

I. Introduction

To speak about, even to attack “Neo-Pentecostalism” from the Reformed position seems to be a somewhat risky undertaking.

This is so not so much because it looks like a David attacking a giant — that too — for while the Reformed faith seems to be dwindling, at least as far as the number of its adherents is concerned, Neo-Pentecostalism is a colossus in comparison. The movement is growing like a mushroom and spreading like a holocaust. The number of its enthusiastic adherents is in the millions and grows by the millions.

However, riskiness seems to enter the picture when this movement is seen as a work and blessing of the Holy Spirit. People are rejoicing in the fullness of the Spirit and have found, they say, a wonderful life which they never found in any Church institution, which is frozen in established patterns and regulated by countless rules.

Are we to “forbid them” as an overly-zealous Joshua, fearing that the position of his master Moses might be endangered when some men kept on prophesying far away from the tabernacle (Numbers 11:28)? or as the disciples wanted to forbid people to prophecy in Jesus’ Name “because they do not follow us . . .”? Might we not be found to “quench” and “grieve” the Holy Spirit if we would dare to attack what seems so clearly to be a repetition of Pentecost, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which holds the promise for a total renewal of the Church?

In addition to that, who are we that we would dare to undertake such an attack? Are we so filled with the Holy Spirit that we are bursting with joy, making other people jealous, so that they come and want to join us and share with us the riches we have? Can we in any way compete with the spontaneous growth of this Pentecostal Movement? What is more, can we surpass them according to the word of our Saviour (be it spoken in a different context): “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of God”?

J.R.W. Stott starts his *Baptism and Fulness of the Holy Spirit* in this way:

The best way to begin is to stress the importance of our subject by confessing our great need of the power of the Holy Spirit today. We are ashamed of the general worldliness of the Church and disturbed by its weakness, its steadily diminishing influence on the country as a whole. Moreover, many of us are oppressed by our own personal failures in Christian life and Christian ministry. We are conscious that we fall short both of the experience of the early Church and of the plain promises of God in His Word. We are thankful indeed for what God has done and is doing, and we do not want to denigrate His grace by minimizing it. But we hunger and thirst for more. We long for “revival,” an altogether supernatural visitation of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and meanwhile a deeper, richer, fuller experience of the Holy Spirit in our own lives (page 5).

Should we not agree with most of this longing? Should we not, at least, start with showing some more of the "fruits of the Holy Spirit" like "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22, 23)?

While not denying this in any way, and confessing our shortcomings in this respect, we must, however, also give an ear to the apostolic warning and command, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit but *test the spirits*, whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Our "small beginning of the new obedience" should not be a neglect of such a command; that would only be another lack of "new obedience" added to the others!

Moreover, whereas Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism boast of "signs and miracles," we should heed the additional warning by the Saviour Himself, "Many will come and say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and do many mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you' " (Matthew 7:22, 23).

There is even more to be said here. It cannot be denied that, with the world heading in a direction that has all the appearances of destruction, people hunger for something "special"; they hunger and thirst for signs and miracles, something out of the ordinary, by means of which they may escape the harsh realities that throw themselves upon us day after day. The Lord Jesus once said, and still says in such a situation, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matthew 12:39).

Many more texts could be quoted which speak the same language (several of them will appear on following pages), but the few mentioned suffice to show that we simply *have to* "test the spirits" and measure them with the only measuring-stick we are allowed to use: the Word of our God. Then — even if deep inside we might ask ourselves, "Who are we to judge others?" — it will not be risky to face the Neo-Pentecostalist movement, squarely and ask, "What does the Bible say about it?"

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Although at a later stage we will go into extensive details about "*Neo-Pentecostalism*," the reader is entitled to know already now what exactly we are going to talk about. Therefore, in a nutshell, the following definition.

Since the end of the previous century there have been "*Pentecostal Churches*." Because people, who claimed they were so "filled with the Spirit" that they had received the charismatic gifts of Pentecost, like speaking in tongues, the gift of healing and of "prophecy," were no longer tolerated in the "mainline" Churches, they separated from them, and established their own churches. The name was obvious: they claimed that the original Pentecost, as described in Acts 2, continued in their midst.

"*Neo-Pentecostalism*" is very young; it started around 1960 as a movement *within* several Churches, including the Romanist Church. They not only thought and think that they could stay in those Churches but are convinced that they have to contribute something very important and necessary for the rejuvenation of these Churches. At the same time some

of these Churches are happy to have them. These Neo-Pentecostals also claim to have received, as a "second blessing," the gifts of the Holy Spirit as mentioned. The next chapter will prove that, notwithstanding the "*neo*," which means "new" (no more than twenty years old at the most), this movement has accompanied the Church from the very beginning, although mostly rejected as unbiblical.

While continuing our description and evaluation of this movement, we must keep in mind the word of Paul, "We are not contending against flesh and blood (that is, against people, vD) but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Or simply: when we have to fight, we will not fight against people but against principles, if they are in conflict with the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. Historical Survey

Although the “*Neo-*” in “Neo-Pentecostalism:” means “new,” the movement as such is not new by any means. That is why we will have to start by saying something about the history of this phenomenon. It must be kept very brief; otherwise it would fill a whole book. For more complete information see the Bibliography.

A study of the history of the Church must result in the statement that this phenomenon is most certainly not something new, but, on the contrary, it has accompanied the Church of God for centuries, even since the first centuries. Such a historical review will at the same time enable us to lay bare the *roots* from which this movement stems.

It stands to reason that from this historical review is excluded, for the time being, a study of charismatic gifts during Pentecost, and how the apostle Paul had to deal with them specifically in Corinth (cf. I Corinthians 12, 14). We plan to deal with that in a later section.

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In the second century (even earlier!) the Christian Church was confronted with two movements or sects which clearly showed a “pentecostal” face. Both were rejected by the Church, even vehemently.

The first one to be mentioned is *Gnosticism*. This Gnosticism, which already reared its head while some of the apostles were still around, had its roots in pre-Christian and un-Christian “mystery cults” which abounded in the world of those days, a world which was fed up with the outdated “religions” and wanted “something more.”

While the Christian Church is “*class-less*” (in Christ there is no difference between high and low, Jew or Greek, male or female; one is your Master and you are all brothers: one “class”) the Gnostics were not content with that. They divided people into various, at least three, classes. The highest class were the “gnostics-proper,” the ones who had (received) a special, higher, “*gnosis*” or direct knowledge, which was not shared by the “common” believers who “only had faith” Remarkably, this privileged class had special gifts! Calling themselves “*pneumatics*” (the “spiritual ones”; “*pneuma*” means “spirit”), they had the gift of *glossolaly*, that is, speaking in tongues!! Examples of such a gift have been preserved in their writings. They look like today’s glossolaly, like twins.

This Gnosticism stands clearly condemned in the Scriptures because, as has been said, it reared its head already while some of the apostles were still alive. Especially John wrote against them, having seen their destructive influence in and around Ephesus. It is generally accepted that one of

the motives of his adding the Fourth Gospel to the other three was to oppose Gnosticism, and he did so under the driving force of the Holy Spirit. From John's Epistles may be quoted: "Many false prophets have gone out into the world . . ." (I, 4:2); "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ into the flesh" (II, 7). It should be noted that, if not altogether denying the Incarnation, Gnostics did not see any significance or value in that. That is why I John 5:1-6, also 4:15, so strongly stresses, "Whoever confesses that Jesus [that man Jesus, vD] is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God." That "simple faith," put on the lowest level by those "pneumatics," is enough for salvation!

Similar statements may be found with Paul ("some take their stand on visions, are puffed up, and disqualify you," Colossians 2:17, 18; see also I Timothy 1:3-7, 4:1-3: a warning against "abstinence," another mark of the "pneumatics"; II Timothy 2:14-18: against those who said that they had already received the resurrection as a kind of "second blessing"; Titus 1:10-16 possibly points in the same direction). Peter also speaks about "false prophets . . . bringing in destructive heresies, even denying the Master Who bought them . . .," etc. (II Peter 2:1-3). Jude warns against those who with "their dreamings defile the flesh" (verse 4ff.).

By quoting all these texts we do not imply that today's Neo-Pentecostals are in all respects like the early pneumatics or Gnostics, but there is a similarity with regard to claiming a "higher state," which reveals itself in "direct knowledge" and special "gifts."

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The second heresy to be mentioned is *Montanism*, which had as spiritual father a certain Montanus. The impact and influence of the Montanists was much greater and lasted much longer. Even a man like Tertullian was under their influence. Their doctrine may be "written on a nickle" as follows:

The ministry of Montanus marked the initiation of the dispensation of the *Paraclete* [Holy Spirit, vD]. The Holy Spirit should work in individual believers, stirring up charismatic gifts [!]; the millennial rule of Christ was imminent.

Eusebius, the well-known Church historian, gives the following picture of Montanus:

. . . a recent convert, through his unquenchable desire for leadership, gave the adversary opportunity against him. He became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved and began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner contrary to the constant custom of the Church, handed down by tradition from the beginning.

Notice two things here: 1. Montanus went against the apostolic tradition, and 2. he went into a trance and uttered strange sounds, just like today's Pentecostals when they "speak in tongues."

Montanism exercised its influence far into the Middle Ages, although men like Augustine strongly condemned it. According to Augustine the "glossolaly" of Pentecost was only meant to point out that now the Gospel was to be brought in all languages to all nations. Luther and Calvin

took the same position. The Church during those centuries tried to keep this movement under control by putting in its place *Mysticism* and *Asceticism* which could be better controlled than the noisy Montanists.

However, towards the end of the Middle Ages there came a new outburst, when JOACHIM OF FLORA, 1202, started preaching and teaching the "*Ecclesia Spiritualis*" (spiritual Church). His fundamental doctrine was: as well as there are Three Persons in the One God, so there are *three periods* in the history of the Church. The Old Testament was the period of the Father. Then came the Son. And now we live in the dispensation of the Spirit. From his influence originated various branches of spiritualistic sects which excelled in ecstasy and speaking in tongues.

Then came the Great Reformation, the return to the Scriptures. Alas, that glorious century was darkened by an upsurge of spiritualism which had little use for the Incarnation, for the written Word, and for the Church as the gathering of those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Among them the *Anabaptists* were most prominent. Men like Luther and Calvin had their hands full opposing them and thus protecting the Church. In their secret meetings they claimed to experience a repetition of Pentecost as described in Acts 2. Leaving out many details, though interesting in themselves, we mention the eccentricities of the "Primitive Methodists," the so-called "*Ranters*" and "*Quakers*," (names which point to ecstasy) many of whom emigrated to the American Continent. In Europe one found by that time, especially in France, the so-called *Camisards*, who rejected the authority of the civil government, claimed a direct and new inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and thus were nothing but a more modern edition of the original Montanists (the well-known marks of spiritualists, cf. Belgic Confession, Article 36).

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Then (history seems to repeat itself) came another lull in the "enthusiastic" outbursts. *Pietism* and *Subjectivism*, though related to the "pneumatics" as much as earlier *Mysticism* and *Asceticism*, replaced them. It was the time of men like *Spener* and *Francke*. Many good things could be said about the Pietists in their reaction to dead orthodoxy, but other aspects of these movements interest us in seeing the background and roots of modern-day Pentecostalism. The main stress was placed, not on what God-in-Christ has done *for* us in the death and resurrection of our Saviour, but on what He is doing *in* us. The inner feelings and experience, the date and place and manner of one's conversion and/or rebirth had to be known in detail. Among them there was also a strong stress on (the possibility of) perfection to be attained in this life. Further (and we will meet with that again!) they were very *tolerant* in regard to one's doctrine. Not so much what you believe, but what you experience, was in the centre of attention.

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Modern-day *Pentecostalism* started with *John Wesley*, the great preacher and revivalist, the father of *Methodism*, which is sometimes called the "American Religion." Much could be said of this great man —

much good, too. However, for our topic it is important, even necessary, to point out that Wesley started preaching after having received the "first blessing," by which was and is understood: coming to faith, finding your salvation in the blood of Jesus Christ. This he preached with great zeal and eloquence, and thus won many for Christ.

But that was only the "first blessing." According to Wesley a "second blessing" should follow, by which he understood a total sanctification (bordering on perfectionism). He called this a "being baptized in the Holy Spirit." This event in one's life *could* be accompanied and signified by receiving the gift of glossolaly or speaking in tongues. Here we must state a similarity-in-principle between the original Anabaptists and the Methodists.

While the Reformation, having listened to Paul, to the Scriptures, put all stress on — if one wants to put it this way — "*the experience of Christ,*" meaning all that He went through for us in that "He suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, descended into hell . . ." (cf. Romans 6:1-11) which all happened *outside* us and *for* us, although by faith and baptism we have "been united with Him in His death and resurrection"; Methodism transferred the full accent and stress to "*the experience of the Christian,*" even prescribing a standard "method" ("Methodism"!) for it. Sure, they also preached justification, but that is only the first step, the first blessing, the starting point. From there the believer has to proceed to higher levels and higher things, and . . . he has to do that by his own endeavours, exercises, and experiences! Some, or many, could thus reach the goal of perfection already in this life!

Luther and Calvin were right when they stated that this view of salvation is in fact a return to Rome, where justification also is only the start: from there, though helped by divine grace, we must go on farther and farther — a "return to Rome" which we will also discover among today's Neo-Pentecostals.

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One need not feel compelled to deny that such movements were a *reaction* against overwhelming intellectualism and dead orthodoxy in "the official church." Many Methodists were serious people; they were worried about the general attitude of those whom they considered to be only nominal Christians. They were well-meaning and wanted to see more of the truth of Paul's statement: "He who is in Christ is a new creation; old things have passed away, all things have become new."

But the danger they did not see was that they went to the other extreme by exaggerating Christian experience as, in fact, the ground for our hope of salvation, instead of putting all our hope, outside ourselves, in Jesus Christ. Thus, unwittingly, they distorted and, in fact, destroyed the Gospel. They built upon Christian experience instead of on Christ only.

John Wesley himself strongly believed in justification; but it cannot be denied that he was also strongly influenced by Mysticism and Pietism.

Without realizing it, he even landed in Romanist waters. Although, humble man that he was, he never dared claim that he himself had come that far, he explicitly taught the difference between justification and sanctification in the Romanist way:

1. justification is for *past* sins, symbolized by water-baptism;
2. sanctification must follow after: reaching a higher level, and called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Many of his followers went even one step farther (but it was, to them, a logical step!):

3. We can and must and have attained perfection. Proof? Special gifts, among them glossolaly.

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The reader may have started wondering by now what all this has to do with our topic: Neo-Pentecostalism! This, we expect, will soon become clear.

As a result of John Wesley's preaching and that of others, there came Great Awakenings, especially at the frontiers in America. They exploded in all kinds of excesses, jumping, dancing, and quaking ("Quakers"), and uttering strange sounds. They themselves called it "godly hysteria" but it was hysteria nevertheless. All emphasis was put on the dramatic event of sudden conversion, on emotional outbursts, as well as empirical experience. Whatever one might say about all that, it is clear that it was no longer Christ-centered.

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The next stage in this long history was unavoidable. By 1869 there evolved the so-called *Holiness Movement*. Its preaching, instead of putting the emphasis where it belongs — on Christ and His merits which are imputed to us — the endlessly repeated great theme was: "a victorious, Spirit-filled life!" That doesn't sound so bad, but the way it developed, it became bad.

Having little regard for the Church and the marks of the Church, these enthusiastic people saw nothing in splitting up into all kinds of groups. Soon a deep split occurred. Whereas the mainstream of Methodism wanted to stay with the two above-mentioned "steps" preached by Wesley, many others wanted to go much farther. They started talking about "Live Coals of Fire" and wanted at least *four* steps:

1. the blood that cleans up (justification);
2. the Spirit that fills up (sanctification);
3. the fire that burns up (special gifts);
4. the dynamite that blows up (ecstasy).

The result was that the Methodist Churches condemned this latter radical movement and expelled it. Thus, since the years 1890-1900, several separate churches were established, where "the baptism with fire" was the real thing. Names were chosen like "*Fire-Baptism Holiness Church*" (in Iowa). What we would consider abnormal, was considered normal in those

circles: screaming and falling headlong on the floor, going into a trance, and starting to speak in tongues.

Thus the logical outcome was that from that time on, next to and outside the "mainline" Churches, the world saw emerging special *Pentecostal Churches*, the general name, replacing all those "loud" names of which we just mentioned one.

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And only now the moment has come to start speaking about *Neo-Pentecostalism*.

What is Neo-Pentecostalism?

While referring to the Bibliography for more and exact details, for our purpose it will be sufficient to state that only very recently, i.e., since about 1960, a change has occurred on the scene, all over the world.

While, as just said, since the beginning of this century there have been separate Pentecostal Churches, since 1960 a Pentecostal movement has started *within* the existing Churches, and not just here and there, but all over the place. Churches that have not felt the impact of this new development, must be considered exceptions, alas

First of all, then, it scales the "Church walls" and penetrates them, making no difference whatsoever as to what doctrine this or that Church is based on. The reader will remember that we have heard that earlier, with regard to Pietism, etc. Members of the Roman Catholic Church find here common ground with members of "Churches of (rather: since) the Reformation," and do they ever feel like "brothers of one house." Some time ago the number of adherents of this world-wide movement was estimated at no less than thirty million. By now that number may be far outdated already. They not only have penetrated the Churches, but also, by 1970, have invaded the so-called Youth Culture, drawing young people away from drug-addiction to, one would nearly say, special-gifts-addiction. Instead of "high on drugs" many now get "high on Jesus": ecstatic experiences somewhat similar to what we find in Acts 2.

Many church leaders hope that this movement may yet become "the greatest thing that ever happened in Church history, even ever happened to the world!" All divisions will disappear, and all troubles overcome. That is the "*neo*," the new thing in the history of Pentecostalism. Some churches welcome it (among them even the Romanist Church); others tolerate it, not knowing what to do about it. Still others fight what seems a losing battle to keep it out.

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One of the most remarkable traits of this new movement is, as already indicated, that it not only has invaded the Romanist Church, but that it has brought about what nothing else could bring about since the 16th Century (not even the World Council of Churches): some kind of unofficial reunion of Romanists and "Protestants." In the words of Psalm 133 (but not according to the Spirit Who inspired this Psalm!): "Behold, how good and

pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity." The tragedy is that this reunion in no way signifies a return of the Romanist Church to the Scriptures. Rather, the other way around: Neo-Pentecostalism (as well as earlier similar movements, as we have seen previously) means a *return to Rome!* It is of decisive significance that we see that clearly.

Since the Reformation there has always been that danger of drifting back to Rome, if not to the Church-institution, then to Romanist tendencies. But now there is, on the one hand, an unheard-of explosion of Pentecostalism in Roman Catholic circles, while, on the other hand, many Protestants in fact return to the Romanist doctrine.

It is for that reason not so surprising that Roman Catholic theologians welcome the Pentecostal Movement because they discover in it a revival of the piety of the Middle Ages. Vatican II spoke, in 1967 already, about "The New Pentecost." Some quotes from Romanist writings may underline this.

"Although Pentecostals derive from Protestant backgrounds, they are not typically Protestant. The spiritual experience of the Pentecostal Movement is in profound harmony with the classical spiritual theology of the Church" [i.e., the Romanist Church, vD]. "... it is similar to what occurred in the Middle Ages . . . " "... the Pentecostal doctrine is a very Catholic doctrine . . . "

One would like to underline every word here, because every word is significant.

Another observer wrote, "Because Protestant Pentecostalism is less interested in doctrine, but [only, vD] in pneumatic experience, they have no qualms to join hands with the Roman Catholics who have known similar experiences for ages."

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When one asks, "Why and how is this possible?" the answer comes to us from the historical review we have gone through till now: for Romanists as well as for Pentecostals of various colours, justification or forgiveness of sins is "only" the first step, the starting point. From there on man must — be it with divine help — go forward on his own and reach for perfection; and thus from there on stress is no longer on what Christ did and does *for us* (He was "made unto us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption," I Corinthians 1:30, quoted in Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 6), but rather on what is happening *in us*, and then with special stress on feelings, experiences, ecstasy, a "higher state," etc. For that reason, sound doctrine is no longer that important. You may differ in doctrine, if only you share in the same experience.

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In concluding this extended but necessary historical review, the following remarks should be made.

1. Now we are no longer surprised to hear that Neo-Pentecostalism is seen as the ecumenical force *par excellence*, and becomes its exponent. The Ecumenical Movement has gone through hard times. Its first stumbling block was the doctrine of the Church; then the doctrine of the sacra-

ments; then (and still today) the stumbling block of the position of the Pope — the only stumbling block for a reunion of the Romanist Church and Anglican Church. But now Néo-Pentecostalism does not only eradicate all differences between “Protestants,” but it also builds a bridge towards the Romanist Church. They certainly will not hesitate to recognize the Pope as spiritual leader, if only he, too, can prove to have received the second and third . . . and fourth . . . blessing

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2. And they will not even stop there! While the World Council of Churches has already entered into a “dialogue” with “other religions,” inviting them to a round-table conference, glossolaly also crosses the borderline between Christianity in its widest sense and paves the way for an all-including spiritual movement; i.e., including other religions, too.

Donald W. Burdick 9 in L. Carlyle May’s book, *Tongues — to speak or not to speak*, gives a whole list of non-Christian glossolaly. He mentions the Hudson Bay Eskimos, the people in North Borneo, in China and East Africa, and comes to the following conclusion:

This survey has shown that speaking in tongues is wide-spread and very ancient. Indeed, it is probable that as long as man has had divination, curing, sorcery, faith in spirits, he has had glossolalia.

When looking for possible explanations (in Chapter 7) of this universal phenomenon, he suggests three possibilities. First, that such utterings, etc., are faked. Then, they might be proof of demonic influence (cf. examples of “raving and quaking” as proofs of demon-possession in the Bible, vD). Finally, he himself is most in favour of seeking a *psychological* explanation. Under this heading he mentions ecstasy, hypnosis, and, last but not least, escape from conflict. Thus he comes to the conclusion that glossolaly and related phenomena are “*abnormal psychological occurrences*,” although he does not want to exclude a demonic influence in certain cases.

This conclusion goes far, but does it go too far?

3. *Present Truth*, a Magazine dedicated to the exposition and defense of the central truth of the Reformation, “justification by faith only,” is — understandably — vehemently opposed to the whole charismatic movement which puts the stress on what happens or must happen *in* man. It has published excellent brochures on this matter which are strongly recommended to the reader (free from *Present Truth*, P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook, California 92028, U.S.A.). In one of the issues, the editor feels compelled to refer to Revelation 13:13, 14.

The Beast (which was, according to the Reformers, the Pope) works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to the earth in the sight of men, and by the signs it is allowed to work, and it deceives many.

Thus, according to this author, the Beast, i.e., Romanism, the Pope, is healed from its deadly wound, caused by the Reformation

The conclusion is: the whole charismatic movement, because it leads people away and astray from the heart of the Gospel, justification by faith,

is "a counterfeit outpouring," "a religious deception," the final battle against those who have but little strength, but have kept the faith.

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4. This chapter was written to dig up the *roots* of Neo-Pentecostalism or the charismatic movement as a whole. We may now summarize, as a transition to the next chapter which deals with *doctrine*, as follows. This movement:

- a. leads away from the Word-revelation;
- b. is, therefore, doctrinally indifferent;
- c. displaces the center of our redemption from Christ to the Christian;
- d. is related to mysticism in its various historical forms;
- e. paves the way back to the Romanist bulwark;
- f. even crosses over to pagan religions;
- g. is to be considered as a psychological abnormality.

That is quite an *anathema!*

Would, then, the word of Paul be applicable here: "Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8)?

The following chapters will try to give the answer to this question.

III. The "Full Gospel"

1. The Gospel as rediscovered by the Reformation

In a confrontation with Pentecostalism in its various forms, the expression "*Full Gospel*" will soon pop up. They boast that they have that "full Gospel." By this they mean that they have more than is ordinarily preached from many, especially Reformed, pulpits. There you hear only about Jesus Christ and that He died for our sins; but hardly ever about the Holy Spirit and His wonderful work *in* the believers.

This is just a repetition of the accusation launched by the Spiritualists in the Age of the Reformation. The Reformers had, according to them, only gone *half way* back to the Early Church. They retained much of the Romanist institution and thus lacked in going *all* the way back to the Church on Pentecost Day with tongue-speaking, etc. They themselves wanted to go all the way. The Reformation had only half of the truth in its central doctrine of justification by faith only. They themselves had the full truth.

The same is heard all over again. One does not get "enough" in the institutional Church; only the "first blessing" (cf. the chapter on the history). We must proceed to the "second blessing" and maybe even a "third" and a "fourth"!

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When we now want to do what John told us (I John 4:1), i.e., to "test the spirits," we will return that "accusation" and maintain that Neo-Pentecostalism itself does not live from the "full Gospel." We join those who prophesy that this whole spiritualistic movement, in due time, will break up in a terrible awakening and disillusion, exactly because they do not stress, and live out of, the "full Gospel."

What is the heart of the Gospel?

In answering this question, we could simply refer to and quote the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 23. Think of those beautiful, yes, unbelievable, words: that God considers me "as though I had never had nor committed any sin, yea as though I myself had accomplished all obedience which Christ has accomplished for me." And what is necessary for being thus "considered" by God? "If only I receive such benefit with a believing heart." Nothing more, nothing less.

We may also refer to the Old Testament; to Abraham whose faith was "reckoned as righteousness" (cf. Paul in Galatians); or to Psalm 32, etc. This Gospel was preached by Paul, and discovered again by the Reformation.

When Paul, in his letter to the Romans, gives a “systematic” survey of what he sometimes calls “my Gospel,” he starts out by showing that no one, Gentile or Jew, is righteous before God. But the righteousness of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ (Chapter 3). In Chapter 5 he draws the parallel between Adam and Christ. As we were all “in Adam” when he fell, so we were (and are) “in Christ” when He died, was buried, and rose again. In I Corinthians 15 he puts it very succinctly: “As in Adam all die, so in Christ all have been made alive.” Then in Chapter 6 he rises to the highest height when he assures us that we must and may “consider ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God.” Why? Because we have been united, “grown together” with Christ in His death, and also in His resurrection. Yes, we have died “in Him” and risen “in Him” and even (he adds in Ephesians 2) “in Him” have been set in the heavenly places.

That is the “full Gospel”! All that had to be done for our redemption, *has been done — outside of us —* by Jesus Christ in Whom we were when He went through hellish agony, and equally when He rose to heavenly joy. It has been finished. Nothing can or need or should be added. This “justification” is not just the “first step” or “starting point” from which we have to proceed to higher things, it is the first and the last step, and all steps in between. It has been done *for us by Him*. As we confess with each Lord’s Supper: “. . . because we seek our salvation outside ourselves in Jesus Christ . . .” Even after that glorious Chapter 6, Paul continues in Chapter 7 and cries out: “O wretched man that I am . . .” Yet: “Thanks to God in Jesus Christ!”

This is not to exclude or neglect, let alone despise, the work of the Holy Spirit, Who is given to us as a “first gift” (Ephesians 1). On the contrary. “Having redeemed us by His blood, Jesus Christ now also renews us by His Holy Spirit” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 32). But then always this way, as we confess in the *Form for Baptism*: the Spirit makes us partakers of all that we (already) *have in Christ*, and that even includes “until we shall be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.”

Jesus Christ, as we have quoted before from I Corinthians 1:30, is not only our justification but also our sanctification and glorification. The LORD demands from us nothing else but believing and receiving Christ by a true faith. Then “the fruits of the Spirit” (Galatians 5) come spontaneously. As Kohlbrugge once said, “My conversion took place on Golgotha and Easter morning.”

The joy of the true Christian is, therefore, found in what Christ did, *outside him, for him*. In Luke 10:17-20 we read that the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your Name!” Now, talking about “charismatic gifts,” that is really one: throwing out demons. But hear the answer of the Lord. First He tells them that they will be able to do greater things. “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in

heaven!" And Paul would add (after Ascension Day, Ephesians 2): "You are, in Christ, already set in heaven."

If we look at what is *inside* us, we may, with Peter, drown in the waves. But Hebrews 12 tells us, "Look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

Once again, the "full Gospel" was that which was preached by Luther and Calvin as pupils of Christ: our redemption is completely *outside ourselves* in Christ. God is completely satisfied with us because He is completely satisfied with Christ in Whom we were and are, by faith.

2. The "Full Gospel" attacked

One would expect that this glorious Gospel would be enthusiastically embraced by everyone. This, however, is not the case. Paul already said that is not "according to man." Man does not like it that he need not do anything for his redemption except wholeheartedly cling to Jesus Christ from beginning to end. He wants to do something himself, although he may be willing to agree that God has to give the first push.

The first attack, understandably, came from the Romanists in their so-called *Counter-reformation*. They put the *anathema* on the Reformed Faith: let it be accursed Being a new edition of the old Pharisees, they claimed:

- that the death of Jesus Christ made our salvation possible;
- that baptism by which the sins are washed away, opens for us the door to reach heaven in the end;
- that from there on, be it with the support from heaven, the person must proceed under his own steam, be it by doing the good works invented by the Church, or, even better, by asceticism, monasteries, and other "super-abundant good works";
- thus they divide the church members into classes and stages, lower and higher, although in Christ there is *no* distinction.

It has been rightly said that "perfectionism" is inherent in the Romanist system of doctrine. They have their "saints"

Arminianism, though in a different manner, also attacked the "full Gospel." The *Canons of Dort* tell us the whole story. Christ has made our salvation possible. Now it is up to us.

Again in a different way, but essentially the same thing, *Pentecostalism*, including Neo-Pentecostalism attacks the doctrine of the Reformation. What was just quoted from the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, gives an accurate picture of the Pentecostalist doctrine (though the terms may differ). Justification by faith is (only) the "first blessing"; the starting-point. For us it is the first and the last blessing because it is nothing but another word for "being in Christ." Christian life not only begins, but also ends, with it. On our deathbed our only hope will be, not that we had such an abundant "second blessing," whatever that may be, but "my only comfort in life and death: that I am Christ's," and that therefore God considers me "as though I had never had nor committed any sin,

but accomplished all the righteousness which Christ has accomplished *for* me.”

This strong comfort is accompanied by a very low opinion about myself. “The most holy man has only a small beginning of the new obedience” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 44), and I most certainly am not one of the “most holy.”

When the Romanist counters by saying that such a doctrine makes men “careless and profane,” the answer of the Reformation and of every true believer will be, “that is *impossible!*” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 24). Being ingrafted into Christ and not bringing forth fruits of thankfulness? Impossible. But these fruits (of the Spirit) will grow only according to the measure in which we live out of the fulness of Christ. There is no other way.

We conclude this section with a quote: “How can ever God’s righteousness be compressed into a puny human soul!?” And we add that righteousness sits at his right hand!

* * * * *

3. A Theology of the Holy Spirit

The complaint may arise that in the above sections the Holy Spirit was hardly mentioned; and is He not the Author of faith and joy and abundance? Is it, then, not a little bit true that Pentecostals accuse us of pushing Him into the background? Let us see.

The best method might be to start with Pentecost, of course! What do we see, or rather, hear, there? Certainly, Peter starts with answering the question, “What is this all about?” He quotes Joel and states: This is now fulfilled. But then, in the first place, he does *not* continue speaking in tongues. He talks the common language that everyone can understand. Then, having answered the question, he “proceeds” (verse 22ff.): “Men of Israel, hear these words . . .” and what follows; his whole “sermon” is *Christ-centered*: it is all about what happened to and was accomplished by Jesus Christ; the conclusion is, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus Whom you crucified” (verse 36).

Where, all of a sudden, was the Holy Spirit? Gone? Certainly not. He stood behind Peter and said to him, “Well done Peter! Because that is exactly why I have come: to take it all out of Christ; I will not talk about Myself; your sermon is Spirit-filled, Peter, because it was filled with Christ!”

The reader will have understood already that we were quoting from the well-known Chapters 14 and 16 of John’s Gospel. Let’s quote just a few verses, because there we find the “theology of the Holy Spirit.” “He [the Holy Spirit, vD] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I, Jesus Christ, have said to you” (14:26). “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will *not* speak on

His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak . . . He will *glorify Me*, for He will *take what is Mine* and declare it to you" (16:13ff.).

The result of these promises of the Lord to His disciples is: the New Testament! the Word of God which is the Sword of the Spirit; the Testimony of the Holy Spirit. Everyone who separates the Spirit and the Word (and all spiritualists do that in various degrees) in fact grieve and quench the Holy Spirit, although they, assumedly in all honesty, think that they do exactly the opposite. The Holy Spirit is, like John the Baptizer was for a brief period, "*the Friend of the Bridegroom*" Who Himself stays in the background, and rejoices when the Bridegroom finds His Bride, and the Bride embraces her Bridegroom. What is one to think of such a "friend" if he would draw the attention of the bride to himself . . .???

It all can be summarized in two lines: Pentecostals say: "*Christ leads us to the Holy Spirit*"; Christ is the "first blessing"; the "Holy Spirit is the "second blessing." We say, with the Bible:

"THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US TO CHRIST"

not only once, at the beginning of our "first conversion," but always and again, by speaking through the Scriptures about our Bridegroom.

Pentecost "happened" at the beginning of Acts. Go through the whole book and discover that all the "sermons" which follow were like the first Pentecost sermon: Christ-centered, Christ-filled, and thus, "according to the meaning of the Holy Spirit."

4. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

We have by now arrived at the important question, "But how and when and by what means do I then receive the Holy Spirit?" Can we, from a Reformed point of view, indeed, still speak about a "baptism with the Holy Spirit"?

Yes, indeed, we can and must — not by our own endeavours or exercises or (mass-) suggestion.

Paul's letter to the Galatians tells us all we need to know about it. He calls them "foolish Galatians," because they had departed from the Gospel that Paul had preached, and listened to false teachers who told them that faith is not enough; much more has to follow . . . He reminds them how he had "publicly portrayed Christ as crucified"; then, "Let me ask you only this: Did you *receive the Spirit* (!) by works (of law) or by the hearing of faith?" The ear is the most receptive organ God gave us. Well, then, by that hearing (cf. also Romans 10) they received the Holy Spirit! That was the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," not as a "second blessing," coming later, after the "first blessing," but immediately with the "hearing of faith of Christ crucified." "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*" (3:14). "And because you are sons, God has sent *the Spirit of His Son* into our hearts, crying Abba, Father!" (4:16). (Cf. also Romans 8, first part.)

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul speaks the same way. "In Him you also, who have *heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*, and have believed in Him, were *sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*, which is the *guarantee of our inheritance* until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory" (1:13, 14). The stressed phrases here and there are sufficiently eloquent to prove our point: that the Holy Spirit was given to the believers, to them *all*, when they became believers. And this Spirit is called here the "first gift" or the "first instalment" of the inheritance.

Pentecostals point to I Corinthians 12 (and 14) where they think they find their "second blessing." Though we will return to these Chapters, we should now listen to verses 12 and 13, where we find exactly the same as in Galatians and Ephesians. "For just as the body is *one* and has many members, and all the members, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (N.B.: here "Christ" means the Head *plus* the Body, as a unity, vD.) For by *One* Spirit we were *all* baptized into the one body, and made to drink of One Spirit." That is the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," given to *all* members of the body, not just to a special class, Remarkably, in the same chapter where this "all" is stressed so strongly, Paul answers the question "Do all speak with tongues?" with a resolute "No!"

When the Colossians were not satisfied with the "simple" Gospel, Paul called all their self-invented additions, like "special regulations, rigour of devotion, and asceticism," of no value, and continues in Chapter 3 with the majestic "full Gospel": "You have risen with Christ and you are with Him hidden in God." You are completely safe, and you have all that you need, because you are "in Christ"!

He is my all: my righteousness, my sanctification, my redemption, even my glorification. I have it all, outside myself, in Him. Because, by the Spirit Who works faith through the preaching of the Gospel, I have been baptized into the one Body, Christ plus His Church. I have it all. God gives me everything with Him. "He has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing* . . ." And where are these blessings? ". . . in the heavenly places" where I have been made to "sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6).

On that firm basis Paul can add, and does add, Chapter 5:18: "Be filled with the Spirit" (the verb is in the present tense), i.e.: be and again and again become what you already are, by faith!

What are the marks of that "being filled with the Spirit"? "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (verses 19, 20).

5. The Great Dilemma

Although much more could have been added, in order to meet the Pentecostals head-on, it is time to make up the balance. The Great Dilemma is: Is "the real thing" *inside* us or *outside* us?

A. "Outside"

According to the Scriptures, and in agreement with the Great Reformation, we confess that we have it all outside ourselves, in Jesus Christ Who *is* our righteousness (and that includes everything) before God the Father. Therefore, when we receive Him by a true faith, we receive *all* His benefits, including the baptism with and the fulness of the Holy Spirit. In ourselves we remain miserable sinners, still inclined to all evil. We are brothers and sisters of David, Paul, and Peter in this respect. We even become more and more aware of that the further we proceed on our way in life. But if we only "abide in Him," the true Vine (John 15), we will bear many fruits. They come from Him. They are the "good works that God prepared (in Jesus Christ) that we might walk in them" (Ephesians 2). These fruits are the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit. They grow, and "we do not know how."

B. "Inside"

According to the (Neo-) Pentecostals, and — alas, we must add — according to the Romanists, and even pagan religions, "justification" or whatever it is called (first conversion or "choosing for Christ") opens the door to further progress. This progress takes place *inside* us, as Gnostics, Montanists, Pietists, Romanists, etc., have claimed. From this "opening of the door" we must proceed to further "blessings," be it only a second, or many more. We may even, in this way and in this life, reach the goal of perfection — and (!) thus there is no surprise left for us on the day of Christ's return: we had it already; we do not need His return for our glorification.

Thus it is all said in just two words. Where is our full and complete redemption located? Is it really "*inside us*"? Or is it not rather — Hallelujah! — "*outside us*, in Jesus Christ"?! That is no question! It is "*outside us*," and therefore perfect and complete and all-inclusive and safe, "hidden with Christ in God."

6. Assurance of Faith

One of the issues between the Romanists and the Reformers was that the latter accused the former: "You rob God's children of the assurance of faith!" If one has to do so much himself, after the "starting-point" that God made, one can never be sure of reaching the end. The official doctrine of the Romanist Church, therefore, includes the belief that a believer can always, even briefly before his death, commit a "deadly sin" and die in that sin. Then there is no hope.

The same is the case with any sectarian thought that puts the stress on what is *in* man. Apart from the fact that it is doubtful that there can be a person who "only" (!) believes in the forgiveness of sins, and never gets to the "second blessing," even one who got that far cannot be sure that he will keep it. Everyone who sets as his aim to reach the goal of perfection, as though he has not already reached it "in Christ," must live in constant fear that he will never make it.

Only the believer who clings to the “full Gospel,” i.e., that his perfection is in Christ, yes, *is* Christ, can have that wonderful and full assurance that nothing can separate him from His love. In the Reformed Confession, true faith is a sure knowledge and a firm confidence that, even though I may fail, my life is hidden and safe in God, through Jesus Christ. Let no one take that crown from you! Your Crown is Jesus Christ Himself in Whom I have been made to sit in the heavenly places, already now!

IV. Do Pentecostals not have Scripture on Their Side?

Even the patient reader may have become somewhat impatient while reading the previous chapter. We were supposed to hear about Pentecostalism, and whether the Bible indeed teaches that “speaking in tongues” is (still) supposed to be the mark of having been “baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Indeed, it is time for that now. But only after having expounded the Reformed, i.e., Biblical teaching of the “full Gospel.” Only from that standpoint we can find the proper answer to the above question.

* * * * *

We will not dig too deeply into the question whether the “tongues,” of which Paul speaks in I Corinthians 12 and 14, are the same as were heard on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, Acts 2. Some deny that. But even if we do not deny that, it does not make our rejection of the Pentecostalist doctrine any weaker.

Dr. Stott, mentioned previously, makes the very valuable remark that, in this case, as in all others, we must not base our doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the “*descriptive*” parts of Scripture, like the signs of Pentecost, which were divided tongues as of fire, something like a mighty wind, and speaking “with a new tongue.” They in themselves do not and cannot tell us much about the Holy Spirit. For that we have to go to the “*doctrinal*” passages of the New Testament, as we did in the previous chapter, especially John 14 and 16, but also Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. If we only keep that in mind, we will find our way.

Of course, Pentecostalists (their name says it already) appeal to Acts 2, as much as they point to I Corinthians 12, etc. It should have our attention that, in doing so, they already make their first mistake. As to Acts 2 — though in Antioch and Ephesus a kind of “repetition of Pentecost” happened (10:44ff., 19:6), because these were “turning-points” on the way of the Gospel — it must strike the reader that nowhere else did such an event come about. It simply is not true that every time a Church was established by Paul’s preaching, people spoke in tongues.

The appeal to I Corinthians 12 is even weaker, if this chapter has to prove that the “second blessing” of speaking in tongues is a sure sign of having been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Already in Chapter 3 we have seen that Paul here (verses 12 and 13) begins to say that “by one Spirit we were *all* (!) baptized into one body.” But “speaking in tongues” is only one of several special gifts that were found in Corinth at that time.

But now it comes! Returning to his main theme, the unity of the body, Paul continues, (verse 27ff.) — and we had better quote it all, interrupting here and there:

Now, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. [You all, whatever special charisma you may have, or none at all, vD]. And God has appointed in the church first[!] [This points to an order of priority! vD] apostles, second [!] prophets, third teachers [These are the foremost, the important ones, vD] . . . then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, [and at the bottom of the list, vD] speakers in various kinds of tongues. "Are all apostles? [Answer: No, vD.] Are all prophets? [No.] Are all teachers? [No.] Do all work miracles? [No.] Do all possess gifts of healing? [No.] *Do all speak with tongues? [No!!!]*

And then Paul proceeds to the "more excellent way," the normal, abiding way, that of love (Chapter 13).

Coming back to that list, one notices that prophets and apostles have disappeared; they are no longer around. Why not assume that others have disappeared, too?

The General Assembly of the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 1976, has called the opinion of one of its missionaries, who claimed to have the gift of tongues, an "error." This Assembly was the first one to do a thing like that. That took courage, to be sure, in our present world. Of course, they had *grounds* for their judgement. Some of them follow here:

- a. "tongues" were given in those days as a sign for *unbelievers*;
- b. "tongues" [if interpreted, vD] as well as prophets [and apostles, vD] were for giving Word-revelation in a time that the Bible was *not yet complete*;
- c. tongues, if not interpreted, were not meant only for *private use* (we plan to come back to this, see I Corinthians 14:2, 4, etc.);
- d. tongues were contemporary with the apostles, as we read in II Corinthians 12:12, "the signs of a true apostle were performed among you, with wonders and mighty works." The apostles gone, the tongues gone.

Although we have respect for this Assembly in calling Neo-Pentecostalism an error, we also believe that their biblical grounds could and should have been much stronger. A truly Reformed believer, in whatever issue is at stake, always "works" with *the whole Bible*, because God's Word is one. He readily leaves "incidental texts," and the reference to such isolated texts, to sect and sectarians. Thus we must, and can, add many more *grounds* for rejecting the claims of the Pentecostals, of whatever age and colour.

1. Is it not highly remarkable that Paul *nowhere else* mentions speaking in tongues as one of the "fruits of the Spirit"? We dare anyone to contradict this statement. Even of the 3000 on Pentecost Day we read (Acts 2:42ff.) the "normal" things: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers."

2. Should we not ask ourselves why Paul deals with the special gifts in general, and with tongue-speaking in particular, so extensively exactly in his first letter to the Corinthians, which is filled with admonitions and warn-

ings and the solution to problems? The answer is obvious: because in Corinth the tongues, and those seeking to speak in tongues, had caused great confusion and division in the "one body" of the Church! There were all kinds of abuses, divisions, a loss of brotherly love, contention, and competition. People took pride in being able to speak in tongues. You can find it all in Chapter 14. Imagine if the whole body were an eye, i.e., if all were supposed to be full Christians only if they were able to speak in tongues! If you have that gift, says Paul, then keep it to yourself!

Then comes that well-known statement: I would rather speak five words in a language understandable by everyone, so that I could edify them, than ten thousand in a tongue. An elder, comforting or admonishing a member during family visitation in simple, biblical language, in God's eye is much more important than all speaking in tongues together!

(NOTE: During the evening when the contents of this chapter was delivered as a lecture, we had the opportunity to play a tape with tongue-speaking. It is impossible to give the reader the same opportunity; only an example.)

Ever heard tongue-speaking? Here is a sample. // 'yamana 'kita, sia'naya, si // 'yamana 'kita, sia'-naya, si // ,ana 'kiana 'tiasa, naya ,ana'kia 'tana 'sia,-naya, si //.

That, now, is an example of what it is all about, and it wins people by the millions. Would you not rather recite the answer to the question, "What is your only comfort in life and death?" or "How are you righteous before God?"

3. It should not escape our attention that Paul interrupts his discourse on tongues by that beautiful Chapter 13: the "more excellent way," of faith and hope and love which remain (!), and of which love, just plain Christian love is the most! In Chapter 13 Paul states simply: "Tongues will cease," as well as prophecy (as soon as the Bible would be complete).

4. In Revelation 2 and 3 we find seven letters, to seven churches in Asia Minor, dedicated by the exalted Saviour personally. Walking between the seven lampstands (ch. 1), He, as the Church Visitor *par excellence*, had discovered many wrong things; He even warns some of these churches that He will take away the light. They have abandoned their first love; they bear with heretics; they live in false pride, thinking that they are rich; etc. But *nowhere does Christ blame one of these churches for not speaking in tongues*, and thus having lost the "second blessing" and "the fulness of the Spirit"!!! Instead of saying to them, "You do not have the full Gospel anymore," He praises one of them: "You have small strength, but you have kept my Word; therefore I will keep you in the hour of temptation."

5. We have several letters of Paul, as well as some of Peter, John, James, and Jude. In addition there is Hebrews. But in *none of these* do we find that "the life in the Spirit" must reveal itself in speaking in tongues and doing other extraordinary things.

6. In his so-called Pastoral Letters (to Timothy and Titus), Paul, at the end of his life, puts all stress, about a dozen times, on keeping and teaching the *sound doctrine*, the sound words, and not once does He write one

word about "tongues." You do not hear him say, shortly before his death, "See to it that people get the second blessing and start speaking in tongues!"

7. We mentioned Hebrews, which is an important point in our case against the Pentecostals, because this letter was written to those who were slipping away, and back to the synagogue. What is the remedy applied to such "sick Christians"? A glorious exposition of the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ once for all, and a drawing of all attention to the Heavenly High Priest (cf. our previous chapter). Only this way there will be healing: all stress on the one sacrifice of Christ Who is now our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Nothing is mentioned about "tongues."

8. Finally, John, the last survivor of the apostles, in rejecting Gnosticism (cf. previous chapter), concentrates on the true confession that Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh, and that faith in Him is the victory of the world.

From this list we learn that men like Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, in their rejection of spiritualism in their days, were in keeping with the apostles.

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Till now we have only looked at the *New Testament*. But what about the *Old Testament*? To our knowledge no one, writing in opposition to the stand of the Neo-Pentecostals, has looked at that important part of the Bible. Let us then do just that.

What do we find? That at the earliest time of the history of prophecy there was indeed some kind of ecstasy. We read about that in Numbers 11:25. The seventy assistants of Moses "prophesied." The impression is that they did not so much speak messages from the LORD, but, in a state of ecstasy, praised the LORD in "new" sounds.

Similar things we find in the days of Saul who just had heard from Samuel that the LORD had chosen him as king of His people (see I Samuel 10 and 19). What we read there clearly points to a form of ecstasy, if not frenzy. This "prophesying" is accompanied by taking off all clothes, and lying on the ground, just as we read about dervishes in pagan religions.

It is also important to note that, in both Chapters of Samuel, the stress is not on what people *heard* (understandable revelations from God) but on what they *saw*.

The important point here (and in this respect the Old Testament runs parallel to the New) is that in *later* prophecy this form of "abnormal" ecstasy disappeared, making room for (as Paul would say) "understandable language" and "sound words," as the LORD preserved for us in the Books of the prophets. They revealed, in common language, the mysteries of God, and thus *left behind* that "first chapter" of ecstatic uttering, just as in the New Testament the sound words of Evangelists and Apostles replaced the tongue-speaking, which was (as the Orthodox Presbyterian Assembly stated) a sign for unbelievers.

Neither Testament, Old or New, gives any ground for the assertion that being filled with the Holy Spirit must show in the "second blessing" of speaking in tongues.

* * * * *

Conclusion

What do we choose now? Being led by the Spirit into all truth, revealed in the Scriptures, which are the testimony, the sword of the Holy Spirit, Who takes it all out of Christ, to make us partakers of Him? or: an International Conference, where not only all colours of Christianity are represented, including the Romanists, many of them denying fundamental truths of the complete doctrine of salvation, but nevertheless all, oh, so dearly united in "the baptism of the Spirit," and look! there the door of the already large assembly opens, and in come the Buddhists, the Muslims, the Shintoists, the Voodoo-practitioners and witch-doctors (why not?) who, notwithstanding their pagan beliefs, are possibly superior in their forms of ecstasy, frenzy, and uttering strange sounds?

What would you choose?

V. How to Meet This Challenge

1. Let's not boast

Seeing that almost all churches, in various degrees, have been invaded by this holocaust of Neo-Pentecostalism, we should be not only on our guard, but also humble. It would be simply foolish to assume that we, Reformed Christians, are immune to this influence, and that our Churches have nothing to fear. Apart from the fact that, as we happen to know, here and there inroads have been made already, and people have left because they were not satisfied with the "structure" of the Churches (too much organization, too little Spirit), Scripture warns us, "If you think you stand, beware lest you fall." It simply will not do to brush the whole "thing" aside and just to keep on doing what we have always done. There is some truth in saying that "sects are the unpaid bills of the Church." We know that some among us would vehemently oppose this statement, but we think that would be foolish.

Secondly, it cannot be denied that Pentecostalism or Neo-Pentecostalism seems to satisfy a certain hunger. We live in a harsh, materialistic world and, on top of that, under the threat of a nuclear holocaust. People are not happy, notwithstanding all the so-called prosperity we are enjoying. Our generation has known the youth-rebellion. Who were to blame? We might not like it, but mostly the older generation. Young people went on their drug-trips, away from it all, into sweet dreams. Then came Neo-Pentecostalism and pointed the way to get "high on Jesus." This hard world of dollars and business-practices makes people hunger for some warmth, fellowship, release from tensions. Oh, if the Lord Jesus would walk on our streets today, how He would have pity on people!

Who filled this hunger? Where did people find this glow of warmth and fulfilment? What did the Churches do, also the Churches to which we belong? Many churches starved to death on a diet of liberalism and modernistic nonsense, big words without contents. Others, not so liberal, fell dead on their orthodox backs. Many lacked, and are lacking, evangelical joy, enthusiasm, and living expectation of a better world to come with the return of the Master. Is it, then, so surprising that people by the millions were flooding and flocking together at places where they could find some antidote against this rotten and cruel modern world? Who would pick up the first stone?

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2. Yet, we are rich, they are poor

When you come to think of it, all those sectarian movements that have passed our reviewing stand in Chapter 3, including the Neo-Pentecostals, are poor, very poor indeed. We really mean it when we say that we should feel sorry for them. It simply is *not* true that we, ordinary members of ("only") a Reformed Church, should be converted by them. We should work for their conversion!

We have said it before, but it deserves repetition: millions of people who at present feel they have found the real thing are in for a terrible awakening. Why? It sounds harsh, but it must be said: because they do what Paul so strongly warned against (cf. only Colossians 2); they put their confidence in *the flesh* — not in Christ, but in the flesh — because they put so much stress on what has to happen *in* man, *by* man. He has such a difficult path to climb in front of him: from the one "blessing" to the next, and up to the goal of perfection. Instead of having it all *outside themselves* in Jesus Christ Who is our righteousness and perfection in God's sight, they think they must find it *in* themselves. Is it not terrible?! We confess that we have all we need, "objectively" (if you can stand that unpleasant word), in our Redeemer. To "them" believing is only the first step. To them you are only a beginner. "Is that all you have to tell?" they ask. "Do you only believe that your sins are forgiven? But that is not enough. The proof that you are really a 'new man in Christ' must come when you will be able to speak in tongues."

And thus it is the same tragic picture as with those faith-healing rallies, heavily organized and televised: if you come away unhealed, you are just no good Poor people.

3. Two reasons

Once more looking at the whole picture, the history with all those sects, accompanying the Church; the biblical evidence; the sound doctrine of the full Gospel as rediscovered by the Reformation; — there are two reasons for asking ourselves, "How do we as Reformed believers meet the challenge of Neo-Pentecostalism?" (Do not underestimate its influence! We do not live on an island)

The *first* is that we, being Reformed Churches, should become a little (and not so little) more what we are. We should not lose any more of our beloved members to this movement that will end in a morass.

Second, we should become a haven for the disillusioned, the hungry and thirsty.

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If only Jesus Christ is really in our midst, and in us, and we in Him. He Who said, "Come unto Me, all you heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is that the "image" that we show to our surroundings? Is it really? Is it not the highest time to do some soul-searching? We harbour very high claims. Being a, even *the*, true Church. Even the "Canadian" true Church, of all things. Modesty, humbleness, seems to be a sin among us.

But, even if "outsiders" do not hold us responsible for that claim,

Jesus Christ will. How do we meet the challenge, not only of Neo-Pentecostalism, but of hunger and thirst and empty lives all around us?

4. As simple as radical

The answer is as simple as it is radical. We will have to preach the "full Gospel," not only from our pulpits, but by all our members who are supposed to "multiply the sermon" in the midst of the world.

Look at the *Early Church*. There was the thrill of the Good News, the spontaneous outburst of joy, that the Lord had risen indeed! The Early Church never got over that "shock." It was really true: the Lord had risen! That joy pervaded the Church with such an intensity that every believer became a witness. They did not need Mission Societies, nor Home Mission Committees, to set up some attractive programs. But the Church exploded, literally . . . in the Early Centuries . . . and again in the Age of the Reformation. It spread like a forest fire.

And what was the secret of that explosion? They had a divine message. And they really believed it! They could not get over the staggering event of the Incarnation, even less over the event of the Resurrection. The idea! that the Creator of heaven and earth had become man, and bore all our human sicknesses and smart, and carried all our sorrows in His heart To put it briefly: God was *real* for them, real in Christ. And they were "in Christ" too! This glorious reality pervaded their lives, changed and shaped their lives.

Why should the same not happen today and to us? We cannot think of one reason why it should not. We have the same Gospel, the full Gospel. It has not changed one bit.

If we really are filled with that Gospel, we will no longer eat and devour one another, as we do sometimes There will then come the unity of the body of which I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 speak so eloquently. Then all indifference will disappear. The hangers-on will leave. Worldliness and materialism will melt as snow before the sun. We will not be suspicious of each other, let alone promote such suspicion. Who can deny that such things are happening among us? If it were the last thing I would ever write, it would be this warning! Only if we heed it, we will weather the storm of Neo-Pentecostalism.

5. The Centrality of Jesus Christ

Let's look once more at the Reformation. That was nothing but a re-discovery of the "full Gospel." The people learned to read Paul again, and they read him right. That's why they put all their stress on the mighty, living Word of God, through which the Holy Spirit makes people a "new creation" by His saving and transforming power. Lives were changed. A continent was changed. The same can happen today.

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Then the Churches which we love will be able to weather the storm, the holocaust, of misinformed and mistaken Neo-Pentecostalism. We

have it all in Christ. There is no doubt about it. Look only how God raised Him from the dead for our justification (Romans 4:25).

And thus it will become again:

- *sola Scriptura*, only the Scriptures;
- *sola gratia*, only by grace;
- *sola fide*, only by faith.

But that is not enough. We must and may add: "*sola Christo*," by Christ alone.

That's how the Holy Spirit wants it.

That's how the Holy Spirit wants us!