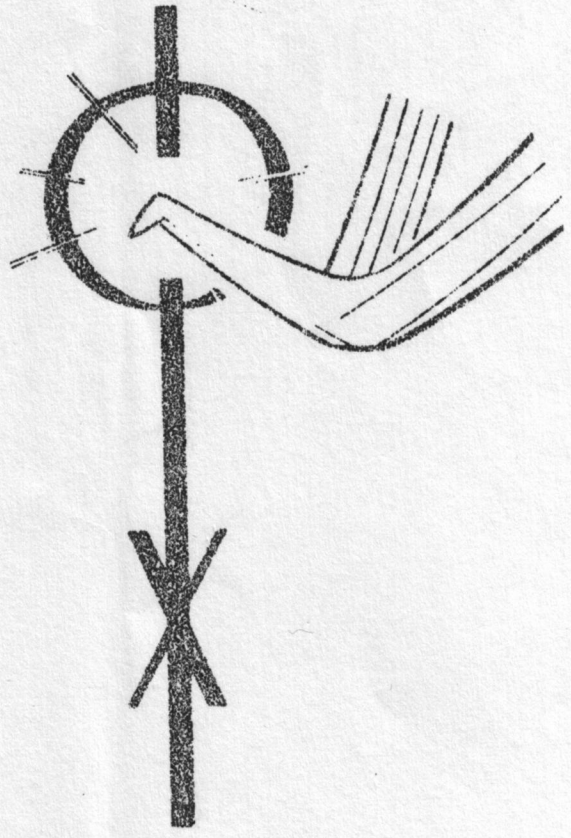


South Holland
minutes: conference
March 6, 1973

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**The Holy Spirit:
His Gifts and Power**



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THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS PRESENCE, POWER, AND FRUITS

There are several difficulties in preparing and presenting a paper such as this. There is the obvious brevity required on a subject which has been dealt with in many, many volumes of books. The subject is very broad, the number of subdivisions so many, that the treatment of the entire subject is impossible with any degree of comprehensiveness. A second difficulty involves the amount of time available for preparing a paper such as this-- the author simply does not have adequate time to prepare a paper in the way he would wish.

However, perhaps something can be presented which will lead to a good discussion on the assigned topic. The intent of this paper is to present positively certain thoughts concerning the work of the Holy Spirit within the church of Christ. We are aware, and have been made aware this morning, of the dangerous inroads which have been made in "mainline" denominations by neo-pentacostalism and of the growth of pentacostal groups. We must be aware of these developments not only, but must certainly condemn such movements when these so obviously walk contrary to the teaching of Scripture and mislead many.

Yet it is also true, as the committee who assigned the subject suggested, that we must be positive. It is not simply enough to say what the Spirit does not do, but we ought also to present clearly what is the work of the Spirit. It is this idea that we now consider.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Before discussing the presence, power, and fruits of the Spirit, several things ought to be made plain. I believe that we also face a very real danger in a discussion as this in placing erroneous emphasis upon the work of the Spirit.

Many churches have been facing the fact of inroads of neo-pentacostalism in their midst. These who have been infected by this error, have emphasized strongly that now they feel the full power and effect of the Spirit in them. There is a minimizing of past work of the Spirit but now they have more: the fullness of the Spirit. These remind us too that now we live in the "age of the Spirit"; the church in the past lived first in an age of the Father, then the age of the Son. Yet many who oppose this pentacostalism, have fallen into (what I am convinced is a related error. I have heard it said: the churches do not place sufficient emphasis upon the work of the Spirit. There must be, it is said, a re-evaluation concerning what we believe the work and guidance of the Spirit is. And we too must beware, lest in our study we fall into this same error. We do need a proper understanding of the working of the Spirit in the church; but I would also suggest that that church and preacher who properly presents Christ

and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2), will at the same time be placing Scriptural emphasis upon the work of the Spirit. The preacher does not engage himself in presenting merely the fruit and work of the Spirit, but the work and fruit of the cross in his preaching.

35 This fact I would like to emphasize first. In discussing the Spirit, we can not in this paper become involved in all of the questions concerning the Spirit which have been raised--and particularly questions concerning His position within the Trinity. I would limit this paper to the question of the church's awareness of the working of the Spirit as Scripture teaches this.

40 I would suggest that Scripture presents the Spirit principally as the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of the Son. It is striking that Scripture, though it often mentions the Spirit, does not treat extensively the work of the Spirit--certainly not with that detail which the gospel accounts treat the work of Christ. There are chapters in Scripture which do touch somewhat upon His work, as John 14; Rom. 8; Gal. 3 and 5; Eph. 4 and 5; but even in these
45 passages, a great deal is not presented about the Spirit. The same is true with our confessions. There is mention made of the Spirit in the Heidelberg Catechism (L.D. 8 and 20) and in the Netherlands Confession (especially articles 8 and 11), but again, only brief reference to Him and His work is presented.

I would suggest that all of this fits in with the idea that the Spirit is revealed not simply
50 as Spirit, but as the Spirit of Christ.

His relationship to Christ is evident in Christ's so-journ on this earth. Christ's conception is through the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35). The Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove after His baptism (Matt. 3:16). He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (Luke 4:1). Christ was directed and led by the Spirit
55 in His ministry (Luke 4:14, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee....") He has the Spirit given Him without measure (John 3:34). In Christ's exaltation, He receives the "promise of the Holy Ghost" which, Peter explains, accounts for what is seen and heard at Pentecost--for Jesus pours out of that Spirit upon the church (Acts 2:33).

But also Christ in His teaching and in directing the writing of the apostles, identifies
60 the Spirit as HIS Spirit. His function is, centrally, to reveal God through Christ: to apply His work, to guide in His Word, to protect the whole of the church of Jesus Christ. Though Scripture does speak of the Spirit simply by that name "Holy Spirit" (cf. Rom. 8:4), or the

"Spirit of God" (cf. Rom. 15:19), it appears evident that the Holy Spirit in the church functions always as the Spirit of Christ.

65 That is evident already at Pentacost. Peter calls attention of the audience to the prophecy of Joel 2:28,29. The outpouring of the Spirit is the fulfillment of prophecy. But to explain this wonder of the outpoured Spirit, Peter sets forth the wonder of Christ's suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. He insists that, not the Spirit sheds Himself upon the people, but Christ "sheds forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:36). Pentecost, therefore, reveals the outpoured Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. This too is suggested in that the Holy Ghost comes as a "gift" upon the child of God--a gift of Christ (Acts 2:38).

Further, that Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ. His testimony is not about Himself or His work first of all, but a testimony about the Son in the flesh. Jesus calls the Spirit 75 the "Spirit of truth" (John 14:17). The truth which He expresses, is the truth concerning Christ (John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.") More explicitly yet, we read in John 16:13,15, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall 80 hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

It is by the power of that Spirit of Christ that the child of God recognizes and confesses Christ. Here too, the Spirit does not work to gain recognition for Himself, but for 85 the Christ. Paul declares in I Cor. 12:3, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And again, I John 4:2,3, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God...."

90 In addition, the Spirit Who inspires the writers of Scripture infallibly, inspires them as the Spirit of Christ. Jesus had promised also that in John 16:13, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...." Striking, in this connection

is the passage of I Peter 1:11, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Peter speaks here of the writers of the Old Testament Scripture. These wrote by the Spirit of Christ. It is true that we read in John 7:39, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet (given); because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This points to the difference between the old and new dispensation with respect to the working of the Spirit--something into which I can not enter here. Yet it must be noted that in a sense, the Spirit of Christ worked also in the old dispensation as He guided holy men of old to write the Old Testament Scripture concerning the Christ. In all of this, it is the Spirit Who testifies of the Christ.

The Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, both adopts and gives new birth. Again, in this, He functions clearly as the Spirit of Christ. He is called the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15) an adoption which means the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23). All of this is the work of the Spirit of Christ and is equated with "Christ being in you" (Rom. 8:9,10). Rebirth or regeneration is by that same Spirit of Christ (John 3:5). Concerning that life, Jesus says in John 10:28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Related to all the above is also the (for want of a better term) self-effacing character of the Holy Spirit presented in Scripture. This factor, too, is ignored, I believe, in pentacostalism, neo-pentacostalism, or whenever improper emphasis is placed upon the Spirit. I do not wish to minimize the work of the Spirit. Yet it appears that Scripture reveals that the very function of the Spirit is to reveal and magnify Father and Son. The Spirit function not in order to reveal who and what is the Spirit, but Who and what is God. Again, I remind you that though there are many references to the Spirit in Scripture, these are brief and serve not so much to emphasize the Person of the Spirit, as to reveal the wonder of God's work in Christ. Perhaps the Netherlands' Confession has this in mind when it speaks of the "operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible" (Art. 35).

The Netherlands' Confession, article 11, states concerning the Spirit, "We believe and confess also, that the Holy Ghost, from eternity, proceeds from the Father and Son; and therefore neither is made, created, nor begotten, but only proceedeth from both; who in order

is the third person of the Holy Trinity; of one and the same essence, majesty and glory with the Father, and the Son: and therefore, is the true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures
125 teach us."

That idea of procession, which is also Scriptural (John 15:26, "...which proceedeth from the Father...."), suggests this "self-effacement" of the Spirit. He eternally will reveal the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father. He proceeds from both; and through Him there is fellowship and communion within the Trinity.

130 This same "self-effacement", if you will, is seen in His work in the Church. That already follows from the Scriptural truth that He is repeatedly called the "Spirit of Christ" and the "Comforter whom I will send unto you". Again, Jesus declares in John 16:13, "...For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show
135 it unto you." It would conclude, therefore, that in consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit, we first bear in mind always that His work in the church and its individual members is work as the Spirit of Christ. His work is to apply that which Christ has merited so that the full benefits of the cross may be fully ours. In doing this, His task is, on the basis of Christ's work, to gather the members of the body of Christ to the glory of God--not to His own glory as
140 Third Person. Secondly, bearing in mind what I have called this "self-effacing" character of the Spirit, we will not place the wrong emphasis upon His work within the church--an emphasis which would serve to magnify the Spirit in distinction from Father or Son.

II. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Again, in treating of the work of the Spirit, we are confronted with far more material
145 than can be adequately presented in this paper. I can only touch on some of this. I would suggest that we can distinguish various areas in which the operation of the Spirit of Christ is evident. There is, first of all, the area of the Word of Christ and its faithful preaching. I believe that this aspect of the work of the Spirit of Christ ought to receive great emphasis. Again I remind you that it is the Spirit of Christ Who directs holy men of God to write
150 Scripture (I Pet. 1:11). This too is evidently the idea of II Tim. 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration (theopneustos)...." Inspiration is "God-breathed", and the Spirit is that breath of God. And He would "bring to remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you"

(John 14:26; cf. also I Cor. 2:10-16).

With this, there is the fact that the Spirit sends forth the preaching of the Word and
 155 directs it that God's people may be gathered and strengthened in their faith. Through the
 Spirit of Christ, there would be sent forth preachers of the Word. The book of Acts, especial
 shows how that the Spirit of Christ directs the sending forth of the Word and the ministers
 of the Word to accomplish the purpose of Christ. The Spirit directed Philip to join himself
 to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29). The Spirit directed Peter to go to the house of
 160 Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:19; 11:12). The Holy Ghost directed the church of Antioch
 through its leaders to send Saul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2).
 The Spirit directed the course of the missionaries on their journey when He suffered them not
 to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7). In line with this, Romans 10:15 emphasizes that the
 preacher must be sent. This sending too is a sending by the church under the direction of
 165 the Spirit of Christ.

And the Word spoken shows the power of the Spirit. Paul points this out in I Cor. 2:
 2,4, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified..
 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demon-
 stration of the Spirit and of power." And in I Cor. 12:3b, "...And that no man can say that
 170 Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."

That same Spirit so applies the Word He sends, that there is response in the elect
 sinner. To this I would direct your attention a little later also. But notice: Romans 8:
 15,16, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the
 Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our
 175 spirit, that we are the children of God." Perhaps I John 3:24 could also be mentioned, "And
 he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he
 abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

Thus, the child of God, truly interested in the work of the Spirit, will look not first
 to certain special gifts in which some today seem to boast, but he will look to the Word of
 180 God and seek the proper preaching of that Word. It is in that area that first of all, and
 centrally, he beholds the beauty of the work of the Spirit in the church and in its individual
 members. But he notes that the Spirit works in this area as the Spirit of Christ.

The Spirit is seen in His work in directing and governing the body of Christ. This too He performs as the Spirit of Christ. I have earlier pointed out how that the Spirit directed the church of Antioch to send forth Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey. Many of the references to the Spirit are in the epistles addressed to various churches. Again, the work of the Spirit in the body of Christ receives emphasis. I Cor. 12:13 states, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The same is suggested in Eph. 4:4, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye
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190 are called in one hope of your calling."

The work of the Spirit of Christ is seen in the individual child of God! and in fact, that work must be seen. Scripture contains warnings concerning the ignoring of or neglecting the Spirit and His work. Already in the early history of the church in the New Testament, one finds the account of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3). There is the striking admonition in I Thess. 5:19, "Quench not the Spirit"; or again in Eph. 4:30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." These passages suggest that there is such a walk possible within the church where these sins are evident.
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As far as the power and work of the Spirit of Christ in the individual saint are concerned, we could perhaps divide this into two parts: the gift of life, and the gift of the godly walk. Gal. 5:25 suggests this, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."
200

We can be brief concerning the first division. There is that efficacious work of the Spirit below the consciousness whereby He implants the life of Christ into the heart of the elect sinner--the work called regeneration. Of this Jesus speaks in John 3:5, "...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." That work is not accomplished through the use of earthly means nor with the cooperation of the sinner, but directly by the power of the Spirit. Jesus reminds us again in John 3:3 that one can not even see the kingdom apart from this rebirth.
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The call also is the work of the Spirit of Christ whereby He sends forth the preached Word and applies this to the hearts of elect sinners. These hear--and believe. Here too, though God uses the means of the preaching of the Word, the Spirit efficaciously accomplishes God's design: the bringing of His people to repentance and to belief in God as the God of
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their salvation. That this is the powerful work of God is plain from Rom. 8:30, "moreover
215 whom he did predestinate, them he also called...." With this is in agreement also the Word of
Christ in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me...."

Now this is not the aspect in which we are principally interested in this discussion.
However, we ought again to understand well that this work of the Spirit with all of its
evidence of efficacious power is that which ought to be emphasized in the preaching of the
220 gospel. I would suggest that, perhaps, it has been the two-fold neglect of emphasis of the
work of the Spirit in the giving and proclaiming of the Word and neglect of emphasis upon His
saving power in regenerating and calling the elect sinner that leaves children of God at a
loss concerning what the Spirit actually works. The sad result often seems to be that in
groping for knowledge of the Spirit's work, many readily seize upon such things as speaking
225 with tongues and miracles or a certain "inner light". A proper emphasis upon the work of the
Spirit ought to make knowledgeable children of God aware of the evils of misunderstanding
the Spirit's work.

There are several expressions in the New Testament which suggest the work of the
Spirit in directing the way of the child of God by applying the Word of God to such an one.
230 We read of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Eph. 5:9); Gal. 5:22); of being "filled with the Spirit"
(Eph. 5:18); of the "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:1,4); of the "sowing to the
Spirit" (Gal. 6:8); of "minding the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9); of being "led by the
Spirit" (Rom. 8:14); of "speaking by the Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3); of the "Spirit dwelling in
you" (Rom. 8:9,11).

235 First, the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ and through the Word of God provides for the
church in giving officebearers, as suggested in I Cor. 12:28, "And God hath set some in the
church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then
gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Point here is that God pro-
vides those who must function in office within the church--this is the gift of the Spirit.
240 The same is set forth in Eph. 4:11-12, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and
some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the
work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The Spirit provides Christ's
body with these functionaries that the office of Christ might be reflected in His church. At

the same time, it ought to be evident that the Spirit does not simply and mystically bring
245 such men into the church to rule, to reveal mercy, and to teach. On the contrary, passages
such as I Tim. 3 show that these men must be chosen within the church on the basis of their
godly walk and spiritual development. These have been called and were directed in a walk of
holiness which becomes evident to the whole of the church. Of such men, who consciously and
openly adhere to the Word of God in love, are chosen officebearers to assist the church--and
250 these are gifts of the Spirit.

Perhaps, in connection also with the paper presented this morning, we are more interest
ed in what are called the charismatic gifts of the members of the church. "Charismatic" I wo
not limit to tongue-speaking and miracles, but all such gifts of the Spirit as seen in the
individual saint in his daily walk. There are those gifts, seen in varying degrees within th
255 saints, mentioned in Gal. 5:22,23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-
suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."
Or, Eph. 5: 18-20 suggests a filling of the Spirit whereby we sing and give thanksgiving. We
are encouraged to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (I Cor. 12:31). We are reminded of the
value of prophecy (I Cor. 14). There are gifts of wisdom (I Cor. 5:15); of knowledge
260 (II Pet. 1:5); of patience (Rom. 5:3); of mercy (Rom. 12:8); and many more.

We are told with respect to the gifts of the Spirit of Christ that, first, these are
given to every man severally as the Spirit wills (I Cor. 12:11). The Spirit of Christ does
provide these gifts--and He gives according to every man's position within the body of Christ
Secondly, we are reminded that these gifts are not for self-glorification nor to gain the
265 praise of men, but specifically for the "edifying of the church" (I Cor. 14:12). This fact,
too, must be born in mind.

These gifts are not either somehow mystically given to some, but come in a very definit
way. The Spirit uses, of course, what God gives us through our physical birth. Not all have
the same natural capabilities; some are more intelligent than others; some reveal greater
270 capabilities in certain areas than others. The Spirit uses such natural gifts and directs
their development and use in the service of the Name of God. Also, the Spirit provides, in
regeneration, in seed-form, the spiritual gifts of love, mercy, faith, which flower forth in
conversion and godly walk. Thirdly, the Spirit through the Word of Christ directs that these

gifts may so develop and grow, through the use of means, within the lives of the saints. He
275 uses the means of the preached Word; the diligent efforts of faithful saints; the gift of
prayer to God--in order that thus the child of God may see and rejoice in the development of
these spiritual gifts. The gifts are not just simply there in full-development, but there is
a growth in these which is evident in children of God.

III. THE SPIRIT'S WORK -- AND OURS

280 Perhaps of great concern this afternoon might be the question of the relationship of
the work of the Spirit to that which is required of us. There are evils which have arisen on
both the right and left in connection with the work of the Spirit. On the one hand, there
have been the errors of antinomianism and the "stock and block" theory; on the other hand, the
errors of arminianism, synergism, and pentecostalism which suggest the cooperation of God and
285 man in accomplishing the work of salvation. How are we to proclaim properly the Word of God
in order that the children of God may be directed in the proper "walk in the Spirit?"

Somewhat related to the subject is the old antinomian error suggesting even that we can
sin that grace might abound (cf. Rom. 6:1). The error suggests that the work of Christ has
so freed us from the law that now we are not under its demands anymore. The teaching leads
290 to licentiousness--and thus certainly the opposite of walking "in the Spirit". The preaching
must never suggest this error.

There is also that error which might be termed: the "stock and block" attitude. I think
there is danger of such an attitude arising in our midst. There are those who would believe
that we are as blocks, or perhaps as empty glasses, into which the Spirit pours some measure
295 of gifts. Now this block or glass simply sets there--if it is not filled, or only partly
filled, well, that is God's fault. If there is any spiritual lack on his part, if he does not
do what God's Word requires--then the fault lies with the Spirit Who has not properly provide
for him. Spiritual inactivity is then viewed as the result of lack of gifts, rather than as
sin on the part of the inactive one.

300 On the other hand, there is the opposite error which suggests that God and man cooper-
ate in man's salvation. God does His part and man does his part. God will save--if we first
accept Christ. God will perform part of the work of salvation--if man also does his part until
salvation. Or there is the error of pentecostalism which suggests this idea in the realm of

the work of the Spirit. We will receive the special measure of the Spirit, marked perhaps by
305 speaking in tongues, provided we meet certain of the conditions which God lays down.

The question comes down to that age-old one: what of the sovereignty of God as this
relates to, what is called, the responsibility of man? Most, if not all, heresies arising
from within the church will minimize or detract from the sovereignty of God in order to teach
its own idea of the responsibility of man. At the same time, such erroneous teaching of the
310 sovereignty, presents necessarily a wrong idea of man's responsibility. The same question
arises in connection with the work of God through the Spirit of His Son in His elect people.
Certainly Phil. 2:12,13 expresses this proper relationship: "...Work out your own salvation
with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good
pleasure." That relationship must be retained clearly and emphatically in the preaching of
315 the Word.

Certainly, the full Sovereignty of God also with respect to the work of the Spirit of
the Son in the church, must be maintained. There can be no compromise with respect to it.
God remains always God--and must be so confessed within the church.

With this, the church must understand well the teaching of Gal. 5:25, "If we live
in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This suggests the truth that one who lives
will also manifest the life of Christ in him. There is the 'working out of your own salvation
with fear and trembling...." Christians may never attribute their own carelessness or lethargy
to a lack, or limitation, of gifts of the Spirit of Christ to them. That would be very evil.

But there must be impressed upon people of God that the enjoyment of the Presence
of the Spirit of Christ and the experience of His work within one is in the way of faithful-
ness. The "works of the flesh" (Eph. 5:19) must be strongly condemned--as the Word of God
also condemns these. The walk in the Spirit must be evident. The child of God consciously
seeks to walk in that proper way. He sows--and as he sows, he also shall reap (Gal. 6:8-9).
Even as this is true in the natural sphere, so the Word of God reminds that this is true
spiritually. We must face the question, is this truth properly emphasized? Related to this
is the question: how ought the work of God through the Spirit of the Christ be impressed upon
our people that they may understand well our calling here below? With such proper emphasis,
there ought to be little danger of inroads of pentacostalism in our midst. God grant His
blessing upon us in this way of faithfulness for Jesus' sake. --G. Van Baren