clear that every believer can know Jesus Christ and the way of salvation. Anyone can discover that from Scripture. ***But the Reformers did not teach that the church can get along without trained teachers, or that every Christian is able to interpret the Word of God as well as anyone else.***

There is a strong tendency among the Pentecostal Movement to stress private interpretation. They are taught to spend time with the Bible and just wait for the Holy Spirit to speak from its pages. ***Sometimes they insist that the Holy Spirit gives surprising insights that have nothing to do with the meaning of the words of the text.*** For example, God's promise to David to build him a house in II Sam. 7:27 means that the throne of Israel will be reserved for David's family. However, you will find Pentecostals who take this to be an instruction from the Spirit to build a church.

There is the story of this pastor who felt it was time to build a new church. Then he read II Sam. 7:27 – "O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, 'I will build a house for you.'" Though this promise plainly has to do with establishing the royal line of David, not a physical building, the pastor took the word "house" literally and claimed it as God's promise, or even instruction, to him to proceed with building a new church. When he discussed the matter with his wife, she told him that the Lord had spoken to her in the same way a year earlier. And so the matter was settled for this pastor.

Pentecostals speak of this as reading the Bible for blessing, not for doctrine. A description of some part of the temple, or even an unlikely spot in a long list of names, may suddenly be filled with spiritual significance. Such insights are often totally unrelated to the meaning of the words of the text. They are thought to be intended by the Spirit only for the individual who receives the insight. No one else may receive the same insight. That interpretation is said to be the result of the private, immediate enlightenment of the Spirit. There are no criteria available for evaluating the correctness of the interpretation. Even the text itself cannot serve as criterion. All that is necessary is for someone to receive a clear impression that this is the Spirit's insight to you.

***Such a way of treating the Bible is a highly individualistic approach that is not acceptable. It violates the nature of the Bible by ignoring the plain meaning of the actual text. In addition, it is based on a false idea about the way the Holy Spirit functions among the people of God.***

## **THE NATURE OF THE BIBLE**

The Bible did not fall ready-made from heaven. It was not put together by angels, but by men inspired by the Spirit of God. **God chose to reveal Himself through human words and language.** He could have chosen to reveal Himself directly by making an inner impression on our minds or by a direct appearance to us. But God chose men who wrote in the Hebrew and Greek languages as His preferred way of revealing Himself.

The Holy Spirit honours that. He does not directly transcend those language barriers. Without translators, even though we have been anointed by the Spirit, we could not interpret the Bible. And the work of translation already involves a large amount of interpretation. When we read the Bible in the English language, we are reading an interpretation of the Word of God. Usually it is a good interpretation, but occasionally not so good. When the NIV changes “close up his bowels,” a meaningless phrase to us today and makes it “has no pity on him” (I John 3:17), we have a good interpretation that accurately reflects the intention of the original words in the Greek text of the New Testament. At other times, the interpretation is not so good. For example, the New English Bible interprets the word “flesh” in Gal. 5:16 as “lower nature.”

NOTE FOR ADVANCED THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS: When the New English Bible translates Paul’s word “flesh” as “lower nature,” the reader might conclude that man has a lower nature and a higher nature. The lower nature could be interpreted as his body, while the higher one might be his spirituality or rationality. That interpretation would be based not on Paul’s text but on Pagan Greek anthropology. “Flesh” in Paul’s writings does not mean “lower nature” or “body.” It means man under sin as opposed to the man in Christ.

Another example of a poor translation. The Living Bible interprets “law” as “Jewish laws” or “Jewish customs” as in Rom. 4:9, 16 and Gal. 3:2. This translation gives the sentences a different flavor and meaning from that intended by Paul.

Fortunately, such faulty interpretations are very few and they usually are corrected in the more standard translations. Such poor translations make us hear the wrong things. So, when you want to listen to what the Spirit wants to say to you, be sure you have a reliable translation before you.

God chose to reveal Himself in written form at a certain time in human history, though over a period of many centuries. Through His written revelation, He spoke to and about people living in particular circumstances. Hence, this written revelation contains customs and practices from those periods of history. For example, we read of phylacteries (Mat. 23:5), of “not boiling a young goat in its mother’s milk,” (Ex. 23:19), and of Jesus’ criticism of oaths (Mat. 5:33 ff). In order to understand these passages, you must know something about these customs and practices. We read of the holy kiss, of women wearing veils and of foot washing. These are

customs different from ours and we need to know their meanings for the people of those days before we can understand them for our own day. ***We must first understand the Bible in terms of the times in which it was originally written before we apply it to our own times. That is a basic principle of Bible interpretation.***

Another basic principle of Bible interpretation concerns the ***unity of Scripture***. It is common practice for some to interpret words, phrases and verses in isolation from what the Bible says elsewhere or even in the passages just before or after the one being studied. Scripture is a unity which presents God's plan of salvation. ***Every part must be interpreted in terms of other parts.*** The New Testament must be interpreted in the light of the Old, and the Old in the light of the New.

Many ignore this basic principle. For example, some interpret Ezekiel's prophecy about the new temple without even mentioning the fulfillment in Jesus (John 2:21) and in the church (II Cor. 3:16 and 6:16 ff). The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old, and no interpreter may ignore that.

These two principles of Bible interpretation are derived from the very nature of the Bible itself. One must check the correctness of particular interpretations by means of these principles. No one may ignore the kind of book the Bible is when he interprets it. To do so is to do violence to the same Holy Spirit for whose voice one is listening. That Spirit may not be separated from the words He Himself has given us.

### ***THE CHURCH, THE SPIRIT AND THE BIBLE***

It could seem to you that in the last paragraph we are saying that the ordinary untrained Christian cannot interpret the Bible if the above principles are to be applied. They are too difficult for the untrained Christian. It almost seems as if you need to be an expert to understand the Bible. The untrained Christian knows nothing about Hebrew and Greek, the languages in which the Bible was originally written. Neither does the average Christian know much about the ancient customs and history we find in the Bible. Can the average Christian then interpret the Bible or is he cut off? Yes, he can. No, he is not cut off.

But neither may the average Christian simply ignore these basic principles of Bible interpretation. ***All Christians, including the so-called "experts," learn to interpret the Bible in the church.*** It is there that we learn its message, its meaning, how it holds together and how it applies to our lives. We do not interpret the Bible as private individuals. Even in our homes we interpret the Bible in the light of what we learn in the church.

There are several reasons we must learn to interpret the Bible in the church. First, the Bible is addressed to the church, to the people of God. The Bible is not given to each individual separately. It is sent to the church and it belongs to all of us together. ***The Bible is not someone's private possession and, therefore, it is not up to each of us to give it our own private interpretation.*** The Bible belongs to the people of God of all the ages, and it comes to us as members of the Body of Christ.

The second reason we must learn to interpret the Bible in the church is that, just like the Bible, the Holy Spirit is not given to a lot of separate individuals either. The Spirit is given to the church and to individuals as members of that church. All of us together form the one Body, the one Temple in whom the Spirit dwells (I Cor. 2:27, 6:19, 12:7). I Corinthians 12:27 says, "Now you (plural—thus ***many*** individuals) are the body (singular – thus: ***one*** body) of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." The Spirit is not given to us in isolation from others. ***Therefore, only as we live together in one Spirit will that Spirit lead us into the truth.***

The third reason we must learn to interpret the Bible in the church is that the Spirit pours out many different gifts on the church. The contributions made by those who have received such gifts enrich the whole Body. They also enrich the church's understanding of the Word of God. All contribute to that enrichment, not only pastors and teachers, but also all others who have learned the meaning of the Scriptures through living with the Spirit and studying the Word. ***We all contribute to each others' understanding,*** but this happens mainly in the church.

### ***THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE BIBLE***

God does not expect every Christian to become a scholar or theologian or even to read the books of scholars before reading and interpreting the Bible. ***God does expect every Christian to be a member of the church of Christ, for there, among the people of God, we learn to understand the Word of God.***

This does not mean that the Spirit will not suddenly open our eyes to the truth of a particular passage in a fresh way as we read our Bible privately. He often does. But it does mean that we have no right to private interpretations. We must test our understanding against the understanding held by the people of God. The Spirit has been leading the church into the truth for many years and we ignore that only to our own disadvantage. ***To think you can ignore the insights and understanding of others in the church, whether of today or in the past, to assume you are the only one to have knowledge, is to ignore the very gifts of the Spirit you pretend to desire.***

Many of us do not *consciously* follow these principles of Bible interpretation when we read the Bible. If we have learnt to understand the Bible in the church, among the people of God, that does not really matter. We often follow them *unconsciously*, for they have become part of us through our exposure to them for many years in the church. The church has been observing these principles for centuries. As members of the Body of Christ, we have the promise that the Spirit will lead us into all the truth (John 16:13).

***HOW DO YOU SEE IT? Questions for Discussion:***

1. Since the Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God and since each of us has been anointed by that same Spirit, why can't we interpret the Bible on our own?
2. Do preachers have the right to proclaim private interpretation of Scripture?
3. Is it possible for the Spirit to say something to you through a particular message that has nothing to do with the meaning of the passage you are reading? Do you see any dangers in such a position?
4. When the two main fathers of the Reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin, were accused of imposing their private interpretations of Scripture on others, they responded by showing that their interpretations were found in the writings of the early church fathers. Why was this important to them?
5. Does the church spend enough time teaching its members how to interpret the Bible?
6. What would you say to someone who insists that, since the Bible commands Christians to greet each other with a holy kiss, all Christians must do so today. If not, they are disobedient (Rom. 16:16, I Cor. 16:20, II Cor. 13:12, I Thess. 5:26, I Peter 5:14).
7. Which of the following would you consider to be valid interpretations or uses of Scripture? In your answers use the three principles mentioned in this chapter.
  - a. A person reading Rom. 5:8 is suddenly struck by the wondrous love of God for sinners.
  - b. A person reading Gen. 12:7 concludes that the verse promises the land of Palestine to modern day Israel.
  - c. Someone reads Mat. 5:3 as a command not to accumulate earthly treasure of any sort.
  - d. After reading I Cor. 11:13-14 at family devotions, this long-haired young man went to get a haircut and his mother decided to cover her head in church.
  - e. A rich trader and his wife were so impressed by Luke 18:18-25 that they closed their business and converted their shop into a centre for Gospel outreach.

## CHAPTER 7

### CHURCH STRUCTURES AND SPIRIT-FILLED PEOPLE

You may remember that one of the complaints listed in Chapter One was that the distinctions between pastors and ordinary church members are not based on the Spirit of God, but on education and decisions of councils. In other words, according to the complainants, church officials are people appointed by the organization, not by the Spirit of God.

#### ***PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT AND ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT***

There are a number of large establishments in our country that have great influence and even power over us. Establishments are the large organizations, the large companies, the Federal, State and Local Governments, the military, the large hospitals and universities and, not to forget, the churches. These are called political, medical, educational, business and religious establishments. They all have a lot of power before which most people have to bow. To a large extent these establishments rule us. They are very difficult to change.

In the world of today there is a spirit of anti-establishment. People with that spirit do not like these establishments. They partially fear them and partially hate them. They would like to reduce their power or even see them disappear altogether. Some people are anti-government; others are sort of anti-church, even Christians, for they feel that the church stands in the way of good and Biblical religion. The Gospel and the way of Christ should not be made so complicated or bureaucratic, they feel.

To some degree the Pentecostal Movement is an expression of this spirit of anti-establishment. And to the degree that it is, it finds a ready hearing among others who have such a spirit. This is especially so for young people, who can easily become discouraged with the slow pace of the church and her bureaucratic procedures. In such an environment, the criticism of the Pentecostal Movement that decisions in the church should not only be made in assemblies of learned people, but by simple believers who are “waiting upon the Lord,” finds a ready hearing.

One would think that people like Pentecostals who study the Book of Acts so intensively, would notice that the Holy Spirit led the early church through some very difficult conflicts and

problems. At that time there were opposing parties, discussions and debates. Yet, through it all, the Spirit led the church into the truth (Acts 15).

Some of the criticisms the Pentecostal Movement has against the church can be seen as part of this general spirit of anti-establishment. But their basic objection goes much deeper. By placing church officials in opposition to so-called “Spirit-filled” people, the church’s officers lose all their credibility and authority with Pentecostals. They are no longer accepted, believed or respected, not to talk of obeyed. ***It is true: only the Spirit can have legitimate authority in the church and that He exercises through people He has chosen.*** When they are asked who God’s chosen leaders are, the Pentecostal will usually answer that they are those with Spirit-baptism. In such a situation it is almost impossible to avoid a conflict between so-called “Spirit-filled” people and church officials who are supposedly not “Spirit-filled.”

### ***CHURCH OFFICE A GIFT (CHARISMA)***

The above distinction between Spirit-filled or Spirit-gifted people on the one hand and church office-bearers on the other hand is not Biblical. ***The Bible views church office and the office-bearer as gifts of the Holy Spirit.*** If you go back to the lists of the gifts of the Spirit earlier in this book, you will see that it includes the official church structures. These gifts are mentioned either in terms of the activity – for example, teaching and exhorting – or in terms of persons carrying out those activities – for example, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers and administrators. The apostle Paul says the same about church elders. They have been appointed by the Holy Spirit as overseers of the flock “to feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28). Offices in the church are based upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

***At times it is possible that the church appoints someone who has the education to fit a position, but who does not have the gift of the Spirit.*** It must be confessed: sometimes that happens regularly. Sometimes it happens because of the way people enter the ministry. Young people sometimes move from secondary school into theological training without having shown any leadership and spiritual qualifications. ***Church officials sign for them simply because they do not wish to be blamed for hindering someone’s educational plans.*** When that happens, Pentecostals and all other members have the right, if not the duty, to voice their objection. However, this must be done by following established procedures, not by shouting from the rooftops. ***The church must always be conscious of its responsibility to ensure those considered for appointment have the necessary gifts.*** Only those who are spiritually gifted to lead should lead the church. And office bearers themselves must be conscious that their position is not one of power or self-seeking, but a gift of the Spirit. They will be able to lead only when they are so led by the Spirit.

Thus, the Holy Spirit cares also for the structures of the church, for the offices and for the office-bearers. These are His gifts to the church. One may not simply assume that official structures and Spirit-guidance are two different things.

### ***THE NEED FOR OFFICES IN THE CHURCH***

Would it not be far better if there were no offices in the church? ***The history of the church proves that offices easily become dictatorial structures. The official church sometimes restricts and suppresses the working of the Spirit. Can the church not get along without office-bearers?***

Simply put, no, it cannot. The New Testament shows why. At first, the apostles did not appoint office-bearers. They simply went about preaching and establishing churches. But it did not take long before they felt the need to appoint elders in every church, as per

Acts 14:23 – Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Office-bearers are needed to preserve both Biblical teaching and Biblical order in the church. Paul instructed Timothy to commit the things Paul had taught him to faithful men, who would then teach others in turn:

II Timothy 2:2 – And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

***The Christian faith is rooted in the tradition of the apostles.*** By “tradition” we mean the faith delivered to us by the apostles, those writings we know as the New Testament. We are not talking of ordinary man-made traditions. This truth, according to Paul in I Cor. 11:23 and 15:3 is “received” and then “delivered” without any changes or additions. “Tradition” comes from a root word that means something like “handed over.” It is handed over from God Himself, mediated through the Holy Spirit. That is the tradition of which Paul speaks in II Thess. 2:15, translated “teachings” in the NIV:

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

The church’s office bearers are charged to be “stewards” and “guardians” of this “deposit,” this “tradition,” this body of “teaching.”

The apostles were the eyewitnesses who passed on or delivered what they had seen and heard (I Cor. 15:1, I John 1:1). The church receives this tradition and is encouraged to stand fast in

them. The whole church must hold to this apostolic tradition. When the church grew in numbers and the apostles realized they would one day die, the task of maintaining, preserving, keeping and handing over this tradition was given to persons appointed to be office bearers in the church:

II Tim. 2:2 – And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

I Tim. 5:17 – The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Simple claims of possessing the Spirit are not a good enough guarantee of the truth. ***Spirit-movements like Pentecostals have a tendency to believe that they have an independent and infallible source of truth in addition to the tradition we have in the Bible.*** For this reason, Pentecostals have sometimes gone ***beyond*** the tradition in the New Testament. Sometimes they have gone ***against*** this tradition. And sometimes they have ***left*** it and ended up outside the church. But claims of possessing the Spirit must be tested by the teachings of the apostles:

I John 4:1 – Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

***That is why the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, established offices in the church to preserve and to pass on the New Testament tradition.***

***These church offices are also necessary for good order in the church.*** Order is essential to maintain the unity of the church. All sorts of things can disturb this unity. Disorderly conduct that goes against the tradition of the apostles is one of them:

II Thess. 3:6 – In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

Disorderly ways of worshipping can be another as in

I Cor. 11:17 – In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.

Read the entire chapter to see for yourself. A third way is the deliberate and selfish destruction of Christian unity:

III John 1:9-10 – I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

The church cannot simply do her thing in a wild and disorderly way, as if the Spirit prefers chaos to order. ***This Spirit can be quenched by both chaos as well as by too much order that then becomes rigid. Sometimes the church has emphasized order too much and thus quenched the Spirit. Sometimes Pentecostals emphasize freedom too much by disorderly conduct tending towards chaos.*** That, too, quenches the Spirit. Both are wrong. The Holy Spirit has appointed offices in the church to rule against both extremes by preserving New Testament truth and the unity of the Body.

### **TRADITION AND TRADITIONS**

People do not like tradition much these days, especially young people. There is so much change all around us all the time that we begin to think that everything more than five years old must be rejected and replaced by something new. Past traditions may have been good for past ages, but not for ours.

We Christians and our churches are also affected by the above attitude. Sometimes for good reasons. Sometimes the church tries to maintain traditions that are only human traditions. That does not make them bad, of course. Many human traditions started for good reasons, but later these reasons were overtaken by new conditions and no longer fit. Not every tradition is from the Spirit and not every tradition needs to be held on to forever. Change is not sin. We can change our ways of doing things.

***When the church insists on traditions that have lost their usefulness, conflict always arises.*** It may well be the Spirit of God Himself that leads members against such traditions. Church leaders must always remember that the Lord Jesus was very critical of traditions that may have been of the Spirit at one time but that had outgrown their usefulness and thus became mere human tradition:

Matthew 15:1-9 – Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honour your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ he is not to ‘honour his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’”

In such cases, traditions may hide the truth and make it difficult to live the truth in our modern times. This means, among other things, that ***the specific ways in which we worship may need to be changed sometimes***. Dissatisfaction with some of our present traditional forms of worship does not need to be against the apostolic tradition. Refusal of all change will only create splits in the church or encourage people to change to other denominations that are more open to change. ***When such conflicts arise, the elders should not only reprimand those who demand change, but they should also examine whether some of the demands may not be legitimate***. When things become too rigid, people will demand change and the church must be open to that. Refusal to prayerfully consider change or to hear the cries of those who are dissatisfied will not help the church at all. We need Spirit-guided change. Church leaders have been appointed to guide these changes in a proper way, not to resist them all by building dams around them.

The church of Christ has been in the world for almost two thousand years. Traditions have been built up and they are a very powerful force in the life of the church. There are layers and layers of traditions. Church leaders must not simply resist changing any tradition, but must seek the gift of discernment. The apostolic tradition of the New Testament may never be abandoned, but ***the traditions of men should be preserved only as long as they assist the church in maintaining and living the truth***.

Preserving the apostolic tradition is not the same as preserving the status quo. That is, it does not demand resistance to all change. The Holy Spirit guides leaders to help the church to live and preach the truth in a fresh way in every age. The office bearers of the church need to have the gifts of the Spirit to guide the church through such change. ***If they are not sure that they have these gifts or if the people cannot see these gifts in them, then they have no business being officers***. The question should then be raised how they became officers in the first place.

But more: ***the office bearers are themselves to be the gift of the Spirit to the church. When they are that, everyone will recognize it, for it cannot be hidden***. And when that is the case, there will be no necessary conflict between them and the members who are also Spirit-filled. They are one body together and are guided by one and the same Spirit. That Spirit will lead them together, not into conflict, but into the truth of the new situation. Where there is conflict, you can be sure that there is a lack of the Spirit and both sides have to seriously examine themselves, church leaders just as much as the members.

#### ***HOW DO YOU SEE IT? Questions for Discussion:***

1. Defend or oppose this statement: Pentecostals are a threat to the unity of the church.

2. Can you think of any example in the history of your church, either congregation/parish or denomination as a whole, in which the Council or Synod took action to preserve the unity of the church?
3. How does the way in which your church chooses its office bearers – elders, deacons, pastors and others – ensure that only Spirit-filled people are selected?
4. Make a list of one or two traditions of your church in each of the following areas:
  - a. Worship services
  - b. Church education
  - c. Sacraments
  - d. Office holding
5. Which of these traditions do you judge to be of the Spirit and which merely human? On what basis do you judge?
6. Which of these traditions are useful? Which should be changed?
7. Can you suggest alternatives to those that should be changed?

## CHAPTER 8

## COUNSEL TO PENTECOSTAL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

Remember that the foregoing is a summary of a much longer study of the Pentecostal Movement done by the Christian Reformed Church. At the end of the original report you will find the church's counsel to its Pentecostal members as well as to its office bearers. In this chapter we summarize its advice to the members. Chapter 9 contains the counsel to the church as a whole. ***Be sure to read both chapters before you criticize either one.***

You will observe that the church does not reject these members. Instead, it gives them counsel that is evidence of wisdom and appreciation that only the Spirit of God can give. The issues had created much emotional turbulence in the church and it would have been easy for the study committee or even the entire Synod to have given in to these heated emotions. However, the Spirit guided them towards careful, Biblical and balanced advice that aims at peace, tolerance and reconciliation. Without covering up its disagreements with certain teachings and practices found among the Pentecostal Movement, the report encourages its members to contribute to the life of the church in a healthy manner. ***It gratefully recognizes that the Pentecostal Movement has brought back into the church certain aspects of the Gospel that had long been neglected.***

We gratefully and prayerfully present the advice of the church to all its Pentecostal members:

1. Remember that all your Christian brothers and sisters have received the Holy Spirit as well as you:

I Cor. 12:13 – For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Romans 8:9 – You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

2. Remember that all religious experience is to be judged by the Word of God in Scripture and to be discerned by the Spirit-filled community of believers.
3. Remember that the Spirit of God is sovereignly free to work as He wills. He works in different ways with different people. There is diversity in His working. Do not think,

therefore, that you know the way in which the Spirit will work in the hearts of all  
 therefore, that you know the way in which the Spirit will work in the hearts of all  
 your Christian brothers and sisters. The Spirit will not necessarily work with others as  
 He has in you.

4. Live together in love, patience and full acceptance with your fellow believers who claim with you the baptism of the Spirit, but who do not testify to a “second experience” of the Spirit after conversion that is different from the “ordinary” growth in grace. Or with those who do not seek those particular gifts of the Spirit that are so important to you. Perhaps they stress rather the gifts of administration, discernment, teaching and exhortation.
5. Be discerning about the gifts of the Spirit. ***Be sure that your claims of having such gifts are demonstrated by the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life.*** Be grateful for the gifts of the Spirit you have received, but receive your gifts with modesty, remembering that there are many gifts of the Spirit. Recognize with equal gratitude and modesty the gifts received by others.
6. Do not glory or boast in your gifts or in others who are gifted. Boast only in Jesus Christ and in the salvation you have through Him.

I Cor. 1:31 and II Cor. 10:17 – Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.

I Cor. 4:7 -- For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Luke 10:20 – However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

7. Remember that ***the gifts of the Spirit are for the good of the whole Body of Christ.*** Exercise your gifts with prudence, care and love. When these gifts are not used in love for the Body of Christ and in spiritual wisdom, they come to nothing. Recall I Corinthians 13.
8. Remember that these gifts are not your own achievement. Neither are they rewards for your good works or endorsements of your holiness. They are truly gifts – and not for your honour but for service to the Body and the world.

9. Be sure you do not seek any particular gifts because they are spectacular or because people will adore you. Seek them for their usefulness for the upbuilding of the church and the world in faith, hope and love.
10. Do not single out any one of the gifts, whether tongues or any other, as the touchstone or test for being filled with the Spirit.
11. Know that even if you have been given one of the more spectacular gifts, this does not mean you have also the gift of Scripture interpretation or of discerning the will of God. Study the Scriptures in the company of the whole Spirit-filled church and discern the will of God within that fellowship.
12. If you are a pastor, elder, deacon, evangelist or some other office bearer in the church, ***be sure not to use your gifts as a commission from the Lord to impose that particular gift on the entire congregation where you serve.*** They may not recognize that particular gift or see the need for it. Love and prudence must guide you at all times.
13. Remember certain rules in interpreting the Scripture. The Spirit usually operates in the church and to individual members through disciplined listening to the Scriptures within the fellowship of the whole church. The way to honour the Scripture is to recognize the grammatical, historical and literary character of the Bible.
14. Be careful of the language you use as you testify of the grace of God, so that you may speak out of “one mind” with the whole church.

Romans 15:5-6 – May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth, you may clarify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

See to it that all your speaking is in accord with the faith of the church. If yours is significantly in opposition to that of the church, you need to examine yourself seriously. ***Do not automatically assume that the church is all wrong, that it has no Spirit.*** Examine yourself before you examine the church!

15. If you would like to be a pastor, elder, deacon or any other officer in the church, remember that the church is the judge of what gifts of the Spirit are needed most for

the exercise of these offices at any time. It is the Spirit-gifted church that appoints people to office and it does so in the name of Christ.

16. In all things seek the leading of the Holy Spirit. However, remember that the Spirit usually leads through the teaching of Scripture, through the counsel of wise and godly men and women, through the accumulated wisdom of the church, through the experiences of your own life and through your Spirit-enlightened mind and conscience. These are the ways through which a Christian will normally search for the will of God. True, the Spirit may sometimes guide us in strange, wonderful and even highly personal ways. Nevertheless, ***if you consciously, knowingly and regularly bypass the ordinary ways in favour of "special guidance" by signs or portents or revelations, you reject the Spirit's normal workings.*** In addition, you open yourself to subjective whims, to self-deception and to arbitrary directives. When you follow that route, you seek to escape from your own responsibility before God for making decisions in ways He Himself has established for you, a responsibility no one has the right to reject. If you have a sudden insight, do not confuse that with "special revelation," but examine it carefully in the light of Scripture and the accumulated wisdom of the church.

17. 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 who do not speak out of "one mind" with the church. They may 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." It is not surprising that we find such agents, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if Satan's servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond with their deeds.

II Cor. 11:13-15 – For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

II Thess. 2:9 – The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of ***counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.***

18. Remember that the kingdom of darkness is real. It is very dangerous if you give into it or if you become involved in occult practices. This can happen easily if you cut yourself loose from the guidance of the Spirit through the church.

19. If you take part in fellowship groups outside of the church, resist all temptations of such groups to break down the unity of the church or respect for her ways of working. Instead, promote its unity and respect for it. If the group persists in breaking down the church, then leave that group and look for one that is more healthy and positive, for one that seeks to build up the church.
20. We urge you to recognize and accept the Bible's full range of spiritual gifts. What may seem to you to be only the established church's superficial activities and routine administrative and teaching roles, are actually gifts of the Spirit. We are talking, for example, of service, teaching, exhorting, contributing, ruling and doing acts of mercy as in Romans 12:6-8. We are talking of teachers, helpers and administrators as in I Corinthians 12:28 as well as of pastors and teachers as in Ephesians 4:11. We urge you to remember the basic teachings of the epistles of II John and III John. There we are taught that ***unless the order and some form of structure of the church be maintained as part of the apostolic teachings, the church will die.***
21. Many Pentecostals understand the Gospel in an exclusively personal and very individualistic way. According to them, the Bible is concerned primarily with the salvation of the individual from sin and with the individual's life of personal piety. Now, of course, the Bible is deeply concerned with these, but its concern goes also far beyond that. There is what is called a "cosmic scope" to salvation that most Pentecostals ignore. This salvation includes all of creation, for all of creation is suffering from sin.
22. ***It is not a matter of being conservative or progressive. It is a matter of being faithful to the entire Scriptures.*** To be truly progressive, you need to be faithful to the Scriptures. Those Scriptures include long-standing apostolic traditions that need to be preserved. ***A Spirit-filled person is neither conservative nor progressive. He is both.*** Before he embarks on any so-called progressive spiritual venture, he will check it out with the established traditions.
23. Finally, we urge you to preserve the spirit of the Apostle Paul:

Phil. 2:2-4 – Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but

in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

## CHAPTER 9

### COUNSEL TO THE CHURCHES

While the previous chapter contains advice to members of the Pentecostal Movement, the same study committee and Synod (General Council) offer the following points of advice to the rest of the church, to all of its members, clergy, elders, etc. When you read “whole church” in these points, you must think of all of its members, all of its clergy and all of its other functionaries and officers. ***These points need to be read together with those of the last chapter. If you read only Chapter 8 or only Chapter 9, you will get a wrong impression.***

Chapter 8 warns Pentecostal members against various mistakes they sometimes make and could give the impression that the Synod sees nothing good in them while the church does everything in the right way. This chapter corrects that impression. ***Here it is acknowledged that the church and its officers can also be wrong and need to examine themselves also.*** When the church is urged to do some things in the following points, the implication is that it is not always doing so. When it is urged to walk in the Spirit, it means the Synod recognizes it is not always doing so as fully as necessary. When it is encouraged to bring the faith and life of the church closer to the life in the Spirit, it is suggesting that this is not always fully the case.

Furthermore, ***the church is called upon to recognize that Pentecostals are right at several major points.*** First, the gifts of the Spirit are still as available today as ever. That has not always been accepted in the past. Salvation is a deep experience that changes a person; it is not only accepting a body of doctrine. That has always been known theoretically but not always emphasized in the church. Pentecostals are especially to be thanked for having reminded the church afresh of the importance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. It is only a dead conservatism that refuses to recognize this positive contribution of Pentecostals. We should affirm this contribution joyfully, not grudgingly.

And now follows the advice the Synod has for the churches, point by point. If you are a church leader, pastor or elder or whatever, be sure to study them carefully. What follows is not the ideas of one person but the counsel of Synod itself, of the entire church. It offers these points of

advice after several years of prayerful and careful study of both the Bible and of the Pentecostal Movement.

1. We urge the whole church, members as well as 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 the teachings of the Bible about the Holy Spirit.**
2. 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:

I Cor. 12:13 – For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

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). Compare also John 3:5 *ff*, Acts 2:39, Rom. 8:1-17, 15:13, I Cor. 3:16 *ff*, 12:3, II Cor. 1:21 *ff*, Gal. 3:2, 5:16-26, I John 1:20, 27. **We reject, therefore, the teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a “second blessing” received after conversion.**

3. We urge the whole church to live in close fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. **We are neither to quench nor grieve the Holy Spirit** (I Thess. 5:19, Eph. 4:30). Instead we are
  - to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).
  - to “live” in the Spirit (Rom. 8:13).
  - to “walk” in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).
  - to “be led” by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14, Gal. 5:18).

We are to do all of the above, **so that the joy of salvation and the fruit of the Spirit may be ever more evident in our lives.**

4. 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 accordance with the Scriptures for this purpose:

Eph. 4:12-13 – to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

5. **We call on the church to recognize the freedom of the Spirit to bestow His gifts according to His will. The Scriptures do not restrict these gifts to apostolic times as**

**has sometimes been thought.** Let the church be open to the full range of gifts of the Spirit. These include those listed in the Bible, but they are not necessarily limited to those. We must be open to others that were not listed because there was no need for them, but for which there may be a need today. **An example is the gift of technology.** Today the Gospel is often advanced through modern tools of communication like radio, TV, loudspeakers, etc. The gift to produce, maintain and operate these was not needed in New Testament times, but they are today.

6. We urge the churches **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.”

I Cor. 14:33 – For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

Churches should also give full opportunity for service in ministries appropriate to the gifts of the members. It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure this happens so that no gifted members feel suppressed and go elsewhere for service.

7. We urge the churches to **fully accept in love those members who claim to have a “second experience” of the Spirit after conversion and one that is supposedly different from the more ordinary growth in grace.** We may disagree with their interpretation, but we must be grateful for every working of the Spirit that leads to a fuller manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.
8. We urge all pastors and elders to deal lovingly, patiently and wisely with members who claim to have a special Pentecostal experience or who take part in outside fellowships. **Christians have a freedom of association also in fellowship.** Disciplinary action should not be instituted so long as these members evidence fruits of the Spirit and do not disturb the peace and unity of the church.
9. We call on the church to be aware of the errors involved in much of today’s practice of “divine healing” and urge the whole church, but especially the leaders, to a ministry of prayer on behalf of and with the sick. **Some pastors and elders do not even visit the sick in their homes, let alone pray for them there. Where this is the case, it is the fault of the leaders if members turn to others for healing.**
10. We counsel the whole church whose pastor tends towards Pentecostalism to accept the brother fully in the performance of his office, so long as he manifests the fruit of the Spirit, employs his gifts for the upbuilding of the church and does not disturb the

unity and peace of the church. It is only when the welfare of the church requires it, when such a pastor threatens this welfare and unity, that the council should seek a separation from the pastor – and even then it should be done according to the church’s constitution.

11. We urge the church to safeguard “the unity of the faith in the bond of peace,” and to acknowledge that

I Cor. 12:12-13 – The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are man, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

I Cor. 12:4-6 –There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all ....

### ***CONCLUDING REMARKS***

We hope you have been blessed by this book and encouraged. If you are a Pentecostal, you should now realize that the church can accommodate many of your concerns and leave room for the free play of the Holy Spirit in your life. Be part of that church. Help build it up in the new joy you have found in the Spirit. But be open also to the points of criticism you have read. Give them serious thought. They are not the product of an individual opinion but the result of several years of deep prayer and study by the entire denomination called Christian Reformed Church.

If you are a church leader, it could be that you have been annoyed by some of the youthful exuberance, enthusiasm and impatience shown by the youth wing of the Pentecostal Movement. Please remember that you have been young yourself and sometimes were impatient. Remember also that some of the concerns Pentecostals have brought to your attention are legitimate concerns. Be grateful for enthusiastic spiritual life in a day when materialism surrounds us everywhere and corruption tempts all of us. It is when you leaders refuse to listen sympathetically and when you refuse to make room for spiritually enthusiastic youths in the church, when you frustrate them that they become rebellious and angry. That’s when they leave.

Some years ago, I was serving a CRCN church. Students had come home for their break. The elders were fearful that the presence of many students in the village would lead to troubles. So

they asked me to call the youth and warn them to behave. The whole thing was based on a negative attitude towards young people.

I called them and told them of the concerns of the elders. Then some of the youth leaders stood up and informed us of the plans they had made for this break time. They had planned very positive things like evangelism, drama and music, both for the church and for the village as a whole. The fear of the elders was unfounded. I personally felt embarrassed at having shown so little faith in these students.

Leaders, give youth a positive role to play. Recognize that sometimes they are impatient with dull worship services, with immobile worshippers and with slow and traditional songs. Create variety. Give scope for their interests as well. Give them a chance to participate. Be especially grateful for their spirituality.

***If you want to stem some of the negatives we write about above, be sure the youth cannot accuse you of dead conservatism or, even worse, of dead spirituality. If your spirituality is not as joyful and lively as theirs, everyone will see that. You will have no right to lead them and they have no reason to accept your authority. So, be sure you are a spiritual and joyful person, one who is obviously born again. That is the sole basis for your authority. If that cannot be said of you, please get out of the way.***