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### **I. Introduction**

In response to an overture from the council of Plymouth Heights CRC and a strong appeal from the floor of synod, Synod 2004 appointed a study committee

to examine the biblical teaching, Reformed confessions, theological implications, and pastoral dimensions related to third wave Pentecostalism (spiritual

warfare, deliverance ministries, and so forth), with a view to providing advice to the churches.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 608)

The grounds for the request indicate that while the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism still has much useful and applicable advice for our churches, the unique emphases of the third wave movement and its growing influence on various ministries within the CRC warrant further reflection.

The committee reported to Synod 2007, submitting both a majority and minority report. The advisory committee's observations included the statement that "this advisory committee affirms the gracious openness of the majority report and believes it is the beginning of a thoughtful dialogue concerning a movement that already has significant influence in the denomination." However, they also noted that the report "must go further in grounding its recommendations biblically, confessionally, and theologically so that it will become a more useful pastoral tool" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 614). Synod 2007 adopted the recommendation "that synod recommit the majority report and augment the membership of the majority study committee in order to fulfill the study committee's original mandate, answer the significant issues and questions raised by Overture 36, and report to Synod 2009" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 614). In response, we have significantly expanded the evaluation section of the report with overviews that provide more extensive and overt biblical and theological reflection and interaction with third wave principles and practices.

We also added a completely new section on discernment in relation to manifestations and ministry expressions evident in the third wave. This is intended to meet the request to "provide a more fully developed biblical-theological rubric (guidelines) to assist pastors and others in the church to exercise discernment when they encounter specific manifestations of the Spirit that could be identified as third wave" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 615).

In this report we have also sought to more extensively incorporate key elements of the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34) in reference to the specifics of the third wave, which Synod 2007 also requested. The committee sees itself as standing in fundamental continuity with Report 34. While we do interact with this report, we did not find it realistic or necessary to duplicate all of Report 34's extensive material on the teaching of Scripture and the Reformed confessions on the work of the Holy Spirit (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 413-35), and we refer the churches to the excellent work reflected there.

It is notable that the term *third wave Pentecostalism* is not in common use. We understand our mandate to refer to what Peter Wagner and others have designated as the "third wave of the Holy Spirit." The other so-called waves were the Azusa Street revival of the early twentieth century, which gave rise to the Pentecostal churches, and the charismatic movement (neo-Pentecostalism) of the 1960s and 1970s. Because the term *Pentecostalism* is not usually applied to the third wave, this report will henceforth speak simply of the *third wave* or the *third wave movement*.

While members of the committee brought a wealth of personal experience to our discussions, we also relied heavily on the writings of key representatives (see Appendix A) to acquaint ourselves with the third wave movement. In order to assess the familiarity with and influence of the third wave in the

Christian Reformed Church, the committee drafted a questionnaire with the help of Dr. Rodger Rice of Calvin College, which was distributed to every congregation in the denomination. Its results were tabulated and analyzed by Dr. Rice for the benefit of this report. (See Appendix B for the executive summary. The full survey can be viewed online at [www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm).)

Finally, we were greatly helped in our work of assessing this movement in light of the Reformed tradition by the academic submissions of a number of CRC pastors. Rev. John Algera developed an extensive twelve-session course titled “Signs and Wonders of God’s Kingdom” as part of his doctor of ministry degree with Westminster Theological Seminary in 1993. This project has been reworked as *Signs and Wonders: A Reformed Look at the Spirit’s Ongoing Work*, a resource for adult small groups published by Faith Alive Christian Resources (2006). As part of his initial project, Rev. Algera conducted a signs and wonders survey of the CRC that formed the basis for the survey used by this study committee. Rev. Stan Kruis completed the thesis “Towards a Theology of Miracles: Reformed and Third Wave Contributions” as part of completing a master of theology degree in intercultural studies in 1999 at Fuller Theological Seminary. In his thesis, Kruis interacts with representatives of the third wave, primarily Wimber, Wagner, and Kraft, from a distinctly Reformed theology and worldview. In addition, for an independent study at Fuller Theological Seminary in 2001, Rev. John Dykhuys prepared the paper “The Healing Ministry of Jesus for Fellowship CRC Today,” appealing for the place of healing ministry in the church today.

## **II. Continuity with the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34)**

Although it is now more than thirty years old, the 1973 report (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 398-493) retains its value as a careful and balanced yet, at the same time, bold and prophetic statement of a Reformed biblical response to the challenge of the charismatic movement a generation ago. Although the 1973 report was a response to what today is sometimes called the second wave of the broad Pentecostal-charismatic movement, its basic emphases are those that undergird the present committee’s evaluation of the third wave movement of our own day. To a significant extent, we see our work as an updating of the 1973 report in light of contemporary developments.

The basic attitude of the 1973 report to neo-Pentecostalism (that is, “the charismatic movement” [p. 443] of its day) can be described in the phrase *open, but cautious* (see chapter 2 in the helpful 1996 book edited by Wayne Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*). On the one hand, the report is remarkably open to the charismatic movement and its attendant phenomena, but, on the other hand, it is cautious, warning against specific theological teachings and emphases in the movement.

A fundamental part of the report’s openness is that it directly challenges, on biblical grounds, the cessationism long held in Reformed circles; that is, the teaching that some of the more unusual spiritual gifts of the New Testament era, such as healing and tongues-speaking, had ceased after the time of the apostles (pp. 445-46, 481). Furthermore, the report states quite plainly: “There can be little doubt that neo-Pentecostalism is essentially a revival movement within the confessional and traditional churches” (p. 403), and it gives considerable space to the testimony of those who have been spiritually

revitalized by the movement (pp. 403-6). It acknowledges that “any unprejudiced evaluation of neo-Pentecostalism must begin with the acknowledgment that two of its main emphases, viz., (1) that salvation must be a profound and transforming *experience* in addition to a confession of a body of doctrine, and (2) the importance of the Holy Spirit in applying salvation to sinners, are in accord with the Scriptures” (p. 413).

With respect to Paul’s teaching concerning the spiritual gifts or *charismata*, the report says, “It is clear that the apostle recognized that God in Christ had effected in the lives of believers by the Holy Spirit a ‘third work’ (other than conversion and sanctification). He had also given certain ‘gifts’ to members of the believing community” (p. 423). In fact, the Holy Spirit may see fit to give charismatic gifts today that the apostles do not mention because the lists of *charismata* found in the New Testament should not be understood as either complete or normative (pp. 421, 424, 444). Other statements in the report are equally positive: “We gratefully acknowledge that the Pentecostals have focused attention on the Spirit, whose work has all too often been overlooked or ignored by the established churches”; “those who have experienced what they call ‘the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit’ show a remarkable change in their lives, eager to be vibrant Christians. We are grateful and praise God for any and every manifestation of newness in Christ Jesus” (p. 438). Furthermore, the gift of prophecy today need not exclude the possibility of prophetic prediction (p. 452). After all, “nothing in Scripture forbids us to believe that the Lord may work signs and miracles in our day” (p. 456). The report is also quite open to the present reality of demon possession and exorcism (p. 463).

The openness of the 1973 report to many of the claims and phenomena of the charismatic movement is balanced by its equally forthright cautions against the errors and excesses associated with it. For example, it repeatedly points out that an emphasis on the charismatic gifts of the Spirit should not obscure the more fundamental value of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 (pp. 421, 423, 428, 443). It emphasizes that Scripture makes no distinction between miraculous (or spectacular or dramatic) spiritual gifts and those that we experience as ordinary (pp. 422, 444). It challenges the notion that to act spontaneously is somehow more Spirit-led than to act with deliberation or careful preparation (p. 452). Similarly, it rejects the idea that guidance by the Spirit somehow rules out thoughtful and responsible deliberation on the part of believers (pp. 425, 461).

Perhaps the report’s most serious criticisms of the charismatic movement have to do with two matters: its teaching concerning baptism in the Holy Spirit and its practice of interpreting Scripture. On the first point, the report states: “The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the most distinctive (and often the most precious) doctrine to the Pentecostals. The desire for this Spirit-baptism sweeps every other doctrine into its vortex” (p. 435). In the usual charismatic understanding, this term refers to an overwhelming experience of God’s reality and presence—an experience that is subsequent to conversion and sanctification and that empowers the believer for service and witness. Against this view, the report argues that, biblically speaking, being baptized in the Spirit (or receiving the Spirit) marks the redemptive-historical transition from the old covenant to the new; therefore, “now to be in the new covenant is to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (p. 437).

It is something that happens at conversion in order that all who have faith in Jesus Christ have already been baptized in the Spirit, as indicated by 1 Corinthians 12:13 (pp. 480-81). Subsequent to conversion, the Holy Spirit may indeed give the believer one or more peak experiences of empowerment, but this is not what Scripture means by baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rather, such an experience is a further filling with the Spirit (p. 438).

However, it is on another point that the 1973 report is most critical of the charismatic movement: the way this movement tends to interpret Scripture. In a long section titled "Hermeneutic and Individualism" (pp. 464-75) the report criticizes the private and individualistic way charismatics often interpret the Bible. Its hermeneutic or way of interpreting Scripture is guilty of violating the Reformed understanding of historical revelation and organic inspiration (p. 467) and of "ignoring the linguistic and historical tools forged historically by the Christian community" (p. 468). Furthermore, in the report's own detailed exegesis of the New Testament exhortations concerning the Spirit (pp. 424-29) and the charismatic gifts (pp. 443-63), it demonstrates again and again that the neo-Pentecostal interpretation of these passages tends to be tendentious and arbitrary, failing to take into account the basic rules of grammatico-historical interpretation.

As we shall see, in this more recent manifestation of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement, the teaching concerning a post-conversion Spirit-baptism has ceased to be a defining characteristic, and the third wave is not marked by a dearth of hermeneutically responsible biblical exegesis. We now turn to a discussion of the third wave movement.

### III. Overview of the third wave movement

In 1983, Peter Wagner was interviewed by Kevin Perotta of *Pastoral Renewal* magazine regarding what the Holy Spirit seemed to be doing. In response to a question about whether Wagner was describing something new or whether this was just an extension of what we have seen in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, Wagner used the expression *third wave* for the first time (Wagner 1988, p. 16). This became the title of the article, which was quoted and reprinted in several other places. In 1988, Wagner published a book with the title *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*. History appears to be showing that this term is accepted to describe a movement, also identified as the signs and wonders movement, which had its beginning in about 1980.

While the term *third wave* is used to describe a largely North American evangelical experience, the movement is part of a bigger, broader, global neocharismatic movement that includes Christians who have received Pentecostal-like experiences, yet claim no association with either the Pentecostal or charismatic movements. Impetus for the third wave seems to have been initially prompted by experiences with charismatic phenomenon by Wagner and others in missionary settings, resulting in a desire to challenge the alleged complacency of contemporary Christianity in North America. The third wave now also has its own international impact through missionaries, teachers, and prayer teams shaped by the third wave over the past twenty years.

#### A. Pentecostal, charismatic, and third wave

The third wave is similar to the Pentecostal and charismatic waves that preceded it, but it has significant differences. While appreciating both the

Pentecostal and the charismatic movements, there is an intentional choice in the third wave not to be identified with either. The charismatic wave was largely a revival movement within confessional and traditional churches whereby participants sought to experience the living Jesus whom they felt was hidden “behind the doctrines, liturgies, and unspiritual atmosphere of the churches” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 403). In Christian Reformed churches, the charismatic wave was often experienced as being divisive and judgmental rather than a source of renewal. It broke communities apart, resulting in dissension and pain. By contrast, the third wave tends to be predominantly an evangelical phenomenon that has not, by and large, fostered disruption in church communities but has encouraged renewal and spiritual vitality. Christians are largely drawn to the third wave out of a sense of inadequacy and inability to minister effectively through their own strength and, as such, seek empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

While adopting third wave emphases, these Christians uphold their evangelical convictions, including a high view of Scripture and its authority as the Word of God for faith and life. This is reflected particularly in the writings of many key representatives of the third wave who base their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit on a solid, hermeneutically responsible interpretation of Scripture. While the 1973 report expressed a serious concern about individualistic biblical interpretation predominant in the charismatic movement of the 1970s, that approach to Scripture is not necessarily encouraged or modeled by leading figures of the third wave (see “Excursus: Biblical interpretation in the third wave”).

Another significant difference between the charismatic and the third wave movements, is the matter of baptism with the Holy Spirit. Ministry under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit as evidenced in physical healing, inner healing, deliverance from evil spirits, prophecy, and other signs and wonders is considered the primary entryway into the third wave. In contrast, a spiritual experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues is emphasized in much of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements (Burgess and McGee 1988, s.v. “Third Wave,” pp. 843-44). In fact, the third wave tends not to focus on baptism with the Holy Spirit, preferring to shift the focus to being filled with the Holy Spirit and placing its emphasis on the more evangelically acceptable area of spiritual gifts for ministry (see “Excursus: Baptism/filling with the Holy Spirit”). The full range of the gifts of the Spirit is believed to be active today and is to be used for others for the good of the body.

Finally, rather than the big-name event characteristic of the charismatic movement, the third wave encourages ministry within a body of believers by ministry teams. Ministry is usually shared, and people are equipped and released to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit in their local ministry setting under the authority of their church leadership.

#### 1. Excursus: Biblical interpretation in the third wave

As we have seen, one of the main criticisms of the charismatic movement described in the 1973 report was the way representatives of that movement interpreted Scripture. It was pointed out that its hermeneutic was frequently private and individualistic and tended to neglect the

linguistic and historical tools that have traditionally been considered indispensable for responsible biblical interpretation.

In the meantime, the situation has changed significantly. Although it is undoubtedly still true of many in the general Pentecostal-charismatic stream of Christianity that their reading of Scripture seems arbitrary from a linguistic and historical point of view, this is now counterbalanced on the part of many others by a new respect for the traditional disciplines of serious biblical scholarship. On that score, this particular stream of the church universal is now not much different from many others. It is a symbol of this new situation that today one of the most respected evangelical New Testament scholars is Gordon Fee, a Pentecostal. It is fair to say that the Pentecostal and charismatic movements today include many exegetically responsible preachers and competent biblical scholars.

This general observation is true also of the third wave. Among respected biblical scholars who are associated with the third wave, we mention Peter Davids, Wayne Grudem, and Max Turner. One of the leaders of the third wave is Jack Deere, a former Old Testament professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, whose books contain much detailed exegetical argumentation. C. Samuel Storms, the representative of the third wave in the excellent book *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (1996), handles the exegetical issues with evident competence. As a further example of serious exegetical engagement in and with the third wave, we mention the book *The Kingdom and the Power* (1993), which is largely devoted to the work of John Wimber.

The point is not that the third wave is entirely free from poor interpretative practices in its dealing with the Bible. It is not. The point is, rather, that it is not exclusively, or even predominantly, characterized by such practices.

## 2. Excursus: Baptism/filling with the Holy Spirit

In the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the baptism with the Holy Spirit is virtually *the* point of focus. In the third wave, multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion are expected for empowerment for ministry. "This empowering may be lifelong, preparatory for an office or particular ministry, or an instance that calls for an immediate and special endowment of power to fulfill an important and urgent need or spiritual emergency" (Storms 1996, p. 180). Some hold that the first of these empowerment fillings is baptism with the Holy Spirit, which serves as an initiation, but others maintain that these are all "fillings with the Holy Spirit" and that baptism in and/or with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion. Overall, there is flexibility and the willingness to address these as significantly synonymous and a matter of semantics so as not to be the lingering focus within the third wave. In an effort to avoid divisiveness, even those who believe that there is a baptism with the Holy Spirit that is theologically distinct from conversion for empowerment for ministry often choose to use the more common biblical terminology "filled with the Holy Spirit" as an acceptable synonym. In the second edition of *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* authored by Alvin J. Vander Griend and published by CRC Publications (now Faith Alive Christian Resources) in 1996, there is an acknowledgment that empowerment for

ministry is referred to in Scripture in various ways: baptism in (or with) the Holy Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit, having the Holy Spirit fall on us, or being filled with the Holy Spirit (Student Manual, p. 43). Interestingly, part of an application exercise includes the call to “ask the Lord Jesus Christ to baptize you with his Spirit and with power so that you may be equipped to serve him with strength” (p. 45).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a respected Reformed thinker who served as minister in Westminster Chapel, London, England, from 1939-1968, preached and published sermons that included the teaching that baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience after conversion, or at least separate from conversion. A series of sermons that he preached on the Holy Spirit in 1964 were published in 1984 as *Joy Unspeakable*, resulting in a renewed impact in Reformed and evangelical circles. Dr. Lloyd-Jones cautioned against interpreting Scripture in light of experiences and called for examining our experiences in light of the teaching of Scripture. On the biblical teaching of baptism with the Holy Spirit, he held firmly that it is separate from conversion but is not to be associated with any one gift of the Spirit. Among others, Dr. Lloyd-Jones identifies himself as standing with R.A. Torrey’s teaching on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. R.A. Torrey was the first superintendent of Moody Bible Institute and a world-renowned evangelist and teacher in the early twentieth century. Torrey, too, taught that baptism with the Holy Spirit is separate from conversion and is for empowerment for witness and service. Torrey’s teaching on this and other dimensions of the work of the Holy Spirit form the basic framework for the teachings of PRMI (Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International) in its books, courses, and conferences.

In the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC), the view that the baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion is held with great conviction as a “denominational” distinctive and is thus seemingly defended most strongly in these churches. This was the conviction of founding pastor John Wimber and comes through in the writings of C. Samuel Storms, associate pastor of the Metro Vineyard Fellowship of Kansas. Storms represents the third wave view in the excellent book *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, edited by Wayne Grudem.

The 1973 report shares the view, developed in the AVC and held by many in the third wave, that being baptized with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion (Holwerda 1974, pp. 13, 44). The report charitably acknowledges the change in people who have experienced what they call “the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit” but questions the terminology used to describe their change, preferring to call this a new filling with the Holy Spirit, and that “being filled with the Spirit is a repeatable event that believers must continually seek,” albeit tying this more to increased vitality of faith than empowerment for ministry (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 438). It needs to be remembered that the 1973 report was faced with the challenge of a movement in which “the desire for this Spirit-baptism sweeps every other doctrine into its vortex” (p. 435). Its response to that challenge was just as sweeping: It rejected altogether the teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit could be said to occur after conversion (p. 481).

One point of this tension with the Pentecostal and charismatic movements on baptism with the Holy Spirit is that speaking in tongues is often

considered to be the normative evidence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the third wave, tongues are considered to be a gift given to some and not to others to be used by some for ministry or prayer language. This is in contrast to their being the sign of baptism in or filling with the Holy Spirit. In agreement with everyone in the third wave, the 1973 report had already emphasized the view that the New Testament does not support the Pentecostal claims about tongues-speaking as a necessary evidence of Spirit-baptism (p. 439).

The third wave, with its expressed focus on empowerment for ministry, seems able to accept a diversity of terminology for this experience of empowerment without its being a point of contention. In much of the third wave movement and materials, including in resources with a deliberate Reformed identity produced by Faith Alive Christian Resources and Dunamis materials produced by PRML, a diversity of terminology is used, including *baptism with the Holy Spirit*, as ways of naming the experience of empowerment for ministry.

#### *B. Key representatives of the third wave*

Some leading pioneering figures associated with the third wave movement include John Wimber and Peter Wagner who together taught a course on signs and wonders at Fuller Theological Seminary in the early 1980s and 1990s. Charles Kraft and Jack Deere have written extensively about the power of the Holy Spirit for ministry. A key representative in Reformed circles is Brad Long, executive director of Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International, who developed the Dunamis project and video courses that teach about empowerment of the Holy Spirit for ministry within a Reformed theology and worldview. Finally, as author of the Alpha course, Nicky Gumbel has greatly extended the influence of the third wave. This popular video course, designed to introduce unbelievers to the Christian faith, includes a weekend devoted to teaching on the Holy Spirit, addressing such topics as who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit does, and how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. (For more about the involvement of each of these figures in the third wave, please see “Excursus: Key representatives.”)

Many other names are identified with the third wave, some more globally than others. Because there is no formal organization to the third wave movement, pinpointing all who are associated with it can be challenging. Other representatives will be mentioned in reference to specific facets of third wave as described below. Some names are more closely identified with the charismatic movement (such as Benny Hinn, Jimmy Swaggart, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Peter Youngren, and John Hagee) and will not be addressed directly in this report. However, while not being addressed personally, some of the ministry emphases and practices of the third wave certainly overlap with the charismatic movement; thus some of the assessments of these will also apply indirectly to representatives of the charismatic movement. Additionally, many local expressions of Holy Spirit empowered ministry represent a fluidity of influences across the spectrum of third wave, Pentecostal, and charismatic movements.

While the third wave seems to be a movement largely within evangelical churches and denominations, one denomination may be identified as third wave—that is, the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC). The church John

Wimber founded in 1977 later became known as the the Anaheim Vineyard when they joined a small group of churches started by Kenn Gullikson, known as Vineyard Christian Fellowships. Wimber became founder and leader of the Vineyard movement worldwide. The Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, with John and Carol Arnott as founding pastors, began as the Toronto Airport Vineyard, but late in 1995 it disengaged from the AVC. The Toronto Airport Fellowship itself now has satellite churches and a network of Partners in Harvest that is beginning to take on the character of a denomination though not identifying itself as such.

Excursus: Key representatives

Prior to being leading figures in the third wave, John Wimber and Peter Wagner worked together as church-growth consultants with the Fuller Evangelistic Association. Wimber was among those who wondered why healing and other miracles were happening in Third World countries but not in North America. In 1981, Wimber delivered a lecture at Fuller Theological Seminary titled "Signs, Wonders and Church Growth," and subsequently taught the course "The Miraculous and Church Growth" (MC 510 and MC 511) with Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft from 1982 until 1985, when there was a course moratorium due to some disputed theological dimensions and practices in the classroom in addition to academic questions raised by faculty members. A twelve faculty-member task force was appointed to review the issues that had arisen. Their report was published in 1987 as *Ministry and the Miraculous: A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary*, edited by Lewis B. Smedes who was the leader of the task force and a member of the Christian Reformed Church. In 1987, a similar course, "The Ministry of Healing and World Evangelization" (MC 550), was reinstated. It was taught by Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft, professor of anthropology and intercultural communication at Fuller, with the participation of John Wimber until 1992. Wimber also continued a busy pastoral and conference schedule and wrote influential books on the third wave, including *Power Evangelism* (with Kevin Springer, 1986) and *Power Healing* (1987). A distinctive of John Wimber's teaching, which some have called the "democratization" of healing, sparked the widespread emphasis in the third wave on equipping and empowering the laity to minister in the power of the Spirit.

Charles Kraft has also written influential books on the third wave, most prominently *Christianity with Power*, which explains his own journey to the third wave paradigm. In his book, he challenges the enlightenment-influenced Western worldview and embraces the Holy Spirit's power for ministry in signs and wonders.

Another key shaper of the third wave is Jack Deere, who created his own waves when he left Dallas Theological Seminary and a cessationist paradigm. He went on to write about his own transformation, especially in his first book *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: Discovering How God Speaks and Heals Today* (1993).

In Reformed and Presbyterian circles, Brad Long is a key third wave leader. He became executive director of Presbyterian-Reformed Renewal Ministries International (now Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International or PRMI) in 1980, developed the Dunamis teaching materials since 1990, and authored several books including *Receiving the Power* (coauthored with

Doug McMurry). The primary focus of the Dunamis projects and Dunamis video courses sponsored and promoted by PRMI is to equip local church leaders and laity. PRMI also seeks to expand its leadership base through a Dunamis fellowship, which provides for the equipping, empowerment, and encouragement of those with whom leadership is shared so as to broaden the scope and impact of the ministry regionally and in local churches. Several CRC pastors and members are part of this Dunamis fellowship.

Perhaps the most influential introduction to third wave emphases within the CRC is through Nicky Gumbel, author and teacher of the *Alpha course*. The self-identified influence of John Wimber on Nicky Gumbel is seen predominantly in the teaching of the Holy Spirit, including a weekend addressing such topics as who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit does, and how to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit weekend includes a moment in which participants are invited to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In addition, a session of the course addresses the dynamic of resisting evil, introducing spiritual warfare, and deliverance. Another session addresses how God heals today, including the use of words of knowledge and persistent particular prayer, modeled after a pattern introduced to Nicky Gumbel at a meeting led by John Wimber at Holy Trinity Brompton (London, England), recounted near the beginning of the Alpha session on healing. Our survey of the CRC revealed that 39 percent of churches used Alpha, including the Holy Spirit segment, within the last five years. Interestingly 70 percent of these are Canadian CRC churches but only 26 percent are U.S. CRC churches, perhaps revealing a greater acceptance of third wave emphases in Canada.

### C. *Beyond the third wave: New apostolic reformation*

While maintaining certain emphases of the third wave, Peter Wagner has spearheaded a new development that he calls the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), described in his recent books *The New Apostolic Churches* (1998), *ChurchQuake!* (1999), *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (2000), *Changing Church* (2004), and *Freedom from the Religious Spirit* (2005). The greatest divergence from the third wave comes in stressing the contemporary relevance of the fivefold ministries of Ephesians 4:11 and principles of Ephesians 2:20, seeing apostles and prophets as the new foundational leaders of the church in the second apostolic age. Wagner himself oversees the organizational development, taking on roles such as heading the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA) administered through Wagner's Global Harvest Ministries. New apostolic government and territorial church alignment is seen as replacing denominational government and alignment; calling this a "new-wineskin" and explicitly maintaining that a corporate spirit of religion is an agent of Satan to prevent change and maintain the status quo by using religious devices. According to Wagner, the resistance from "old-wineskin" leaders, denominations, and churches is evidence of this spirit of religion. Internal reform is seen as inadequate and apostolic renewal as essential, such as withdrawing from denominations and hierarchies to embrace and encourage independent charismatic churches. A full explanation of the structural, leadership, and even doctrinal directions of NAR is in Wagner's book *Changing Church*. We strongly warn against these distinctive tenets of the NAR and see it as a new development that draws from the third wave but is distinct in many ways from what is typically identified as the third

wave movement. The NAR is not part of how we identify the third wave for purposes of this report.

#### D. *Distinctive facets of the third wave movement*

By explaining some of the facets of the third wave, in no way do we wish to imply that these aspects of faith and life are not a part of the Pentecostal and charismatic wave or of many streams of evangelical Christianity. However, there are some unique ways in which each of these aspects of faith and life have been explained, experienced, developed, and prioritized in the third wave.

##### 1. Prophecy

In evangelical circles, no voice seems to speak louder and open more doors to prophets, prophecy, and hearing the voice of God than that of Jack Deere. His first book, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (1993), began the invitation, which was intensified by an even larger second book, *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions* (1996). More recently, Deere authored a book in *The Beginner's Guide to . . .* series, titled *The Gift of Prophecy* (2001). Deere sets out prophecy primarily as the speaking of a truth about a person or situation, with there being no possible human way of accessing that information. Deere was influenced significantly by John Wimber, who is credited with catapulting prophecy and prophets into prominence.

All proponents in the third wave maintain that God speaks today. Some call it prophecy, while others refer to this hearing of God's voice as a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom. (These expressions from 1 Corinthians 12:8 are often taken, in charismatic and third wave circles, to refer to special insights from God received in a ministry situation.) This openness is most often, in theory at least, balanced with emphasizing the need for the gift of discernment in both, sensing if a word is from God, and also in how to interpret and apply a word that is discerned to be from God.

The universal acceptance in the third wave that God speaks today and that we can hear his voice contributes to the way in which prayer is understood and healing and deliverance ministry is engaged.

##### 2. Prayer

Prayer in the third wave has a distinct emphasis on its being powerful and effective—not just changing us but also changing reality and shaping the future. Alvin Vander Griend developed the coursebook *Passion and Power in Prayer*, a widely used resource published in 1991 by Church Development Resources, a ministry of Christian Reformed Home Missions. In it, he provides a familiar example of third wave emphases in prayer: Prayer is two-way communication with God; God speaks to us in several ways; and God works in response to the prayers of his people, with these prayers even moving the hands of God.

More recently Dutch Sheets, pastor of Spring Harvest Fellowship, has had a significant shaping influence on increased interest in and the practice of intercessory prayer in evangelical churches through his book *Intercessory Prayer* (1996). Sheets developed this material into a popular video-based teaching series for adult classes and small groups. His teaching became very accessible through the book on intercession in *The Beginner's Guide to . . .* series. Sheets develops typical third wave themes of a two-way

relationship with God in prayer, prayer being powerful, and the idea that God sometimes limits himself to the requests of humans in prayer.

Brad Long, executive director of PRMI, and Doug McMurry coauthored *Prayer that Shapes the Future: How to Pray with Power and Authority* (1999). Long encompasses many third wave prayer emphases in exploring dynamic prayer for building and shaping new realities in the kingdom of God that involve listening prayer, intercession, prayer of agreement, and warfare prayer. Long and McMurry teach that through these facets of dynamic prayer a vision for a new reality is conceived, birthed, and clothed and that this would not become reality except for dynamic prayer.

Prayer, of course, is found universally in the church. In the third wave, much of what is practiced in prayer traditionally in evangelical churches is included but with a distinct emphasis or accent on prayer as two-way communication and prayer as being powerful and as changing reality. These two key emphases often come together in hearing from God what is to be prayed for and against, as we see in prayer for healing and in spiritual warfare.

### 3. Healing ministries

John Wimber's healing prayer ministry became a major point of identity of the third wave, power healing being one of the primary signs and wonders of kingdom power for power evangelism. With Kevin Springer, he coauthored influential books on healing, including such titles as *Power Healing* (1987) and *Power Evangelism* (1986, 1992). Wimber practiced a model of healing ministry that brought together words of knowledge or prophecy with gifts of healing—a model he introduced in his teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. This model has had a widespread impact in the Association of Vineyard Churches and beyond, even being adapted by Nicky Gumbel for the session "Does God Heal Today?" in the Alpha course. In short, words of knowledge or prophetic words or other signs are sought in prayer to identify who God wants to heal, after which the power of the Holy Spirit and the release of gifts of healing are sought in prayer to work the healing.

Wimber was deeply influenced by the writing and teaching of George Eldon Ladd on the kingdom of God, seeing that there is an *already* dimension of the kingdom of God and emphasizing how this can be experienced in healing and other signs and wonders, marks or signs of the kingdom such as we see in the gospels and the book of Acts. The *not-yet* dimension is also part of Ladd's teaching, embraced by Wimber and in general in the third wave so that it does not tend to espouse a theology of faith healing that is based on a false understanding of the extent of the presence of the kingdom. Reasons for there not being healing in all cases fit within this theology of the kingdom of God.

Henry Wildeboer, Christian Reformed minister and author of *Miraculous Healing and You*, published by CRC Publications (now Faith Alive Christian Resources) in 1999, also espouses this view of the kingdom of God that there is both the *already* and the *not yet*, a perspective that is deeply rooted in a Reformed theology and worldview. Wildeboer strongly contends that gifts of healing and miraculous healing are for here and now, and he includes some specific steps for developing a healing

ministry, urging traditional evangelical and Reformed churches to become more actively involved in healing ministry.

Peter Wagner also urged traditional evangelical churches to embrace healing ministry, writing what he terms a comprehensive guide in *How to Have a Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick* (1988; rereleased in 1992 as *How to Have a Healing Ministry in Any Church*). Wagner explores his and others' experiences with healing ministries in other countries, offering suggestions on the when, where, and how of healing ministry. He elaborates on Wimber's method, not seeing it as the only viable method but sensing that it seems to fit many evangelical churches.

Along with physical healing, inner healing has been part of the third wave movement from its beginning. John Wimber embraced inner healing as part of healing ministry and gave this explanation of the need for healing from emotional sickness: "sickness of the emotions is generally caused by what is done to us. It grows out of the hurts which are done to us by another person or some experience we have been exposed to in the past. These hurts affect us in the present in the form of bad memories, and weak or wounded emotions. This in turn leads us into various forms of sin, depression, a sense of worthlessness and inferiority, unreasoning fears and anxieties, psychosomatic illness, etc." (Wimber, *Signs and Wonders and Church Growth*, p. 3). Charles Kraft, another pioneer of the third wave, authored *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing*, promoted as a complete guide to inner healing, which maintains how we need to recognize the spiritual roots of our emotional wounds in order to receive deep and lasting healing. Brad Long defines inner healing as "part of the process of undoing the hurtful effects of sin. This includes the results of our own sin and being sinned against. It is a process of restoring to wholeness the shattered image of God within us. As the wounding of sin is overcome, we increasingly reflect the character of Jesus Christ. This is the process of sanctification, which comes from the work of the Holy Spirit within us (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)" (Long, *In the Spirit's Power*, p. 110). Michael Evans, like Long, especially emphasizes inner healing in teaching materials. Evans, in his course *Learning to Do What Jesus Did*, defines inner healing as being "concerned with the healing of past hurts, [and] involves vividly recalling and honestly facing those times of hurt and asking Jesus to bring healing to those wounds. . . . Our understanding of Jesus' mandate in Luke 4:18-19, is to free us from the evil that burdens us today, take the memories of the past and heal the wounds that have resulted from them and which still affect our lives in the present" (Evans, pp. 1-3).

Ed Smith, who pioneered Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM) in 1996 may be considered to be in the third wave in a way that is not an organized movement but is generally inclusive of particular paths of ministry in evangelical circles. TPM may be the fastest-growing method of inner healing in evangelical churches today, and it shares much with what is being practiced and promoted by the inner healing methods of others in the third wave.

Some common themes that flow through third wave expressions of inner healing are that the roots of emotional pain and resulting ways of life in the present are in the past, that being taken back to memories is part of the inner healing process, that our reactions and conclusions in

the memory are the root cause, and that confessing and repenting lies and then having God replace them with the truth as renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2) is a form of healing that is walked out with discipleship on a renewed path and way of living in freedom. The process of inner healing is marked by such common biblical practices as prayer, repentance, and forgiveness. It also engages in what may be seen as the more extraordinary gifts of “words of knowledge” received as thoughts and mental visual images.

#### 4. Spiritual warfare and deliverance

With its accent on the spiritual realm in its worldview, it is not surprising that in the third wave we find an emphasis on the presence of demons, personally and corporately, and a corresponding interest in the development of spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry. Novelist Frank Peretti, a former Assemblies of God pastor, is considered both to have ridden the crest of the wave of renewed interest and to have stimulated further interest. *This Present Darkness*, released in 1986, has been read by millions of North American evangelicals intrigued by the spiritual struggle over the fictional rural town of Ashton. To varying degrees, the worldview, demonology, and spiritual warfare tactics of Peretti’s novel have been adopted and adapted in the third wave and beyond in the Christian world. Entertaining the possibility that demons are pervasive in everyday life was stimulated significantly by Peretti’s early novels and his subsequent fictional writings in the same genre.

Interest in the topic of spiritual warfare has developed in several focused directions. At one end of the spectrum are individuals who are attacked, oppressed, or possessed by demonic powers. At the other end of the spectrum are geographical regions that are controlled by territorial demonic spirits. Between are family, church, ministry, and organizations attacked or controlled by demonic spirits.

In addressing individuals, it is not only the flesh and the world that are seen as contributing to temptation and leading into sin and causing manifestations of evil; demonic attack is also identified as a contributing factor to be dealt with, sometimes emphasized as the main factor to be addressed. The third wave also generally accepts that a Christian can be demonized, that is, indwelt by demons and oppressed by them. In the broader evangelical community, this is widely disputed, with arguments that a Christian belongs to God and that a Christian’s body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and thus that they cannot be controlled or possessed by demons. This is in part the reason why those in the third wave avoid using the term *possession* in relation to demons, stressing that a Christian cannot be owned by demons. However, they do hold that Christians can have demons in them by inviting them in or by persistent unrepentant sin, and therefore they can be oppressed by being influenced or even controlled by demons. Some in the third wave differentiate types of demons that attack or oppress in various ways; going so far as to develop detailed rankings of demons.

Within the third wave, there is agreement that we have a spiritual enemy, but there are differences over how to deal in deliverance ministry with the demonic attack and oppression. These are sometimes

differentiated as a truth-encounter or power-encounter approach. The truth-encounter approach seeks to help people understand and apply the basic truths of the Christian faith (such as repentance, forgiveness, identity in Christ) so that the ground an evil spirit may have attached to is removed, and the evil spirit leaves because there is nothing left for it to attach to or feed on. Neil Anderson, of Freedom in Christ Ministries, is the clearest example of this truth-encounter approach, which is also reflected in the book *Spiritual Warfare*, written by Neil Anderson and Timothy Warner in *The Beginner's Guide to . . .* series and in Jeff Stam's *Straight Talk About Spiritual Warfare* and *Battle of the Angels* (youth curriculum), published by Faith Alive Christian Resources. Jeff Stam, a CRC pastor, founded Set Free Ministries, based in Grand Rapids, whose approach to ministry is that of the truth-encounter; their purpose identified as "bringing victory and wholeness through prayer, truth, and the power of God's promises in Christ." Set Free Ministries also serves to help churches establish freedom ministries.

The power-encounter approach involves a Christian's intervening, taking authority in Jesus' name, and commanding an evil spirit to leave a person who is demonized or has a demon in them, sometimes called "casting out an evil spirit." Some examples of leaders in the third wave who tend toward this approach are Tom White, author of *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, and Charles Kraft, in both *Defeating Dark Angels* and *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing*. The third wave seems to have begun with a tendency toward the power-encounter approach, stimulated in part by Peretti's novels and evidenced in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, a collection of papers presented at a conference convened in 1988 at Fuller Theological Seminary by Peter Wagner.

A power-encounter approach is also primarily taken in relation to objects, buildings, and the like, that are dedicated to demons and in which occult rituals have taken place. Alice and Eddie Smith, founders and president and executive director of the U.S. Prayer Center, have written a widely read book, *Spiritual House Cleaning*. The Smiths contend that physical things can sometimes carry spiritual significance, that attitudes and actions can determine the predominant spiritual presence in a home, and that houses can be spiritually defiled. Seven steps of purification are provided that blend the truth-encounter aspects of repentance and sanctification with the power-encounter of dealing ruthlessly with Satan, renouncing his work, and casting him out.

The power-encounter approach is also prominent in the third wave in dealing with the spectrum of spiritual warfare involving geographical areas, cities, institutions, and the like. An emphasis on battling territorial spirits with warfare prayers has become a key element in a variety of third wave ministries. Peter Wagner coined the phrase *strategic-level spiritual warfare* (SLSW) to describe the strategy developed in his book, *Warfare Prayer* (1992), and several others published subsequently. Peter Wagner, along with Charles Kraft and Cindy Jacobs (cofounder of Generals of Intercession) were key leaders in founding the Spiritual Warfare Network (SWN) in 1990, an international coalition to strategize in light of the opposition of the demons to the spread of the gospel. The SWN also

launched the AD 2000 and Beyond movement to intentionally pursue world evangelization.

Some, like Wagner, contend that it is essential to learn the names and ranking of territorial spirits in order to engage them in spiritual warfare. Such naming and ranking is based on Daniel 10:13, 20, 21, where we read of a prince of Persia and a prince of Greece who struggle in heaven with the angel Michael, one of the chief princes of the heavenly host. Others, such as George Otis, Jr., president of the Sentinel Group, which produces the *Transformations* videos, is less concerned about the name and more about the nature of deception of territorial spirits, engaging in what he has called spiritual mapping to seek to discern what is happening in the spiritual realm that is blocking people from responding to the gospel. Alistair Petrie, who directs Sentinel Ministries Canada and the overseas operations of the Sentinel Group, authored *Releasing Heaven on Earth: God's Principles for Restoring the Land* (2000). Petrie, who teaches that actual land can be defiled and affect those who live or work on it, that the land can be healed from its curse through SLSW, and that God's blessings can be released, sees this as one dimension of stewardship.

Some in the Spiritual Warfare Network now also emphasize the importance of dealing with the corporate sin of a geographic territory, seeing sin as having provided the opening for a territorial spirit to establish a stronghold. In this way dimensions of the truth-encounter approach are incorporated into SLSW. John Dawson, a member of the SWN and author of *Taking Our Cities for God* (1989) coined the phrase *identificational repentance* to describe this process of identifying and dealing with territorial sin.

Once preparations such as these are in place, a power-encounter takes place by attacking territorial spirits, commanding that their power be broken, and claiming the territory for the Lord.

#### *E. Conclusion to the overview*

This overview seeks to provide a snapshot view of a movement that is multifaceted and that is not monolithic. As such, it is no doubt incomplete and may well capture only some facets well and touch on others only tangentially. Such it may always be with the Holy Spirit's blowing where he wills, refusing to be captured neatly in a theological box; with human experience providing a mix of clarity and confusion; and with evil spiritual powers always seeking to interfere and confuse.

In all this, Long and McMurry say it well when they determine that their task is to answer two frequently asked questions: "First, how can we understand this move of the Spirit of God so that we can open ourselves to all that is genuine, while closing the door to the counterfeit, the demonic and the merely human? Second, how can we advance the cause of Christ more effectively by relying on the Holy Spirit?" (*Receiving the Power*, p. 21).

#### **IV. Why third wave has widespread appeal**

From the survey the committee conducted regarding the influence of the third wave on the CRC, we learned that interest and acceptance of third wave practices is not an isolated phenomenon but finds widespread appeal among pastors and congregations. What the survey suggests is that over 60 percent of pastors have some familiarity with the third wave movement

and almost 40 percent of pastors have engaged in training in areas associated with the third wave movement. Perhaps most revealing is the prevalent and uncontroversial use of the Alpha materials, including the teaching on the Holy Spirit. All of this indicates an openness and appreciation for the emphasis in the third wave on the Holy Spirit's empowering Christians for ministry.

Why does the third wave have widespread appeal among Reformed pastors and churches? Why have the emphases of the third wave been so easily accepted within some CRC congregations? We believe there are a number of reasons.

#### *A. Theological compatibility*

The third wave is largely a renewal movement within evangelical circles. As such, it shares all the beliefs and convictions of evangelicalism, particularly the high view of the authority of Scripture. Specifically, Reformed ministries such as PRMI have gone a step further, showing how third wave emphases fit with a distinctly Reformed theology and worldview. Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature written from a Reformed perspective that endorses and encourages third wave practices (note particularly the adult studies published by Faith Alive Christian Resources). All of this has made facets of the third wave more accessible and attractive to Christians of the Reformed faith.

#### *B. Ongoing renewal within the church*

The 1973 report noted that those involved in the charismatic movement had a genuine desire and longing to experience the living Jesus and were disillusioned with the dogmatism and complacency of the established church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 407-10). While it accepted this critique of the established church, it also noted that the church was not ignorant of or indifferent to such critique but, rather, had welcomed reform and revival in the form of small-group meetings for prayer and/or Bible study, greater informality in worship services, greater congregational participation in worship, an emphasis on response or involvement in the religious education program, and the attempt to structure mission into the routine life of the entire congregation (p. 410). In many ways, the influence of the third wave on the CRC can be understood as an extension and expansion of these very efforts at revival.

#### *C. Cultural context*

Like its predecessor, the third wave movement is a phenomenon rooted firmly in the context of contemporary North America. The 1973 report described our cultural context as one that emphasizes experience as a means to knowledge and understanding; is disillusioned with reason, science, and technology; depersonalizes human beings; distrusts education as being ideologically based; and emphasizes the present moment (p. 412). While this is an apt description of our contemporary context, we add to this our own observations. The disillusionment with reason's ability to achieve objective knowledge has led to the focus on practical knowledge, on how knowledge is used rather than whether it is true, and this has fostered the pragmatism prominent in today's world. If it works, it is good.

We also note in our culture a general despair about the future in the wake of growing doubt that human ingenuity can resolve global problems—the

environmental crisis, AIDS, political and religious conflict, global inequity, and so forth. This despair has had two dominant effects. First, feeling powerless about the future, North Americans focus predominantly on the needs of the present moment. The notion of delayed gratification has been overshadowed by the call to seize the moment. There is a general fatigue with long-term plans and commitments and more interest in that which produces instantaneous results. Second, we note that many in today's culture have lost a sense of meaning and purpose in human life. The erosion of humanist ideals has resulted in a spiritual emptiness and an aching for something more in life. As such, we note a renewed interest in spirituality and the spiritual world. The astonishing rise of cults, Eastern religions, paganism, Wicca, Kabala, and others in the last couple of decades attests to a longing to experience the spiritual world. Strikingly, however, while interest in spirituality is on the rise, Christianity as an organized religion is in decline, likely because many denominations practice a functional deism that leaves spiritual seekers to turn elsewhere for an encounter with the divine.

These cultural trends have created space for widespread acceptance of the emphases of the third wave. As a movement that seeks to recover the functional belief in the spiritual world, the third wave emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit and the reality of angels and demons. It reclaims spiritual disciplines such as listening to God in prayer, repentance, and submission. Finally, it creates space for the exercise of charismatic gifts that function as overt testimonies to a genuine encounter with the divine. In this sense, the third wave movement is able to engage the postmodern seeker of authentic spirituality with a Christianity that encourages a genuine experience with the triune God.

Furthermore, the third wave tends to place a greater emphasis on the present over the future, focusing on the nowness of the kingdom of God. The release from suffering, inner and physical healing, and spiritual deliverance are all signs of the kingdom of God here and thus are desirable and actively pursued through prayer and gifts of the Spirit. While excessive emphasis on such things can result in a distortion of the good news and the loss of an understanding of suffering in the Christian life, there is also a sense in which the third wave reminds us that the kingdom of God is here and now and that we are called to join in God's mission to further that kingdom in the present.

Without undermining the genuine experience of the power of the Holy Spirit of some in the Christian Reformed Church, we believe that these variables (theological compatibility, ongoing renewal, and cultural context) have all contributed to the openness of our members to third wave emphases.

## **V. Evaluating the third wave movement**

In this section of the report, the committee seeks to interact on a biblical and theological level with the third wave in general and with each of the distinctive facets of the third wave: prophecy, prayer, healing, spiritual warfare and deliverance. Each section begins with a general evaluative overview and concludes with a section of affirmations and cautions that capture the tone of the evaluative overview while not being exhaustive or summative. These affirmations and cautions can serve as a ready reference but rely on the evaluation overview for their biblical and theological basis and for more detailed application to particular facets of the third wave.

While seeking to provide a measure of detailed evaluation in general terms and on the distinctive facets of the third wave, the committee cannot exhaustively address every possible angle nor anticipate new developments in the third wave. Therefore contained in this evaluation portion of the report is a section on discernment that provides both an overview and particular guidelines that are illustrated. It is the committee's hope that these guidelines will serve well in assisting pastors and others in the church to exercise discernment when they encounter specific manifestations of the Spirit that could be identified as third wave.

#### *A. Observations and evaluation*

##### 1. General: Reformed worldview framework

Like Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement, the third wave forces us to reflect on the reality and biblical validity of such phenomena as tongue-speaking, prophecy, miraculous healings, and deliverance ministry. These are phenomena that are well attested in the Bible and enthusiastically embraced in the third wave, but they are relatively unusual in Christian Reformed circles. On the one hand, many of us still feel most comfortable with the older Reformed view that such unusual manifestations of the Holy Spirit were restricted to the apostolic age, and we view with alarm the excesses and theological errors that not infrequently accompany an emphasis on such charismatic phenomena today. On the other hand, no one would deny that God is sovereign and that he can and does work (for example) miraculous healings even today. Many of us have experienced this in our own bodies or seen it with our own eyes. Furthermore, the denominational report on neo-Pentecostalism that synod accepted in 1973 distances itself from the traditional cessationist view and adopts a cautious but open attitude to the contemporary reality and validity of these extraordinary works of the Spirit. What is a biblical and Reformed worldview framework that allows us both to gratefully acknowledge these works and to warn against their perversion and misconstrual?

A key point of departure is the Reformed teaching that salvation is re-creation, that redemption means the restoration of creation as it was intended by God from the beginning. In redemption, God the Father stays true to the creational work of his hands; God the Son buys creation back from its bondage to sin; and God the Holy Spirit, in focusing our attention on Christ as the only Savior, works along the grain of creation.

One consequence of this is that, while God's mighty works of redemption are supernatural in their origin and power, they are thoroughly natural, that is creational, in their means and effects. God uses the ordinary words of preaching to engender new life, he uses our everyday emotional makeup to flood our hearts with joy, he uses the regular speech centers in our brains to gift believers with glossolalia, and he uses the regular patterns of family life to enfold children into the covenant community. Just as children are a gift of God and yet come through natural processes, and just as faith is a gift of the Spirit and yet is a generally human function, so all gifts of the Spirit are fundamentally creational. We might say that wherever the Holy Spirit liberates and redirects the ordinary patterns of

God's creational handiwork for the glory of Christ, there we have a charismatic phenomenon.

The significance of this Reformed emphasis on creational restoration is that it undercuts the spiritual elitism that can so easily infect and spoil powerful movements or waves of the Holy Spirit. In fact, it calls into question the propriety of speaking of waves of the Holy Spirit at all, at least if those waves are thought to apply only to Christian renewal movements marked by the charismata of Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. There is a wave of the Holy Spirit wherever the gospel spreads or wherever it leads to widespread and substantial liberation from prejudice, superstition, or oppression. At the same time, there is no reason to question or be suspicious of the contemporary manifestations of the charismata of which Paul speaks, as long as they conform to biblical directives and common-sense pastoral guidelines. In fact, there is every reason to welcome and encourage the exercise of these gifts and to see them as enhancing and supporting the other gifts rather than competing with them or outshining them. By such other gifts, we can include not only the various graces of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5) but also such gifts as teaching and a way with children and social tact and artistic talent, whether or not they are specially listed as such in the Bible. All these too can be called charismatic gifts when they are touched by the Spirit to serve Christ and his kingdom. What all these charismatic gifts have in common is that they represent natural abilities that are supernaturally energized by the Spirit for the sake of Christ's lordship.

A further benefit of this holistic and integrated creational perspective is that it guards against a one-sided and distorted way of speaking about being Spirit-filled or about being interested in the things of the Spirit, as though these and similar expressions do not properly refer to Christians who have never spoken in tongues or are skeptical about the gift of prophecy but who have devoted their lives to Christian education or diaconal ministry. To be filled with the Spirit, biblically speaking, implies nothing about which gifts the Holy Spirit may have given to the individual in question, and the things of the Spirit include leadership, institution-building, and skillful craftsmanship as much as prophecy and the casting out of demons. Neither is there any reason to think that spontaneity or emotionality have a closer connection with the Spirit than faithful regularity or intellectual insight. No work of the Spirit is more worthwhile than any other, and all his gifts, however they may differ in prominence or be recognized by humans, are on a par as to their potential to glorify God by serving Christ.

A Reformed worldview framework will emphasize not only the restoration of creation (broadly conceived) but also the reality of spiritual warfare (again, broadly conceived). In our own tradition, we have called this the antithesis, the opposition between Christ and Satan, between Spirit and flesh, between kingdom and world, and we have seen it as applying broadly to all areas of life. It is the genius of the Kuyperian or neo-Calvinist heritage in which we stand and that is itself only one historical manifestation of an ecumenical tradition that goes back via Calvin and Augustine to Scripture itself that sees this spiritual warfare as pervading all of human life. We see a battle of the spirits not only in the lure

of pornography or the fight against abortion but also in the movements promoting peacemaking and environmental stewardship and Christian scholarship. We ought therefore to be critical of those in the third wave who speak of spiritual warfare as though it were exclusively or primarily a matter of demon possession (perhaps more appropriately called demonization) and the casting out of unclean spirits in Christ's name. An unhealthy preoccupation with deliverance ministry and the occult is likely to distort the biblical understanding of all of human life as religion.

However, this is far from saying that all cases of deliverance ministry are a matter of ignorant superstition or that all claims of demonic influence on people today are a naive, prescientific misunderstanding of psychological symptoms. The Scriptures are perfectly clear that demons are real and can take over a person's life in horrible ways. They are also perfectly clear that demons can be cast out by Christ's authority. There is also no reason to believe that such demonization and such deliverance happened only in apostolic times. There is abundant testimony from church history and contemporary witnesses that demonization has been, and continues to be, a terrible and persistent reality up to our own times. Although it is undoubtedly true that severe psychological conditions have in the past been tragically misdiagnosed as cases of demon possession and that it is therefore crucial to recognize ways in which true demonization can be distinguished from mental illness, it is a serious error to reduce the former to the latter. Contemporary believers have much to learn in this respect from the long tradition of Christian exorcism, as well as from the more recent experience of evangelical and Reformed Protestants, many of them in the third wave, who have once again begun to engage in various kinds of deliverance ministry. This is a complex and even dangerous area of ministry, fraught with spiritual and theological risks, but one that we may not abandon. When we read the apostolic injunction, "Test the spirits, to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1), we should apply it, not only to cultural and ideological discernment, as we have often—and rightly—done in the past but also to the practice of a deliverance ministry, which may well have been what the apostle primarily had in mind.

A Reformed worldview that stresses the twin realities of creation and antithesis (both understood in a comprehensive sense) will help us both to welcome and to affirm the marvelous work of the Spirit in the so-called third wave and to warn against various ways in which that work has been misconstrued and distorted. We do this in a spirit of both humility and gratitude, acutely aware that we are feeling our way in what for most of us is unfamiliar territory. At the same time, we are assured that this is a territory where God is at work and where our own rich theological heritage can be of ecumenical service.

A Reformed worldview framework provides a grid to evaluate the third wave movement as described in the overview. Again, we recognize that we have not summarized every particular way in which the third wave is expressed. There are times when it blends with other traditions in its expression. It is international in its broad scope. It is also lived out through people and their personalities in local settings. What we seek to provide is an informed evaluation of this North American expression of a worldwide movement from a Reformed perspective. We share most tenets

of faith with this largely evangelical movement, flowing from a shared affirmation that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and our authority for faith and life. This provides us a common point of reference as we seek to place every area of life and ministry in submission to God's teaching in the Scriptures. We continue with general affirmations, as each particular section will too. There are many aspects of this movement that are positive and serve as a good corrective to areas of underdeveloped ministry. However, we also recognize the potential for excesses and aberrant beliefs and behaviors. Therefore, we also add some points of caution to help the church to be discerning about beliefs and practices associated with the third wave. In this way we express our open but cautious viewpoint.

a. Affirmations

- 1) God calls, equips, and empowers his people to participate in his mission in the world. The Holy Spirit continues to give the full range of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12) and continues to empower the church to do all that Jesus Christ commands, to the glory of the Father.
- 2) While the apostolic age is unique as the foundational period for the establishment and spread of the Christian faith and the church of Jesus Christ, the same God continues to pour out his Spirit to empower his church today. As such, we should not be startled, and we should even expect that God would act in wonderful and surprising ways to authenticate the gospel. The Holy Spirit empowers the church for ministry in word (proclamation), deed (service), and signs and wonders (miracles and manifestations).
- 3) Covenant community is lived out in ministry that takes place in the church under the spiritual authority of the leadership. The church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, continues Jesus' ministry on earth. Jesus continues to be the head of the church, with spiritual authority being delegated to leaders and with ministry fittingly taking place with the blessing and approval of the leadership.
- 4) There are two senses in which the biblical text, especially in Luke's writings, refers to being filled with the Holy Spirit. This distinction in usage is observed by exegetes and developed by Reformed and evangelical theologians (such as J.H. Bavinck, D.G. Molenaar, Sinclair Ferguson, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Michael Green). These two senses can be expressed as the ongoing filling for sanctification and intensification of our relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as the more episodic multiple fillings for empowerment, sometimes called an anointing to equip and empower for ministry. These fillings are then differentiated primarily in terms of the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts or manifestations of the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit can refer to either or both of these senses in both the biblical text and in actual experience. Ideally, the two manners of filling are in balance in a believer's life and complement each other, with the fruit of the Spirit providing the essential Christlike character to flow into the wise expression of gifts in ministry.

5) The greatest miracle and gift of the Holy Spirit is saving faith that results in new birth. No miracle can compare with the power or evoke greater gratitude than the miracle of eternal life. The Canons of Dort express this affirmation: “[conversion] is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead” (*The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine*, Art. 12).

#### b. Cautions

- 1) There is an ever-present danger to be more fascinated with the manifestations and to chase after demonstrations of God’s power than to love God and others. This danger of sensationalism can be countered by keeping the Word of God as the foundation, Jesus Christ as the focus, and the gifts in their proper place—not as ends in themselves but for the building up of the church through service and witness to Jesus Christ.
- 2) There can be a tendency to measure value according to gifting, which leads to a spiritual elitism in which those with the most manifestational gifts are the most esteemed. An antidote to this tendency is emphasizing that all spiritual gifts are equally manifestations of the work and power of the Holy Spirit and that these gifts are given at the Holy Spirit’s discretion for the common good.
- 3) There are practices that claim Holy Spirit empowerment that are antithetical to the honor, dignity, and glory of God. There are other manifestations of power that are counterfeits of manifestational gifts. Therefore, the church must be discerning when faced with charismatic phenomena. A fuller discussion on discernment and a proposed set of guidelines are provided in the final section of this report (“Discernment: Manifestations and ministry expressions of the third wave”).
- 4) While the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is not part of how we identify the third wave, we strongly caution against this new development and perceive it to be a disturbing deviation from the overall direction of the third wave, especially in NAR’s claims of the contemporary office of apostle and its antidenominational stance and divisive character.

#### 2. Prophecy

The 1973 report (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, pp. 450-53) stressed that prophecy is much more a matter of “forthtelling” (speaking the word of God) than of “foretelling” (predicting the future). Consequently, it reaffirmed an interpretation of the New Testament gift of prophecy which has long been held in the Reformed tradition, namely that it is closely linked with preaching as the exposition and application of Scripture. The report states, “We should affirm, therefore, that preaching is prophecy—or, more fully, [that] the proclamation of God’s word by a Spirit-filled believer, in which the word is so spoken and applied that the hearers are taught, encouraged, edified and comforted is prophecy” (p. 451). Note that this

definition does not restrict prophetic preaching to the officially authorized proclamation of Scripture from the pulpit.

The 1973 report also emphasizes that prophecy is subject to Scripture. "Every prophecy today, as in Paul's day, is subject not only to the other prophets but ultimately to the Scriptures. No prophecy can deny what Scripture teaches, for God cannot contradict himself. Since the words of the prophets are subject to testing, they do not have the measure of inspiration, infallibility and authority that Scripture has. The sufficiency, uniqueness and normativity of Scripture need to be fully maintained" (p. 452).

Although the 1973 report highlights the connection between prophecy and preaching, it also qualifies that linkage in a significant way. It states, "On the other hand, we caution against a too facile identification of preaching and prophecy. . . . The preponderant emphasis on prophecy as forthtelling need not exclude altogether, however, the possibility of prophecy as foretelling such as in the case of Agabus [Acts 21:10]. Any utterance, however, must be subject to the full range of biblical teaching as well as to community scrutiny (1 Cor. 14:32 [see 14:29-33]) and the inner assent of those to whom this prophecy is directed. To allow for this may appear to be opening the door to all kinds of aberrations and excesses. . . . However, sufficient guidelines and limitations are given in the Scriptures (e.g., Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 32:6-9 [*sic*; no doubt 28:6-9 was meant]; 1 Cor. 14; and 1 John 4:1-6) so that the people of God who are truly willing to follow the way of the Lord as revealed in Scripture may be confident that they will discover that 'God is not a God of confusion, but of peace' (1 Cor. 14:33)" (p. 452).

The report concludes its discussion of prophecy with the following reminder: "We would also call attention to the words of the Apostle Paul that even though 'our prophecy is imperfect' (1 Cor. 13:9), he says, 'So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy' (1 Cor. 14:39), and, 'Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything' (1 Thess. 5:19). In addition, we would urge the church to continue diligently to search the Scriptures and to be always on guard against false prophecy" (pp. 452-53).

Implicit in the report's discussion is the distinction between the prophecy recorded in the Old Testament, which is inspired and infallible, and the gift of prophecy in the New Testament church, which is fallible and subject to testing by Scripture and the Christian community. It should be noted that this distinction between prophecy in the Old Testament and prophecy in the New does not mean there is not also considerable diversity of kinds of prophecy in each Testament. Thus the ecstatic prophecy of Saul (1 Sam. 10:9-11) is different from the literary prophecy of Isaiah, and the prophecy of the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:6-11, 16-18) is different from the prophecy regulated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14. It is also significant that according to the report prophecy and preaching only partially overlap. Some preaching is not prophecy, and some prophecy is not preaching.

Since the time of the 1973 report there have been some significant developments with respect to our understanding of the gift of prophecy in the New Testament. This has been partly due to the charismatic movement, where the prophetic gift is widely acknowledged and practiced, and partly due to renewed scholarly investigation of the New Testament

data. A significant example of the latter is Wayne Grudem's book *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (1988, revised edition 2000), which has been widely influential in evangelical and Reformed circles, and has been endorsed by prominent Reformed theologian J. I. Packer. Within our own circles we can also point to a significant essay by the late George Vandervelde titled "The Gift of Prophecy and the Prophetic Church" in the book he edited *The Holy Spirit: Renewing and Empowering Presence* (pp. 93-118). Also in our own immediate tradition is the Dutch essay "Profetie en Toetsing" [Prophecy and Testing] in C. van der Kooij, *Tegenwoordigheid van Geest. Verkenningen op het gebied van de leer van de Heilige Geest* (Kampen: Kok, 2006), pp. 130-44.

In what follows we will take our cue mainly from Grudem's work. However, although the committee believes that his exegetical work on New Testament prophecy has been responsibly done, and carried out with explicitly Reformed theological commitments, it does not endorse his exegesis on every point. The committee acknowledges that Grudem's work on prophecy has been controversial in some quarters and that there are other legitimate ways of understanding contemporary prophecy. Nevertheless, the majority of the committee sees his work as providing credible biblical justification and guidelines for the responsible exercise of the gift of prophecy in the church today.

A significant conclusion of Grudem's book is that preaching involves the exercise of the gift of *teaching* rather than that of prophecy. He writes, "In conclusion, *teaching* in terms of the New Testament Epistles consisted of repeating and explaining the words of Scripture (or the equally authoritative teachings of Jesus and the apostles) and applying them to the hearers. In the New Testament Epistles, 'teaching' is something very much like what is described by our phrase 'Bible teaching' today. By contrast, no prophecy in New Testament churches is ever said to consist of the interpretation and application of texts of Old Testament Scripture." He then goes on to say, "All the things said about 'teaching' in the previous section apply to 'preaching' as well" (p. 120). If he is right, then the overlap between preaching and prophecy may be much smaller than assumed in the 1973 report. In most cases, prophecy is something quite different from preaching.

If prophecy is not to be equated with preaching, then what is it? The crucial passage here is 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle there writes in verse 29 (NIV): "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said." From the instruction to "weigh" (Greek *diakrino*) the prophecies, it is clear that not everything that was prophesied was to be considered valid. In the verses that follow Paul goes on to say, "And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged." From this we learn that prophecy was based on "revelation," although this word is here used in a more restricted sense than is common in systematic theology. As elsewhere in the New Testament (see Matt. 11:27; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 1:17; Phil. 3:15), *revelation* here refers to any communication from God, not necessarily resulting in authoritative Scripture. It seems that Paul is referring to something that God brings to a person's mind, or impresses on his or her heart, but with

the sense that it comes from God. If that person then puts into words what they understand that revelation to be, the resulting utterance or “prophecy” is to be weighed by other believers. It is not itself “revelation,” and it is neither divinely authoritative, nor infallible. It is a human report of something God reveals.

It is important to stress that prophecy in this sense is subordinate to the authority of the Scriptures, both to the inspired prophecy of the Old Testament and the apostolic tradition as embodied in the New Testament. As Paul goes on to say in verses 37-38 of this same chapter: “If anybody thinks that he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.” The prophet must yield to the authority of the apostle.

Another pivotal text in connection with New Testament prophecy is Ephesians 2:20, where Paul speaks of the church as being “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.” Biblical interpreters are divided on whether the prophets here referred to are the prophets of the Old Testament (so Calvin), or the prophets of the New Testament (so most contemporary New Testament scholars). If the second interpretation is correct, it could be argued that the “prophets” here are on a par with the apostles, and like them are limited to the foundational period of the Christian church in apostolic times. In that case these prophets, perhaps like those of Ephesians 3:5, may be a narrower and more authoritative group than those mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. In fact, the Greek construction here allows them to be identified with the apostles themselves.

That New Testament prophecy is not infallible is also illustrated by the example of Agabus in Acts 21:10-11. Agabus prophesied that the Jews in Jerusalem would “bind” Paul and “deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” This was essentially an accurate prediction, but not in every detail. It was in fact the Romans who bound Paul (Acts 21:33), and the Jews tried to have him killed (Acts 23:12-22). Paul was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles despite the best efforts of the Jewish leaders. The prophecy did give reliable information about the future, but it was not infallible.

A further point to note is that New Testament prophecy is generally described as a *charisma*, that is, a gift, not an office (see Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1). Unlike such Old Testament prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah, who were called to the prophetic office, people gifted with prophecy in the church exercise their gift regardless of whether they are an ecclesiastical officebearer. On the other hand, this need not rule out the possibility that specific individuals may on occasion be called to the office of prophet (see Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28).

It may be that the phenomenon which in charismatic circles is designated with the expressions “word of knowledge” or “word of wisdom” (taken from 1 Cor. 12:8, KJV) is actually a manifestation of the gift of prophecy. Sometimes the Lord gives certain believers an insight into a particular situation, or words to speak to a particular person, which is not based on any prior knowledge and proves to be remarkably accurate and edifying. Such experiences, which are not at all uncommon in the Christian community, are probably best understood as examples of what the New Testament means by prophecy.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that the gift of prophecy can easily be abused or counterfeited. The New Testament contains repeated warnings against false prophecy. In this we see that both the exercise of the gift of prophecy and the church's testing of all claims to prophecy is part of the broader spiritual struggle between the truth and the lie, between Christ and Satan. We must therefore see the whole phenomenon of prophecy as part of the broader context of spiritual warfare, in which the enemy seeks to deceive God's people, and the church tests everything by the Word of God.

Prophecy understood in the way sketched above is a common experience in the history of the church. The contemporary Dutch Reformed theologian C. van der Kooi writes the following in his essay on prophecy: "The experience of God speaking and of his communication with mankind is not restricted to the time of the Bible. Through history there flows a river of stories about revelations, visions, prophecies: the story told by Bede of the prophecy for King Edwin in 625, the spiritual experiences of Hadewych, the prophecies of the Anabaptists, Farel who adjures Calvin in God's name to remain in Geneva and not to withdraw into his study, the Great Awakening of 1742-1743 described by Jonathan Edwards. Then too the events of Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906, in our little land the preacher A. A. Leenhouts. And there are so many more who know about words which occurred to them, a message which burned in their souls, a dream which was for them more than a nightmare, a night vision that would not let them go" (*Tegenwoordigheid van Geest*, p. 132). Although we might debate the legitimacy of some of these examples, they nevertheless represent a significant strand of Christian experience in church history, which was recognized as "prophecy" from the time of the early Church fathers. In fact, it was not uncommon in patristic writings to make a "distinction between two kinds of prophecy, the one represented by canonical prophecies of the Old Testament, ranking next after apostolic teaching, the other being exercised in the primitive Church and resembling other spiritual *charismata*" (Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, under *propheteia* II, A). In fact John Chrysostom wrote that the prophetic gift was widely distributed in every church (*Hom. 31.1 on 1 Corinthians*).

If we acknowledge the present reality of the gift of prophecy, what guidelines should the church bear in mind for the proper encouragement and regulation of the exercise of the gift of prophecy? In addition to the general criteria for discernment laid out elsewhere in this report, the following points of pastoral advice seem wise.

- Approach the subject with an attitude of prayer and humble submission.
- Provide sound scriptural teaching on the subject, both from the pulpit and in other contexts, such as leadership training.
- Be patient and proceed slowly.
- Recognize and encourage the gift of prophecy as it has already functioned in the church, perhaps under a different name.
- Provide initial opportunities for the exercise of the gift in smaller and more intimate settings than the public worship service, strictly bearing in mind biblical guidelines as laid out in 1 Corinthians 14,

with the goal of edification of the body, not personal prestige or attention.

- As the exercise of the gift grows, continue to stress the far greater importance of Scripture as the uniquely reliable source for hearing God’s voice. It is only on the basis of Scripture that we can authoritatively proclaim “Thus says the Lord.”

Appendix C provides (for illustration purposes) two examples of guidelines for receiving and sharing prophetic words that have been developed for use in public worship and other ministry settings.

#### a. Affirmations

- 1) The spiritual gift of prophecy operates by receiving a word from the Lord as a special insight for a specific situation. This word from the Lord may not supersede or disagree with Scripture and is given for building up the body of Christ and advancing the kingdom of God. It may be for an individual, church, community, or country.
- 2) For the gift of prophecy to be safely expressed, it must be coupled with the gift and process of discernment and be regulated by ministry leadership. Prophecy needs to be evaluated for its validity and to determine the most appropriate setting in which to be shared.
- 3) Prophecy and preaching are related but distinct ways of responding to God’s revelation. Preaching primarily involves a process of study, interaction with the biblical text, and often consultation with others. It may involve an element of prophecy—but not necessarily. Prophecy involves a believer’s response to a message from God that is not directly tied to the exposition of Scripture. It may convey a direct word from God for the entire church community, or it may be for specific situations and individuals.

#### b. Cautions

- 1) The difference between the specific insight received and the way it is interpreted and applied must be carefully differentiated, lest the interpretation and application also be attributed to a special revelation from God.
- 2) Prophetic words that produce division, confusion, and fragmentation are not in keeping with the intent of the gift, which is given for the unity and edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:3, 31).

### 3. Prayer

Intercessory prayer has always been a significant part of the Christian tradition. From its inception, the apostle Paul exhorted the churches of Asia minor to pray for each other. “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all of the Lord’s people” (Eph. 6:18). In the early church, intercession was incorporated as a key component of the worship service, a practice that continues presently in the form of the congregational prayer. Today, many of our churches have prayer groups that meet regularly to pray for the community, the church, and the needs of our

world. According to the survey, numerous churches have held healing services or prayers for healing in the spirit of James 5 to intercede on behalf of a sick person in their midst.

Implicit in these acts of prayer is the conviction that our prayers achieve something, that is, we pray with the expectation that something will be different because we pray. Exactly what is accomplished by our prayers, however, continues to be a subject of discussion among Christians. While some traditions have emphasized the way prayer changes the one who is praying, others claim that prayer changes the way God acts in our world. Third wave understandings of intercessory prayer emphasize the latter, focusing on prayer as powerful and effective (see James 5:16b) in shaping the future.

According to third wave literature, through prayer we move the hands of God to bring about healing, pour out blessing, and establish his kingdom in this world. Al Vander Griend in his course on prayer speaks about “releasing the power of God,”<sup>1</sup> a phrase that is also found in the writings of C. Samuel Storms.<sup>2</sup> Dutch Sheets, in his book *Intercessory Prayer*, goes further, claiming that “God needs our prayers”<sup>3</sup> and without prayer, God may choose not to pour out his blessing and grace in the same way. Such claims are based on the interpretation of a number of biblical narratives which suggest that without prayer, God will not or cannot act for the sake of his people. In Exodus 17 when the Israelites go out to battle against the Amalekites, Moses ascends the hill and adopts a posture of prayer (lifting his hands in appeal to God for help). When Moses grows weak and lowers his hands, the Amalekites begin to overcome the Israelites. In other words, the prayers of Moses affect the outcome of the battle. Similarly, in Ezekiel 22:30-31, after a long description of the sinful practices of the people of the land of Judah, the Lord says to Ezekiel, “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger. . . .” This is often interpreted as a reference to the task of prophetic intercession on behalf of the people. It is claimed that if someone had been found to pray and petition the Lord for the sake of Judah, God would have postponed or even abandoned his plan to destroy the land.

In third wave circles, praying in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18) is an important element of prayer that is powerful and effective. While Pentecostals and charismatics have equated praying in the spirit with speaking in tongues, the third wave associates “praying in the Spirit” with being attentive to the promptings of the Spirit who leads us as we pray, “perhaps revealing things about the situation to us, or bringing Scriptures to our minds so we can pray for them in the situation.”<sup>4</sup> Dutch Sheets goes on to note that sometimes, the Spirit empowers our prayers “by literally praying through us as we pray in the Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> Our prayers are effective particularly when

<sup>1</sup> Al Vander Griend, “Passion and Power in Prayer” (Grand Rapids: Church Development Resources, 1991), Session 6.

<sup>2</sup> C. Samuel Storms, *Reaching God’s Ear* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Dutch Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Sheets, p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers such that our requests align with the divine will.

Prayer in third wave circles is distinguished from more traditional forms of intercession by the conviction that prayer is powerful and effective and by the practice of “praying in the Spirit.” What follows is an evaluation of these aspects of third wave prayer in light of biblical teachings and the Reformed confessions.

#### a. Prayer as Powerful and Effective

While the third wave places more emphasis on God responding to our prayers than we are accustomed to (and perhaps comfortable with), the notion that prayer is powerful and effective is firmly rooted in Scripture and in the Reformed tradition. In Scripture, for instance, we discover numerous examples of God acting, sometimes in extraordinary ways, in response to the prayers of his people. Moses intercedes for the Hebrews when God’s wrath threatens to destroy them (Ex. 32:1-14) and God relents (see also Ps. 99:6). When Joshua cries out to God for help in the battle against the Amorites, we read that the Lord listened to a human [Joshua’s] voice (Jos. 10:14). Hannah testifies that the birth of Samuel is God’s response to her prayer in 1 Samuel 1. Hezekiah prays to God to heal him from a life-threatening illness, and 2 Kings 20:5 suggests that God responds directly to his prayer. In Acts 12, the church prays fervently for Peter, and that night an angel of the Lord rescues him from prison. In addition to these accounts of God responding to the prayers of his people, there are many passages that exhort believers to pray with persistence and confidence (Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13; 18:1-7; John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24; Phil. 4:6; James 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15). By example and by directive, we are invited to pray in faith and with the hope that God will respond to our prayers.

What complicates any theology or practice of intercessory prayer is the doctrine of the sovereignty and providence of God. If God is all knowing and all powerful, doesn’t he already know what we need before asking it? If it is God’s will to heal someone, won’t he do it regardless of whether we pray? Is prayer not superfluous? Calvin recognizes the problem but assures his readers that prayer is not only not superfluous but the chief exercise of faith and hope.<sup>6</sup> “To know God as the sovereign disposer of all good, inviting us to present our requests, and yet not to approach or ask of him,” Calvin writes, is “just as if one told of a treasure were to allow it to remain buried in the ground” (Bk. III.xx.1). While Calvin admits that prayer is a spiritual exercise given mostly for our benefit, he is adamant that a good part of the benefit is derived from knowing that God responds to our prayers. To this end, Calvin suggests that God sometimes gives the impression of “one sleeping or idling” in order to spur us on to prayer so that he might respond to our petitions and requests (Bk. III.xx.3). “The keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. 121:4),’ and yet he is inactive, as if forgetting us, when he sees us idle and mute” (Bk. III.xx.3). Thus, while God is completely and solely in control of the world, he acts as if

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: Ephesians* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin’s Commentaries (Eph 6:18). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

he is dependent on us. Furthermore, Calvin implies that there may be situations into which God will intervene only if people pray because God has ordained it to be so. In some cases, the prayers of God's people are part of the total matrix of God's providence.<sup>7</sup> In this way, Calvin firmly holds together a high view of God's sovereignty with free will and human responsibility (see particularly Bk. I.xvii.3-5). Therefore, as Christians, we should pray and pray expectantly.

Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism makes some remarkable statements regarding prayer. In response to Question 116, "Why do Christians need to pray?" the catechism answers, "Because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit *only* to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them" (emphasis added). The implication is that there are things God doesn't bestow on us because we fail to ask.

#### b. Praying in the Spirit

In third wave circles, *praying in the Spirit* is construed as receiving divine guidance in how to pray. Such guidance is an important factor in prayer for Calvin as well. Prayers are effective when they are aligned with the divine will (1 John 5:14). Thus, in prayer, we are to submit our own wills to that of God's and allow the Spirit to guide our thoughts and prayers.

God gives us the guidance of the Spirit in our prayers to dictate what is right and to regulate our affections. For seeing that "we know not what we should pray for," the Spirit makes "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26), "not that he actually prays or groans, but he excites in us sighs, and wishes, and confidence, which our natural powers are not at all able to conceive" (Bk. III.xx.5).

It is important to note, however, that for Calvin, guidance by the Spirit does not mean we become idle and dull in our praying, that we empty our minds so that they might be filled by the Spirit. Instead, Calvin asserts that "while the inspiration of the Spirit is effectual to the formation of prayer, it by no means impedes or retards our own endeavours" (Bk. III.xx.5). The guidance of the Spirit doesn't release us from investing our hearts and minds in the act of prayer but should compel us to greater reverence, submission, and attentiveness as "befits those who enter conversation with God" (Bk. III.xx.4). For Calvin, a right demeanor in prayer is akin to praying in the Spirit and a key to effective prayer.

Calvin uses the metaphor of a conversation to get at this aspect of prayer (see also Bk. III.xx.5). Prayer is not just about us talking to God, but God, by his Spirit, communicating with us through our thoughts, impulses, and intuition (John 14:26). Calvin stopped short of exploring more explicit kinds of divine guidance in the form of visions and "words of knowledge,"<sup>8</sup> limiting communication to common human

<sup>7</sup> James 1:5 provides an interesting example of God bringing something about in response to prayer.

<sup>8</sup> The spiritual gift of "words of knowledge" is given no precise definition in Scripture. The 1973 report describes the gift as "a heightened insight and understanding of the Scriptures, and the ability to communicate this to others in teaching (p. 458)." At the same time, the report acknowledges that this description is no more than a suggestion. In this report, "words of knowledge" is being used according to third wave definitions of this gift as supernatural revelation given for a specific situation.

experiences. Even so, he lays the groundwork for an understanding of prayer that is dialogic, attentive to the promptings of the Spirit who directs our thoughts to the divine will.

The 1973 report also addresses the notion of guidance. It notes the promise of God to guide his people (Isa. 58:9-11; Ps. 23:3) and recognizes the common practice of seeking divine guidance at the beginning of ecclesiastical assemblies or in confirming one's vocational calling. Furthermore, it commends "our neo-Pentecostal brethren for their desire to be led by God in all their decisions."<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the report cautions against some of the ways in which divine guidance is sought. These include opening the Bible randomly to seek a divine word for a specific situation or limiting divine guidance to a spontaneous message spoken by way of "prophecy" or tongues. While the 1973 report clearly prefers guidance that comes by way of regenerated hearts and minds through the reading of Scripture, it also states, "we do not wish to deny that guidance may come, from time to time in unusual ways."<sup>10</sup> In this way, the 1973 report creates room for the possibility that the Holy Spirit may guide us by means other than Scripture.

The point of this brief theological reflection on intercessory prayer is to show that the notion of powerful and effective prayer is not new in Reformed circles. Rather, the third wave focus on intercession is a helpful reminder of the importance of prayer. Where the Reformed tradition primarily differs from the third wave is in the area of divine guidance. While Calvin recognizes the need for guidance from the Spirit in order to pray effectively according to God's will, such guidance is limited to common human experiences. This is consistent with Calvin's conviction that the charismatic gifts are no longer operative today. In third wave circles, by contrast, gifts such as prophecy and "words of knowledge" are currently being exercised by believers through the power of the Holy Spirit, and divine guidance is sought through these forms of extrabiblical revelation.

While cautious, Synod 1973 departed from the cessationist position of historic Protestantism and acknowledged that God by his Spirit may work in both ordinary and extraordinary ways through his people to bring about his kingdom in this world. This report seeks to reiterate and encourage greater openness to the operation of all the gifts of the Spirit. As such, we reject the qualitative distinction that is often made between the charismatic and the more ordinary gifts, implying that some have greater value, are greater evidence of the Spirit, or ought to be viewed with greater suspicion. Instead, we believe that when any gifts are exercised to the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom, there we witness the Holy Spirit at work liberating and directing "natural" human functions. Just as all the gifts of the Spirit can be directed to the glory of God, so it is true that they are all susceptible to abuse and excess. The body of Christ must be discerning such that the exercise of all gifts conforms to biblical directives and pastoral guidelines.

Likewise, we suggest that we ought not to discriminate between the "usual" and the more "unusual" means of God's guidance as we find

<sup>9</sup> *Acts of Synod 1973*, Report 34, p. 461.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

in the 1973 report. In the matter of guidance for a specific situation, the appeal to revelation, whether by Scripture or other means in the form of promptings, intuitions, visions, prophetic words and “words of knowledge,” will always demand scrutiny and discernment by the community of faith. As a result, we ought to be open to God’s guidance in whatever form it comes to us, yet always on guard for the ways in which such guidance may be misconstrued, abused, or manipulated.

In saying this, we also acknowledge the potential for distortions in third wave circles with respect to intercessory prayer. First, power, in the third wave, tends to be limited to an extraordinary blessing or work that God does for the sake of his people or the world. While this serves as a good reminder that God may at times, work in extraordinary ways, it undermines the notion that God’s power is also evident in the more ordinary ways of his providential care or in veiled ways through suffering (as in Jesus’ death on the cross). As a result, we can become blind to the many ways God is at work in our world and fail to praise and thank him for his ongoing love and care. Second, in third wave circles, it is common to attribute blessings being poured out in the lives of individuals or more broadly in the world to prayer alone rather than recognizing the complex ways in which God works his purposes in the world. While we recognize the power of prayer, we also acknowledge that God’s power is “released” through the ordinary use of human gifts and talents. Thus, when someone is sick, we pray for them, but we also bring them to a doctor. In trying to alleviate poverty and disease in developing countries, we pray for strength for the people, for the land to be fertile, for corruption to cease and for justice to prevail. However, we also equip people with new skills, work with them in planting hardier and more nutritious crops, and educate them about health issues. God uses each of these means to bring about his kingdom. Prayer and action properly belong together. Third, there is a potential danger of attributing power to the person praying rather than to God, thus robbing God of the glory due him. This danger is evident in the suggestion that God is dependent on our prayers to establish his kingdom. At times, third wave literature suggests that a certain amount of prayer is required to “tip the prayer bowls of heaven” and release the power of God.<sup>11</sup> However, God is not rendered impotent when we don’t pray although he may choose not to act because we don’t pray. Any theology that disrupts the delicate balance of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility distorts the practice of intercessory prayer. Fourth, there is a tendency in third wave circles to attribute too much authority to the nudges, intuitions, “words of knowledge” and prophetic words believed to be the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The comment, “God told me . . .” or “The Holy Spirit is showing me . . .” fails to recognize our fallibility in receiving revelation from God and the wisdom required in discerning God’s will. “Praying in the Spirit” is an act that requires caution and discernment.

<sup>11</sup> See particularly Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 200-11.

### c. Affirmations

- 1) Intercessory prayer is powerful and effective, which is a healthy antidote to fatalism and inevitability. In his sovereignty, God does sometimes choose to allow things to happen because of prayer and other things not to happen because of a lack of prayer. This idea that prayer can make a difference is not a new notion in Reformed circles but has a renewed emphasis in the third wave.
- 2) God has given us his Holy Spirit to help us pray (Rom. 8:26-27). Therefore we ought to be attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit that comes to us through Scripture, promptings, intuition, visions, prophetic words or “words of knowledge,” revealing to us God’s divine will as we pray.

### d. Cautions

- 1) God in his sovereignty chooses how to work in response to the prayers of his people. Intercessory prayer is not mechanical or magical in a direct cause-and-effect manner. God does not automatically fail to act because of lack of prayer, and while he loves to work in response to prayer, there is no guarantee that God will do so in a specific way.
- 2) God’s power is exhibited in a variety of ways that include extraordinary intervention, ordinary acts of providential care, and sometimes even situations of human suffering. In determining how our prayers are being answered, we ought to be open to the many ways God may be at work in our world.
- 3) Prayer and action properly belong together. Any notion of prayer that thwarts or discounts the application of ordinary human gifts and talents to the pursuit of the kingdom of God here on earth is a distortion.
- 4) As with prophecy, care must be taken and tentativeness expressed in hearing from God. What is received from God must be carefully differentiated from how it is interpreted and applied, lest this full process be attributed to God.
- 5) The guidance received in listening to God in prayer may not supersede or disagree with Scripture and must be discerned.

## 4. Healing

Healing continues to be one of the most pursued and perplexing topics which is not unique to but also is expressed in the third wave. Physical healing continues to be a significant emphasis in the ongoing charismatic wave. The third wave has a somewhat different focus on physical healing and also encompasses and even emphasizes inner or emotional healing. In addressing the charismatic wave, the 1973 report provides a balanced and blended analysis of the phenomenon of physical healing that remains helpful today and applies to all forms of healing ministry. It rightly states that the gift of healing is given to some but that prayer for the sick has always been the practice of Christians and is even uniquely assigned to

the elders (James 5:14). At times answers are seen through the work of doctors and medicine and at other times in ways beyond their skill and ability. Carrying an overall positive tone, the report clearly concludes that “believers ought diligently to pray for healing for each other and themselves, elders in particular ought to pray for the sick, and all should pray believing that the Lord who sent the Spirit is still the Lord whose power can astonish us beyond measure and who does all things well” (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 455). Pastor Henry Wildeboer, a CRC minister, carries this positive encouragement through his book *Miraculous Healing and You* (1999), challenges the church in general to establish increased healing prayer ministry, and charges elders and pastors to teach and practice healing prayer according to the call of James 5 (Wildeboer, pp. 75ff).

a. Healing and the kingdom of God

Jesus and the apostles engaged in healing ministry as a witness to the gospel (Heb. 2:4). As was the case then, we need to be clear now that healing is not for its own sake—that it is not about us but about following Jesus, witnessing to the gospel, and advancing the kingdom of God. In the Bible, the ministry and gift of healing, like other signs and wonders, were given as a taste of the coming fullness of the kingdom, not as the fullness here and now. The Reformed conviction that the kingdom is both already and not yet also must continue to sound clearly in any ministry of healing or exercise of gifts of healing. That the kingdom has an “already” dimension encourages expectancy, and that the kingdom is also “not yet” curtails being presumptuous, making demands on God, or naively claiming healing and believing that it is true despite evidence to the contrary.

John Wimber, a pioneer of the third wave, was deeply influenced by the writing of George Eldon Ladd on the kingdom of God, resonating with his teaching on the already and not yet and the reality of our present battle with the kingdom of darkness, but also recognizing the power and authority in the kingdom of God that already is ours in Christ (Wimber, p. 41). Nicky Gumbel, in the Alpha Course, identifies the influence of John Wimber, including his teaching on the kingdom of God and healing at Holy Trinity Brompton, a church of the Church of England in London, England. Drawing on the teaching of the already and not yet of the kingdom of God in answering the question “Does God heal today?” Gumbel says, “We live between the times, when the age to come has broken into history. The old age goes on, but the powers of the new era have erupted into this age. The future kingdom has broken into history. Jesus preached the kingdom of God. He also demonstrated its breaking into history by healing the sick, raising the dead, and driving out demons . . . healing is one of the signs of the kingdom which was inaugurated by Jesus Christ and continues to this day. . . . Hence we should expect God to continue to heal miraculously as part of his kingdom activity” (Gumbel, pp. 204, 206). Brad Long, executive director of PRMI, defines the kingdom of God as “the growing reality of God’s presence, life, and rule on earth as it is in heaven. The kingdom of God is the transformation of the fallen creation into God’s new creation” (Long, *In the Spirit’s Power*, p. 5). He teaches further that the

gifts of the Holy Spirit, including gifts of healing, are for life “between the times,” drawing from Gordon Fee’s teaching on the kingdom of God in *God’s Empowering Presence*—“the early church . . . lived ‘between the times’; *already* the future had begun, *not yet* had it been consummated. From the New Testament perspective the whole of the Christian existence—and theology—has this eschatological ‘tension’ as its basic framework” (Fee, p. 803; quoted in Long, p. 19). Long ties this identification of this age together with spiritual gifts like healing, maintaining that “the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts and manifestations in order to enable us to witness to Jesus Christ in this difficult, but exciting, ‘between the times’ as the end time people of God” (Long, p. 22). Further, Long teaches that “through gifts of healing, God shows forth His love and power. He shows His concern, not only for our souls, but for our bodies as well. The ultimate goal of the kingdom of God is wholeness in Christ” (Long, p. 110).

We affirm this biblically balanced placement of healing in the context of the already of the kingdom of God, while recognizing the reality of the not yet dimension. While at various times and places the quality and quantity of healing varies from Jesus, the apostles, and the early church, there is a kingdom theological continuity in the exercise of spiritual gifts of healing and a parallel to New Testament healings (Turner, p. 329). This seems a reasonable claim both in light of kingdom theology and also in terms of the effects of the experience of healing on people’s lives, confronting them with the reality of Christ’s presence by the Spirit in their lives, a freedom to serve, and a call to express gratitude in following Jesus Christ as his disciple in a multitude of varied callings.

b. The role of faith in healing

The role of faith in healing is one of the controversial touch points of this topic, but one which the third wave tends to balance in the way that the 1973 report encouraged. Briefly, in biblical cases of healing we sense that faith is part of the picture, but sometimes it is the faith of the person, at other times it is the faith of those who brought the person, and yet in other situations faith is not mentioned. Sometimes prayer and forgiveness are prominent, and at other times they are not. As the 1973 report says, with which we resonate, “healing can occur without the presence of any of these precisely because healing points to the power of God both to heal and to save” (p. 454). Yet there seems to be a general tie between faith and healing, understanding faith as an expression of trust that Jesus is able to work—and where there is not this trust, Jesus is able to do little, as was the case in his own hometown because of the lack of faith (Mark 6:1-6). John Calvin distinguishes between saving faith in Jesus and faith by which “miracles are performed in his name” (Calvin, quoted in Long, p. 107).

Mike Evans, founder of Wholeness Ministries, in biblically surveying the role of faith in healing, recognizes “that the role of faith is important, but not the single ingredient necessary for healing or effective prayer” (Evans, 2-1). Evans concludes his biblical survey by saying, “It should be evident after examining biblical examples of

healing that there is no pattern. From this observation of Scripture, we can submit a basic principle that is applicable in praying for healing: There is no universal method or experience that can be applied to all cases. . . . Our faith lies in the obedience of praying for the sick, despite our doubts" (Evans, 2-5, 6). In the third wave there seems to be a sense of the importance of general faith that acts out of obedience to Jesus' commands and believes that Jesus is able to work. Less emphasis tends to be placed on the faith of the particular person needing healing, thereby avoiding the hurt and spiritual devastation possible with the premise that healing always takes place if the person has faith. As Nicky Gumbel says in regard to faith and love, "the more we pray for, the more we shall see healed. Those who are not healed usually speak of the blessing of being prayed for—provided they are prayed for with love and sensitivity. . . . If we love people we will always treat them with respect and dignity. If we believe it is Jesus who heals we will pray with simplicity, because it is not our prayer but the power of God that brings healing" (Gumbel, pp. 211-12). We commend this biblically balanced perspective on the connection between faith and love and healing where it is promoted and practiced in the third wave, and in any healing ministry.

### c. Inner healing

Assessing inner healing confronts us with a level of complexity beyond what we encounter in terms of physical healing. Inner healing relies on biblical, neurological (brain theory), and psychological bases, intertwined together.

#### 1) Biblical support

In terms of biblical support, we find that articulation of the biblical basis for inner healing is often weak. There is a tendency to read into and interpret biblical passages in light of inner healing principles and practices, thereby resulting in too many forced connections and examples that ignore the context. These passages include but are not limited to Isaiah 34:18 ("the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"); Isaiah 53:5 ("by his stripes we are healed"); John 8:29 ("the truth will set you free"); John 9:25 ("I was blind but now I see"); 1 Corinthians 8:1 ("knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"); and Hebrews 12:1 ("let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles . . ."). By this we are not saying that inner healing is unbiblical; however, an overdone desire to prove a textual biblical basis undermines credibility.

When biblical principles are drawn on, the credibility of the inner healing movement is helped. For example, we can underscore that God wants us to walk in truth and light, not in deception and darkness. And while God may have a positive purpose for leaving us in physical or other circumstances of affliction, it does seem that God would have no reason to leave us languishing in lies. Further, we support that sanctification can be pursued in inner healing, a dimension of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Replacing lies with the truth about God, life, and others, is a vital personal dimension of sanctification that works its way out in

many facets of life, including emotional and physical well-being, and healthy relationships.

While this dimension of sanctification can be supported in inner healing, we caution against a tendency in inner healing circles to only value experiential knowledge and see the key to sanctification as experiential truth replacing lies. The value of experiential truth from the Holy Spirit can be so emphasized that it devalues receiving truth directly from the Scriptures. While there is a commonly understood dichotomy between head and heart knowledge, the Spirit can work a balanced head/heart faith powerfully through logical and academic study and can illuminate the heart to encounter Scripture in many ways. Further, a balanced head/heart knowledge can come simply from putting faith into practice. Stressing sanctification as only or even primarily coming through experiential truth from the Holy Spirit is a myopic understanding that undermines the value of a full-orbed pursuit of sanctification with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Balanced inner healing ministry validates the importance of Bible study and other means toward Christian discipleship, including simple but significant repentance from sin and the commitment to live out the truth of Scripture.

## 2) Influence of psychology and neurology

Inner healing's connection with psychology begins with its basic premise that present emotional pain and irrational, undesirable behavior are usually rooted in the past—and, more specifically, rooted in terms of the conclusions one comes to as a result of traumatic experiences (from the severe, such as sexual molestation, to the less severe, as in the criticism of parent or teacher, or public humiliation). The premise is that a present situation that is similar or reminiscent in any way of a past traumatic experience can trigger lie-based thinking, emotions, and actions out of proportion to present reality. In the field of psychology, specifically psychotherapy, there is a common thread of understanding that psychological and emotional problems can be rooted in the past and that revisiting such past experiences may be necessary to resolve those problems. Further, inner healing holds to memories being able to be suppressed or repressed, and even to the possibility of disassociation of the self if the event is extremely traumatic. Here, in the theory and practice of inner healing, we find more concepts found widely in the field of psychology—the idea of a subconscious, the possibility of repression of memories, and even disassociation. Repression is a basic defense mechanism by which painful or guilt-producing thoughts, feelings, or memories are excluded from conscious awareness. Disassociation is a defense mechanism sometimes triggered by traumatic experiences. The part of the psyche containing the memories, including thoughts, emotions, and sensations, is compartmentalized and not part of ongoing conscious awareness or memory. These concepts are also explored in neurology, or brain theory, in terms of how memory is stored and recalled, including the theory that a different part of the brain registers knowledge learned through experience than what

registers knowledge learned through education—the common right brain/left brain distinction.

Christians take a wide range of positions on psychotherapy in general and specific aspects of its theory and practice, including its neurological basis. This is evidenced in the book *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views*. Some reject inner healing simply for its use of elements of psychotherapy, since one view is that Christians are to reject any form of so-called secular psychology. Others accept the validity of psychology for Christians, but vary in their assessment of inner healing due to the level to which they agree or disagree with the very points in psychotherapy at which inner healing connects. While it is beyond the scope of this study to fully address this relationship, we do hold that a Reformed worldview would embrace an integration view and that psychology and Christianity can be mutually informed. Christian study in the field of psychology is then open to accepting theories about humanity that do not contradict God's revelation in Scripture, and psychology is enriched by the biblical understanding of such concepts as humanity being created in God's image, the effects of sin on human behavior, the reasons for disruptive temptations, and the role of God in bringing healing. However, even if an integrationist approach can be supported as fitting with the Reformed worldview, exactly what qualifies for integration varies even in Reformed circles and so cannot conclusively validate or invalidate the connection of inner healing with psychology.

That said, the theory that the emotional pain that affects many people's lives is rooted in false beliefs rooted in past experiences has a ring of sensibility about it, even though it may be overly simplistic and not fully account for other reasons—physical, relational, circumstantial—for the pain or for irrational and undesirable behaviors. These past experiences can very much be a part of our conscious memory and affect life in the present. However, there is a real possibility that they may be forgotten memories. Forgetting things is a common experience of human life, and can be selective, often the good memories being ones that remain conscious. We selectively remember, and selectively forget. These are realities of day to day living, whether or not we determine that this is caused by psychological categories like conscious or subconscious repression or disassociation.

How past experiences are recovered and the attached lies are revealed is a touch point for concerns regarding inner healing. In a typical inner healing ministry session, Jesus is invited to bring memories to mind, unmask the lies, and replace them with a revelation of the truth. This leading and revealing may be through a mental image or through a vision. Here we agree with concerns that there is a real risk of implanting suggestions, leading to false memories. Guided imagery and visualization practices involve this risk and are never appropriate. Guided imagery or visualization are processes of directed thoughts and suggestions that guide a person's imagination. We also support the caution that any thought or mental picture received from the Holy Spirit by the prayer minister or

intercessors ought to be shared tentatively, if at all, and perhaps only to serve as an internal confirmation of the process being on track. These cautions are present and demonstrated in most illustrations in the material presented by Long & Strickler and Ed Smith—Smith holding the tightest parameters. Charles Kraft generally maintains cautions against suggesting what people ought to see; however, he seems to quickly step over his stated line in such guided exercises as the “back-to-the-womb” or “back to conception” exercises. While we believe that God in his grace will not withhold effective ministry due to the inner healing practitioner occasionally taking an overzealous role of guidance and suggestion, we stress that the principle of avoiding suggesting and guiding ought to be diligently maintained in any inner healing ministry. We recognize that there needs to be structure and direction in inner healing sessions, such as to biblically test truths supposed to be from Jesus, but not to make suggestions on what the memory or attached lies may be.

Interestingly, the Christian Research Institute (CRI), after an exhaustive evaluation, indicated in articles in the *Christian Research Journal* (Vol. 29, No. 2, 2006) that they detected nothing unbiblical about the core theory and practice of Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM), the prominent inner healing ministry model founded by Ed Smith. The Christian Research Institute, whose president is Hank Hanegraaff, is known for its critical thinking and doctrinal discernment in probing contemporary ministry movements. They do have concerns about what they see as peripheral issues, such as teachings on the sin nature, sanctification, and satanic ritual abuse. They also think that more scientific research needs to be done to validate the claims of TPM, while affirming that anecdotal reports of its effectiveness in practice justify further investigation. However, they remarkably find no biblical or spiritual problem with Christians engaging in the TPM core process of inner healing; yet they still withhold full endorsement of TPM’s theory of emotional pain and claims of efficacy.

We take a similar open but cautious approach. Should a church have or seek to develop an inner healing ministry, it ought to be clear that this is not clinical counseling but is prayer ministry. It is also important that some basic balanced training and guidance be provided by the leadership to ensure that people are helped and not harmed. Several courses that generally fit within this evaluative overview are found in the bibliography. Any inner healing ministry ought to operate under the spiritual authority of church leaders and include clear accountability. There are also matters of abuse prevention that ought to be adhered to in the ministry setting, such as typically having two people present to minister. Liability issues should be understood and included in a church’s insurance policy, where inner healing ministry will typically be included under the wide category of “counseling.” Some of the training resources provide direction in these areas and even supply sample release agreements. Here the material by Michael Evans of Wholeness Ministries and Ed Smith of Theophostic Prayer Ministry are especially helpful.

As can be the case with so many programs and approaches in ministry, inner healing also ought not to be seen as the complete or sole solution for those suffering from emotional problems. The problems people experience come out of a large range of experiences and causes. Obsessive thoughts may be a result of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and treatment by a medical professional may be in order. Inner healing may or may not be needed or appropriate, or it may be helpful in a complementary way. The same can be said for depression, which may be due to a chemical imbalance in the brain and require drug therapy treatment. Again, inner healing may still be in order, as the onset could have roots in negative past experiences, but it would not be the complete solution. Proper diagnosis requires wisdom. Sometimes it requires medical help. Referrals to trusted professionals in the medical and psychological/psychiatric fields can help find the right form(s) of treatment in complex situations. Similarly, alongside or in place of inner healing ministry for recovery from emotional problems, there is the consistent call in the Christian life and community to discipleship pursued through Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, and accountability.

#### d. Affirmations

- 1) Prayer for healing has always been a part of the life of the church, whether it be public or private. Our survey results show that prayer ministry teams, special services for healing, and inner healing are also embraced in our circles. Our survey results also show that belief that these ministries are for today and are biblical is even stronger than the embracing of them in practice.
- 2) A diversity of ministries of healing fits with the biblical teaching that there are gifts of healing. Spiritual, emotional, and physical healing are differentiated, though often interconnected, forms of healing.
- 3) Inner healing recognizes that we can be wounded emotionally while living in a fallen world and that wounds from the past can affect our lives in the present. Inner healing ministry provides pathways to follow for lies to be replaced with truth, for repentance to be walked out, and for forgiveness to be processed. All of these emphases are healthy dimensions of biblical discipleship that we are called to express in our lives.
- 4) Healing ministry is part of experiencing the already dimension of the kingdom of God. Gifts of healing and miraculous healing are for here and now, and healing prayer ministry avoids the fatalism of illness taking its course or of the medical field being the only recourse to seek healing.
- 5) The not-yet dimension of kingdom theology is affirmed in avoiding the positive confession often present in the charismatic movement where those being prayed for or those who are praying are challenged to believe that they already have what they are asking. In acknowledging the not yet, there is an acknowledgement that full healing in this lifetime is not always experienced.

#### e. Cautions

- 1) When words of knowledge—understood in a third wave way as images, impressions, nudges, words of Scripture, and so forth—are part of the process of healing ministry, these must be discerned and shared tentatively.
- 2) Healing should not be an automatic expectation of healing ministry. As with any form of intercessory prayer, so it is also the case with healing ministry prayer that God in his sovereignty chooses how to work in response to the prayers of his people. Healing prayer, like any form of intercessory prayer, is not mechanical or magical.
- 3) While freedom from physical and emotional pain is what God ultimately desires for us, we recognize that suffering is part of our present life, and we also must emphasize that it is often used by God to strengthen and build up our faith. Suffering has a place in the Christian life, and, therefore, we ought not be hasty about seeking release from our pain or look for quick fixes in promises of God's power.

#### 5. Spiritual warfare and deliverance

Both Scripture and the Reformed confessions require us to acknowledge the reality of spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 6:12 Paul reminds us that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Answer 127 of the Heidelberg Catechism refers to this spiritual conflict when it affirms that “our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us.” Calvin alerts us to the need to not only be aware but keenly invested in spiritual warfare:

We have been forewarned that an enemy relentlessly threatens us, an enemy who is the very embodiment of rash boldness, of military prowess, of crafty wiles, of untiring zeal and haste, of every conceivable weapon and of skill in the science of warfare. We must, then, bend our every effort to this goal: that we should not let ourselves be overwhelmed by carelessness or faintheartedness, but on the contrary, with courage rekindled stand our ground in combat.

*(Institutes, 1.14.13, Battles trans.)*

While third wave literature on spiritual warfare recognizes the attacks that come via the world and the flesh (or sinful nature), there is great emphasis given to the more direct role of Satan and the demonic and to deliverance from those influences. This is a valuable emphasis, because it is easy for us to be influenced by the naturalistic worldview of our Western culture, which tends to relegate the concept of evil spirits and demons to the realm of fantasy, failing to take seriously the impact of the supernatural powers of darkness on our lives (Eph. 6:10-12). As Christians, we are called to recognize that our “enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). We also need to acknowledge that we in North America, as well as in other parts of the world, are subject to the attacks and influences of the demonic.

We acknowledge the reality and seriousness of spiritual warfare and the important role that the third wave has played in bringing it to the church's attention. There are concerns, however, regarding some third wave teaching that we feel necessary to address and about which we encourage churches to use wisdom and caution as they find themselves engaged at various levels of spiritual warfare. These concerns include biblical support, terminology, the role of sin, sources of knowledge, the practice of deliverance, and "strategic-level spiritual warfare" (SLSW).

a. Biblical support

Here again we face the struggle of assessing the third wave in light of the lack of *specific* biblical support for some of its teaching. We don't mean to imply that all third wave teaching that lacks this specific support is therefore contrary to Scripture, but our desire to have clear-cut, conclusive chapter and verse direction was often elusive, especially in the area of spiritual warfare. There is an obvious connection in the Bible between Satan and the demonic with sin and its various manifestations and results, but Scripture is frustratingly silent at times concerning details we would like in understanding and functioning in the context of the cosmic spiritual battle in which we are enmeshed. We must, therefore be careful when we fill in the blanks left by Scripture. We must also allow the simplicity of Scripture to keep us from over-focusing on details and possible tangents. That said, however, we cannot blissfully ignore the reality of experiences being reported by believers around the world. We must be careful to use the biblical principles that are clear in filtering and understanding those experiences.

We know that Satan is real and powerful, described in vivid and terrible imagery in Revelation 12. We glean from the same context (v. 17) that Satan is enraged and makes war against believers, those who "hold to the testimony of Jesus." He is an adversary, deceiver, and tempter (1 Pet. 5:8; John 8:44; 1 Cor. 7:5). Satan takes personal interest in individuals and groups, as he did with Job and the disciples (note the plural "you" in Luke 22:31). Satan, through his demons, attacks individuals (demonizes), as is seen in numerous examples in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Satan and the demonic are still a threat and need to be taken seriously (Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8). On the positive side, we know that Satan is a defeated (ultimately) foe (Luke 10:18), that we are called to successful resistance (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9), and we are empowered by one who is greater than the "one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). And even though Satan has temporary status as "prince of this world," he will be driven out (John 12:31; Rev. 20:10).

b. Terminology

Another area of difficulty is the terminology used in the discussion of spiritual warfare in the third wave context. The New Testament has multiple ways of describing being under demonic control: a person may be "demonized" (Greek, *daimonizomai*, translated "demon-possessed" or "possessed by a demon" in the NIV); a person may "have" (Greek, *echo*) a demon or evil spirit (Mark 3:22, accusation against Jesus); a person may be "with" (Greek, *en*) a demon or evil

spirit (Mark 1:23); in one case, a woman is crippled and “bound” (Luke 13:11, 16), while elsewhere people are “tormented by evil spirits” (Acts 5:16).

Some of the confusion is due to the NIV’s penchant for translating the concept of being with, having, or being demonized all with the term possessed. Possession, to some, implies a total control that is akin to ownership. We believe that, at least in the case of a believer, Satan cannot claim ownership. 1 John 5:18 clearly implies limits to Satan’s influence in the life of a believer (anyone born of God).

Another difficult term is *inhabited*. In many New Testament references it is evident either from the context or from parallel passages that those referred to are inhabited (not a scriptural term) by one or more demons, which then need to be cast out. To some third wave proponents the difference between having a spirit inhabiting an individual (implied from within) is significantly different from being attacked by a spirit from the outside. The distinction could result in using different methodology for helping the individual gain freedom. Scripture, especially the Gospels, does not always offer such clear-cut distinctions. The man in Mark 1:23 was with (*en*—could be “in” or “alongside”); while the Gadarene of Mark 5 is described as both with (*en*—v. 2) and demonized (*daimonizomai*—v. 16). In both cases, Christ commands the spirit to come out, implying inhabitation of some sort. In the crippled woman’s case (Luke 13:10ff), however, there is no indication that the spirit was inside or cast out. Jesus simply proclaimed her freedom, and her “bondage” (v. 16) was ended. We will eventually run into difficulty if we try to force spiritual concepts (beings) into a spatial construct. The nuances that trying to define “in” or “out” include could unnecessarily clutter the process of proclaiming freedom.

We would prefer the terms *demonization* or *oppression* to describe the specific attack of a demonic spirit on an individual, regardless of the degree or cause of that attack or whether it is occurring from within or from outside.

c. The role of sin

Prevalent in the third wave’s approach to spiritual warfare is the matter of identifying specific sin or sinful patterns that have allowed or caused a demonic attack on an individual or community. We recognize that there is an obvious connection between sin and Satan’s attack on God’s created order. Humankind’s purpose, “to glorify God and enjoy him forever” (Q&A 1, Westminster Shorter Catechism), stands in direct opposition to that of Satan. In speaking of our warfare against Satan, Calvin states that “if the glory of God is dear to us, as it ought to be, we ought to struggle with all our might against him who aims at the extinction of that glory” (*Institutes*, 1.14.15). That Satan continues to attack through temptation to sin, as he attacked Jesus, in an effort to destroy our relationship to God and God’s created order is undeniable.

As sin weakens our spiritual health and resolve, it can surely weaken our resistance to spiritual oppression and even open opportunity for attack. Paul warns about letting sinful anger give “the devil a foothold” (Greek, *topos*, “ground”) in our lives (Eph. 4:26), and Peter suggests

that not being self-controlled or alert (to sin in one's life) could make us prey to the enemy's attack (1 Pet. 5:8). That said, we also recognize that New Testament demonic oppression is not always associated with deeply rooted patterns of sin in a person's life; rather, these people are often grouped together with those who are victims of various illnesses and physical disabilities. When Jesus gives demonized people relief, it is sometimes merely indicated that he healed them (Matt. 4:24).

Third wave writers frequently connect demonic oppression with sins in a person's life such as lust, pride, and greed as well as with addictions to such things as alcohol, drugs, and pornography. This could lead to a misunderstanding regarding demonization. Demons may often be involved in tempting us to commit sins, but examples of demonization found in the New Testament do not supply underlying reasons or point to specific sins in those person's lives. There may be many underlying causes that have built up to significant spiritual oppression, and simply "casting out a demon" based upon behavioral patterns may be overly simplistic, not dealing with other important issues.

The 1973 report makes a similar point: "Again in our day and in the Western world, there are reports of demon possession and exorcism. We express great reservation about some of these reports and the indecent eagerness with which some gospel practitioners 'diagnose' cases of demon possession, when the difficulties are cases of hardened sinfulness, character weakness, natural resistance to the gospel, self-induced fears, mental illness, or diseases such as diabetes ('sugar demon'). All of these are serious, and the Christian counselor, minister, or physician must and can deal with them according to biblical insight."<sup>12</sup>

As stated above, we do not wish to completely disassociate sin from spiritual oppression. As a couple of third wave authors illustrate it—people need to get rid of the garbage (sins/issues) that attracts rats (demons), not just shoot rats. We agree with the analogy that where sin is present, we may be more susceptible to attack, but not all attack is the result of sin in the individual's life. The other side of the coin also deserves a caution—sin in our lives cannot always be blamed on a specific spiritual attack. We must own our responsibility for resisting that which comes from our own carnality (the flesh) and the worldliness of the societal structures within which we live.

#### d. Sources of knowledge

The sources used in seeking to understand Satan, the demonic and their manner of working is an important issue. Proponents of the third wave look to the Bible as a source of knowledge in this area; however, some also rely heavily on other sources of information. When the Scripture is silent or inconclusive on a given issue, many of these writers turn to "clinical evidence" (knowledge gained through experiences in counseling and deliverance sessions). Two other sources used to gain awareness of demonic activity include the spiritual gift of distinguishing between spirits (1 Cor. 12:10) and knowledge obtained by interviewing demons themselves. An example of this would be determining the presence, identification, and purpose of demonic forces in a room

<sup>12</sup> "Report 34: Neo-Pentecostalism." *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 463.

or specific geographic area. Another would be relying on those who practice non-Christian religions to provide information about demons. While this is accepted in varying degrees (some, not at all) by proponents of third wave thinking, two key people in the movement that would accede to these practices are Charles Kraft and Ed Murphy.

Evidence that people in modern times may be “possessed” or inhabited by demons comes from around the world. The loa possession that is part of the practice of voodoo (vodun) in Haiti is one example among many. Our concern, however, is that much of the “clinical evidence” of demonic inhabitation presented by third wave writers is anecdotal and/or subjective. For this reason it must be carefully evaluated. In some cases, third wave authors describe situations in which “demons” manifest themselves in what seems to be a response to the suggestions or commands of a counselor or deliverance minister. In such cases, it is wise to consider the possibility that a suggestible individual is manifesting or providing information in response to the expectations of others and not because of demonic inhabitation. This possibility, however, does not eliminate the reality of demonic manifestations; nor does it allow us to make a sweeping claim that all such manifestations are merely psychological in nature. Again, Calvin is critical of “those men . . . who babble of devils [demons] as nothing else than evil emotions or perturbations which come upon us from our flesh . . .” (*Institutes*, 1.14.19). This drives home the need to find appropriate balance between that which is purely psychological (at times, even manipulated), that which is spiritual, and that which contains elements of both.

We must also examine the spiritual gift of distinguishing between spirits. This gift has most commonly been understood as the ability to distinguish between the work of demonic spirits and the work of the Holy Spirit. Even the 1973 report states, “Because of the danger of false prophecy and because Satan is ever the great imitator, there is always need for the church to be gifted in ‘distinguishing between spirits.’”<sup>13</sup> Bible commentator Gordon Fee, himself a charismatic, believes that the gift may include that kind of discernment, but he suggests that it refers “particularly to the phenomenon of ‘discerning, differentiating, or properly judging’ prophecies in 1 Corinthians 14:29.”<sup>14</sup> While we have examples of both Peter and Paul, through the apparent gifting of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3, 9; 13:9-10), being able to identify demonic (or Satan’s) presence and activity, and we may safely assume that the same spiritual gifting can be found in the church today, we should take great care that we don’t reduce the gift of distinguishing spirits as a kind of “spiritual Geiger counter.” We will discuss later the need for various manifestations of spiritual gifting to be tested and verified.

The belief that it is possible to obtain reliable information from demons themselves also is questionable and fraught with risk. If, as

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>14</sup> Fee, Gordon D. 1987. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; pp. 596-97. He takes this position because the gift of distinguishing spirits follows the gift of prophecy in Paul’s list in 1 Corinthians 12:10, and because those two gifts are followed in turn by “tongues” and “interpretation,” which is similar to the pattern found in 1 Corinthians 14:26-29.

indicated by the possibility above, demonic manifestations have been produced by expectations, then counselors may think that they are interviewing demons when they are not. Even allowing for the possibility of interviewing demons, since demons serve “the father of lies,” the truthfulness of what they say should be treated with great scrutiny. While Kraft believes we can put demons “completely under the authority of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>15</sup> this method of gaining information has little or no direct biblical support and is, at best, questionable and without caution could cross into the practice of spiritism.

In like manner, animists and others who practice non-Christian religions and may be worshiping demons, inadvertently or intentionally, often offer information about the spiritual world. It should not be casually assumed that they have an accurate knowledge of the names and hierarchy of the demons they worship or of the principles by which the spirit world operates. Our primary source of knowledge about the demonic must be Scripture. Information derived from other sources should be treated cautiously and carefully evaluated.

e. The practice of deliverance

When Jesus told his disciples that his church would be built on the fact that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” and that the gates of hell would not overcome (stand against) it (Matt. 16:16, 18), he was speaking of deliverance from one kingdom (of darkness) to another (of God). Jesus proclaimed the coming of God’s kingdom (God’s saving rule). He pointed to his authority over the demons as evidence of the breaking-in of the kingdom: “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28). He explained that it was because he had defeated Satan (bound the strong man) that he was able to liberate people from the power of the evil one (v. 29). He also warned his hearers that having a demon cast out without life change was dangerous, because the evil spirit might return with “seven other spirits more wicked than itself” (vv. 43-45).

Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to extend his ministry of proclaiming the kingdom among the lost sheep of Israel. To equip them, he “gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every sickness and disease” (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1). Later Jesus sent out the seventy-two, and they returned with joy acknowledging that “even the demons submit to us in your name” (Luke 10:17).

Two approaches to giving relief to individuals who have been inhabited by demons or who are experiencing demonic influence—*power* encounter and *truth* encounter—stand out in third wave teaching. Samuel Storms defines a power encounter as follows: “A power encounter occurs when you confront the demon directly and verbally command that it identify itself (name, function, point of entry, etc. [although this is not essential to the power encounter]) and cast it out (to the abyss or to wherever Jesus sends it). Jesus employed the power encounter approach, as did Paul in Acts 16.”<sup>16</sup> Kraft advocates using a

<sup>15</sup> Kraft, 1995:119; 1992:161. See also Wagner, 1996:69-70.

<sup>16</sup> Storms, C. Samuel. “Deliverance, Part I.” Website: [www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/deliverance-part-i](http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/deliverance-part-i).

power encounter only after dealing with the “garbage” (such as bitterness, fear) in people’s lives through inner healing.

Neil Anderson favors truth encounter. In his words, “Truth is what makes an encounter with Satan effective because his primary strategy is deception.” He says that the belief that “freedom from spiritual bondage is the result of a power encounter with demonic forces” is a misconception.<sup>17</sup> In Anderson’s deliverance process, referred to as the *Steps to Freedom in Christ*, he focuses almost exclusively on the power that is found in praying through the truths of Scripture. Individuals are encouraged to battle against Satan’s lies and influence by recognizing and claiming biblical truth regarding who they are positionally as believers and how to recognize, confess, and renounce past sins and present patterns of sin and their root causes. Storms believes that the truth encounter approach should be used whenever possible, but that sometimes a power encounter is required.<sup>18</sup>

Whenever third wave proponents are seeking to help people struggling with sins or addictions, their advocacy of a power encounter approach often seems misplaced. The New Testament teaches us that the way to deal with people who are struggling with sin and temptation is through the application of such things as Scripture, prayer, and accountability. Anderson’s truth encounter is closer to this pattern.

In seeking to help a person who truly is a victim of demonic influence and/or inhabitation, we concur with the 1973 report’s call upon the church “to exorcise such cases of true demon possession as may come to its attention with unerring fidelity to Christ and the Scriptures.”<sup>19</sup>

f. Strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW)

Many proponents of the third wave believe in the existence of what they call “territorial spirits.” Wagner and others believe that a unique kind of spiritual warfare is needed to combat these demons: strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW). The promise of SLSW is that it will break the power of evil in a geographical region so that evangelism can proceed with far greater effect.

The concept of “territorial spirits” is not altogether clear. Third wave writers often describe such spirits as high-ranking demons who rule over specific territories or geographical regions. They also speak of them as being assigned to geopolitical entities, such as nations, ethnic groups, and/or other social networks; therefore, their understanding “territorial” is much broader than geography.

In Scripture, the evidence for such powerful demons is quite limited, with Daniel 10:13, 20-21 being the most common. The conclusion is that since the archangel Michael has the role of “prince” or guardian for Israel, the “princes” of Persia and Greece must be demons. This leads to the inference that other geographical areas are ruled by similar demons, and that smaller regions or cities are ruled by lesser demons. Elsewhere in the book of Daniel, however, Persia and Greece refer not to geographical areas, but to empires that succeed one another and

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, 2000:258 and 23.

<sup>18</sup> Storms, *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> “Report 34: Neo-Pentecostalism.” *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 463.

have shifting boundaries. Another viable interpretation of Daniel 10 is that malevolent spiritual powers use these empires as tools to attack the people of God. The conclusion that there are demons assigned to a specific country (such as Uruguay) or city (such as Los Angeles), based on Scripture, is open to question.

Given the possibility that there are demons assigned to rule particular regions, there is little if any biblical warrant for combating them by means of SLSW. Wayne Grudem, who is sympathetic with some aspects of third wave teaching, points out that there are no New Testament examples of summoning territorial spirits upon entering an area, demanding that demons supply information about the local hierarchy, or seeking to break “demonic strongholds” over a city before preaching the gospel.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the practice of “warfare prayer,” when it involves rebuking high-ranking demons, needs to be reconciled with the warning of Jude 8-10.

A technique referred to as spiritual mapping involves studying the history of a given area, as well as “the ideologies, religious practices, and cultural sins that may invite and perpetrate demonic bondage” in that area.<sup>21</sup> Such mapping is not always connected with the identity of territorial spirits, and it obviously can be helpful in guiding prayer and evangelism. Many in the Christian Reformed Church are familiar with the 10/40 Window (the region of the northern hemisphere between the tenth and fortieth lines of latitude), having been motivated to make this part of the globe a focus of their mission prayers. However, some forms of spiritual mapping, especially those involving the naming of territorial spirits and the discovery of “grids of power” appear to lean heavily on an animistic or occultic framework rather than biblical evidence, which raises the same concerns expressed earlier.

Another feature of SLSW is identificational repentance. This involves discerning the prevailing sins or historical sins of an area, identifying with them personally, and seeking God’s forgiveness for them. Some associated with the third wave speak of the possibility of “remitting” these territorial or national sins. Such remission is said to break spiritual strongholds that keep geographic territories, nations, or cities in bondage to demonic powers. Third wave leaders point to Daniel and Nehemiah as examples of identificational repentance. Daniel and Nehemiah, however, were confessing sin as representatives of God’s covenant people. They were not seeking to remit the sins of Babylon or Persia. The concern some third wave leaders have shown about sins of racism and sins against native peoples is commendable. It is often appropriate for us to confess such sins corporately and publicly, but the notion that Christians can identify with the sins committed by a modern state or nation and remove the temporal curse and penalty for those sins, again, has questionable basis.

Third wave teaching on spiritual warfare is well intentioned and helpful in many ways in reminding us that we have strong and cunning spiritual adversaries. There are risks, however, of going astray at several points due to debatable interpretations of Scripture and because of the

<sup>20</sup> Grudem, 1994:421.

<sup>21</sup> White, 1990:136; Wagner, 1992:153-154; Dawson, 2001:85, 123.

extensive use of questionably reliable sources of information about demons and spiritual realities. Scripture does not specifically call us to cast demons of lust or anger out of people, to evict demons from hotel rooms or to rebuke territorial spirits. It does, however, call us to recognize the spiritual nature of the battles we wage, to put on the full armor of God, to resist the evil one, to be holy and to stand firm, “because the one that is in [us] is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). We are to wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:11, 13, 17), and our weapons of truth “have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:40). With them we can “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” and can “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

#### g. Affirmations

- 1) Demonic powers are at work in every aspect of life, leaving no facet of life over which demonic forces do not want to maintain or reassert influence. There is also no aspect of reality over which Jesus Christ does not claim rule and reign. Reformed tradition has identified this as the “antithesis,” which is another way of expressing “spiritual warfare.”
- 2) Demons can and do attack people in varying degrees, ranging from simple oppression to possession. Christians can come under severe demonic attack and influence, including influence over thoughts and behavior; however, a true believer in Christ cannot be demon-possessed (implying ownership), because he or she belongs, body and soul, to the faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.
- 3) Both truth and power encounters have their place in spiritual warfare and deliverance (freedom) ministry. Truth encounter, which recognizes the role of repentance, submission to God, resisting the devil, and embracing truth in bringing freedom from demonic attack and demonization is preferred, because it allows the individual to remain cognitively aware and in control of the time when they are receiving ministry. There are times, however, such as when a manifestation takes place or there is stronger demonic resistance, when believers must exercise authority in Christ, commanding the departure of an identified demonic spirit. This is often referred to as a power encounter.

#### h. Cautions

- 1) Christians have three enemies: our carnality or fleshly desires, the temptations of the world, and the demonic. Each needs to be taken into account and their interconnectedness recognized. There is great danger in oversimplification, which can lead to an unbalanced attribution of all our problems to the demonic, thereby ignoring or falsely diminishing recognition of our personal responsibility in the areas of fleshly and/or worldly temptations; or the opposite error, ignoring the spiritual dimension and not recognizing and addressing demonic influence.
- 2) Strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW), especially its focus on spiritual mapping and territorial warfare, which include identifying,

naming, ranking, and combating specific demonic activity, has little and tenuous biblical basis and often results in an unhealthy balance by an overemphasis on the demonic.

- 3) Likewise, the practice of identificational repentance may be helpful for Christians in dealing with corporate sins, but there seems to be no biblical warrant for Christians to engage in this practice for the sins committed in a specific geographical area or for an unbelieving people group.

- i. Unresolved

We recognize that demonic forces are at work within various geographical, political, and societal regions or structures; however, we are not in agreement that spiritual mapping is a helpful way to address this reality. There are some indications that it may be a helpful means of discerning how to pray against possible demonic influence or control. It may also be helpful in discerning specific areas of ministry or discipleship which are most needful. After discussion about the practice of spiritual mapping and other practices often associated with it, as discussed in the section on SLSW, the committee is unresolved regarding further advice about this practice.

- B. *Discernment: Manifestations and ministry expressions of the third wave*

We have provided an overview, observations, and evaluation of some of the ways the third wave is expressed in ministry—prayer, prophecy, healing, and spiritual warfare. These ministry areas involve the experience and expression of various manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7, “manifestations of the Spirit” are spiritual gifts. In the third wave this category is broadened to include other experiences that occur under the influence of the Holy Spirit. These include trembling, resting in the Spirit, and receiving “words of knowledge.” Here we provide some specific interaction with manifestations and some general guidelines and ministry expressions.

1. Dangers associated with the manifestations

Those who experience the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit are not free of sin in this life. Thus, in their sinfulness, they may misunderstand and misinterpret the Spirit’s purpose in giving them gifts or manifestations. They may be tempted to abuse the spiritual power they have received or to imagine that they are part of a spiritual elite. Believers with special gifts may engage in manipulation, be puffed up in pride, or wrongfully judge others. They may attempt to “capture” the power of the Spirit as a tool to be used for their own purposes rather than those of God. In the book of Acts, Simon the sorcerer was identified as a believer and was baptized. Yet he sought to gain the power to bestow the Spirit, so that he might use it for his own sinful ends (Acts 8:18ff). Because spiritual gifts and manifestations can so easily be abused, we must be careful in seeking to discern our motives and be open to the correction of others.

Another danger in connection with gifts and manifestations is the denigration of reason. Some pejoratively describe reason as “man’s wisdom.” They then incorrectly assume that spiritual experience always trumps reason. We should view our ability to reason as part of the *imago Dei*

within us. Our reasoning powers have been tainted by sin. However, they have also been redeemed in Christ, and the Spirit of God works through them. Certainly we must submit our thoughts and deductions (as well as our spiritual experiences) to the litmus test of God's Word. But we should make prayerful use of God's gift of reason, not abandon it.

## 2. Discernment of the manifestations

The manifestations we are referring to have provoked a number of questions and some misunderstanding. In part this is due to their experiential and subjective nature. They are usually highly personal and entwined around the emotional and spiritual core of those who experience them. Thus they are resistant to clear definition and objective evaluation. Nevertheless, as Christians, we have an obligation to scrutinize these manifestations carefully.

In Romans 12:2 the apostle Paul tells his readers: "[B]e transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Paul also prays that the Philippians may be able to "discern what is best and may be pure and blameless" (Phil. 1:10). Discernment is necessary for living the Christian life and also for determining whether or not a given manifestation is from the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 Paul instructs us to "test everything." The reason for this testing is so that the church can "hold on to the good" and "avoid every kind of evil" (v. 22). Paul says this in the context of urging the Thessalonian believers not to "put out the Spirit's fire" or "treat prophecies with contempt" (v. 19).

The apostle John likewise commands a "testing" of the spirits (1 John 4:1). He urges his readers to do this testing "because many false prophets have gone out into the world." John does not tell his readers to dismiss any and all new teachings (some of which may have come through prophetic words or visions), but he does present the discernment guideline of having to *acknowledge* from the heart "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (vv. 3-4).

Testing is necessary because of the presence of both spiritual and human purveyors of false teaching. It is also needed because we are capable of misunderstanding, misinterpreting, and misapplying a word that may be from God.

False manifestations may be the result of the working of Satan. Paul reminds us that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). According to John Calvin, "The tendency of all that Scripture teaches concerning the devils [evil spirits] is to put us on our guard against their wiles and machinations . . ." (*Institutes*, 1.14.13). Calvin goes on to warn us that Satan is not only powerful, but also crafty. Scripture identifies Satan as the "father of lies" (John 8:44), the one who "leads the world astray" (Rev. 12:9) and who "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). Jesus warns Peter that Satan has sought permission to "sift [the disciples] like wheat" (Luke 22:31). No doubt he still does that today.

That Satan can be the author of spiritual manifestations is evidenced in the power of the secret arts practiced by Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians (Ex. 7:11-12, 22). Again, the account of the sudden victory by the King of Moab after a human sacrifice (2 Kings 3:27) appears to point to demonic, supernatural intervention. In the Fall 2007 issue of the Calvin Theological Seminary *Forum* we are reminded that "almost all the charismatic gifts claimed by Christians also occur in shamanism or in spiritism . . ." ("The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 7).

Thus we need to be cautious and discerning, but not so cautious that we allow our fears to quench that which the Spirit wants to do in the church today (1 Thess. 5:19). Instead of approaching manifestations in an attitude of fear and doubt, the body of Christ must be ready to discern the Spirit/spirits that it encounters.

### 3. The discernment process

Discernment requires wisdom. Since God promises wisdom to those who ask for it (James 1:5), it is important to seek wisdom in prayer. Indeed, an enriched prayer life is itself an evidence of the working of the same Holy Spirit whose presence may also be evident in gifts and manifestations. As the prayer life of an individual or church becomes more profound, there will at the same time be an increased awareness of sin and of the need for confession and repentance. While there may be exceptions both in Scripture and in church history, it is usually the case that God's blessing and evidence of the Holy Spirit's working are given to those who seek to live in fuller obedience to God and in closer communion with him.

It is essential to seek discernment through prayer. But it is also helpful to have some criteria to use in assessing various manifestations and ministry expressions. The following criteria for discernment are similar to those used by PRMI (Presbyterian and Reformed Ministries International).

a. Does it glorify Christ?—According to John 16:14, the Holy Spirit seeks to bring glory to Christ. So regarding any manifestation in a ministry experience, the question may be asked: Does this glorify Christ? A vision or prophetic word may not explicitly refer to Christ. Thus we may need to ask whether or not anyone or anything other than Christ receiving glory or honor results in the glory of Christ being diminished. (Anything that glorifies the Father or the Holy Spirit will at the same time bring honor to Christ as a member of the Godhead.)

The 1973 report gave the following counsel to those who considered themselves to be neo-Pentecostals:

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

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 478)

b. Is it consistent with Scripture?—In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul says that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Thus a second criterion that should

be applied to manifestations is that of consistency with God's Word. A manifestation need not be explicitly mentioned in Scripture to be consistent with Scripture. However, no work, word, or manifestation of the Holy Spirit will contradict the biblical principles that the Spirit himself inspired. For example, a true manifestation of the Holy Spirit would not encourage pride or cause intentional harm.

If we are to use Scripture as a tool for discerning various expressions of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we must treat it with utmost integrity. We must avoid reading our own ideas into God's Word (*eisege-sis*). And we must not allow the secular, primarily Western worldview of scientific naturalism to blind us to the biblical teaching that the triune God is still at work in the world today.

- c. Do mature believers concur with or confirm what we have experienced?—The church of Christ not only exists to proclaim the gospel and advance God's kingdom. It also exercises the function of mutual edification. "The word of Christ" dwells in us richly as we "teach and admonish one another" (Col. 3:16). As believers we depend upon one another for reproof and correction as well as for confirmation and guidance.

Mature believers are those who "correctly [handle] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). They also have demonstrated that they have the gift of discernment. They have a zeal for Christ's glory. Consequently they can sense when someone or something else is getting glory that rightfully belongs to Christ. Such believers will be honest. They will be concerned to maintain truth and integrity rather than catering to individual feelings and desires.

Any new "spiritual" experience should be confirmed by such mature believers. This is especially important when one has received what appears to be a "word of knowledge" or prophecy that contains a specific instruction. It is wise not to act on such an instruction before it has been confirmed by other Christians.

We should never assume that because we have validated our experiences repeatedly in the past, additional validation is no longer necessary. Through the process of having mature believers confirm an experience (such as a prophetic word), the meaning of that experience may become clear. When others assess our experiences, their assessment will undoubtedly be marked by a certain amount of subjectivity. But as these believers work together, the dangers of being ruled by the subjectivity of any individual will be diminished.

- d. Does it bear good fruit?—In Matthew 7:20 Jesus says concerning false prophets, "By their fruit you will recognize them." The gifts and manifestations of the Spirit should be *gift-wrapped* in the characteristics that the apostle Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). So concerning a manifestation, one needs to ask, "Does it bear good fruit?" Concerning a prophecy or word of knowledge, one will ask a slightly different question: "Does it prove to be true?" (see Deut. 18:21-22).

The nature of fruit is that it takes time to develop. Thus applying this criterion can be difficult. Some prophetic words have a long-term rather than an immediate fulfillment. And some manifestations and ministry experiences may appear to produce little immediate fruit.

However, generally we would expect that prophetic words and other manifestations given by the Holy Spirit today would have the purpose of benefiting today's church. A manifestation or empowerment that is not a prophetic word should produce something visible—such as physical healing—or something more affective or relational—such as peace or reconciliation.

The criteria we have mentioned cannot be applied in the same way in every situation. Here are two real-life examples that show how they might be applied:

- 1) Loraine woke up suddenly from a very deep sleep and sensed very strongly that God was telling her to go to a specific apartment complex. Loraine had not had this experience before, but she had been actively seeking to be more open to God's guidance and the Spirit's leading. She knew about the apartment complex because a close acquaintance lived there. She was aware that it was a place known for drug trafficking and poverty and that illegal activity regularly occurred there. Because her experience was so unusual and yet so clear, the first thing Loraine did was to pray for confirmation and even more clarity. She continued to feel a sense of urgency about going to the apartment complex and was convinced that God had given her a very specific assignment.
  - a) Does the experience glorify Christ? Because Loraine's experience provided her with little instruction, she was not sure how God or Christ would be glorified, except through her willingness to obey. Loraine did not tell a lot of other people about her experience. Thus she was not seeking to attract attention to herself. In fact, the idea of telling others made her uncomfortable.
  - b) Is the experience consistent with biblical revelation and principles? What Loraine sensed she should do did not seem to contradict any biblical teaching or principle. She knew from the Bible that God often does use his people to accomplish his will. The Bible doesn't always reveal how God spoke to those he guided.
  - c) Do mature believers concur with or confirm what we have experienced? Loraine talked to members of her church who were part of a group that prayed together and were familiar with experiences of the Holy Spirit's work. She asked this small group for help in knowing (discerning) what she should do. Loraine had tried to figure out what God wanted her to do and was mentally processing several ministry ideas. Her small group encouraged her not to "get ahead of the Lord." They urged her to go to the apartment complex and see if God made anything clearer for her. She had already made an appointment to talk to the apartment manager. When she met with him on the following day, she did not get any further light on what she should do. She did learn that another church had some kind of ministry in the complex, although the manager didn't know much about it.

- d) Does it bear good fruit? Loraine is not yet aware of any measurable fruit from this assignment from God, other than her own sense of wonder that God would have a specific assignment for her and the personal growth that those around her are seeing in her life.
- 2) When Greg was attending a conference on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and requested prayer, he fell backward (that is, he was “resting in the Spirit”). Greg was not praying for this experience and at that time did not know what it was.
- a) Does the experience glorify Christ? At first, Greg approached the experience very analytically, wanting to make sure that his experience was not simply emotional or psychological. Thus he was not looking for attention to be drawn to himself. He also did not give undue honor to the person who prayed for him. Eventually, he concluded that the experience came from God and praised God for it. In that sense, it glorified Christ.
- b) Is the experience consistent with biblical revelation and principles? Greg knew that Scripture speaks of people falling face down before the Lord. It does not mention falling backward. Yet Greg did not believe that his experience was contrary to Scripture. So it seemed consistent with biblical revelation and principles.
- c) Do mature believers concur with or confirm what we have experienced? Greg had an opportunity to talk with others about his and their experiences almost immediately. Some confirmed what he felt by describing their own experiences. For some, resting in the Spirit was new, and they had entered into the experience with varying degrees of skepticism, but none of them felt uncomfortable, controlled, or manipulated. They all believed that their experiences were genuine.
- d) Does it bear good fruit? Greg felt his experience was specifically for himself, although later he was able to share with and encourage others who were seeking a better understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. As a result of the experience, Greg gained a deeper sense of trust and a greater openness to God’s personal touch and involvement in his life. These appeared to be good fruit.

The above criteria should not be interpreted to mean that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and ministry expression of the third wave are fraught with danger and, therefore, are better avoided. On the contrary, the church should be encouraged to seek all that the Spirit has to offer. The more discernment we show as we receive and make use of the varied gifts of God’s Spirit, the greater our impact will be in advancing God’s kingdom and the more fulfilling we will find the privilege of working together with him.

## VI. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Dr. Al Wolters, chair, and Rev. Ray Vander Kooij, reporter, as representatives of the report for the study committee.

B. That synod provide the following counsel to the churches regarding the contemporary Christian renewal movement known as the third wave:

1. Gratefully accept all the ways in which this movement manifests the work of the Spirit, notably in demonstrating the present reality of the spiritual gifts (charismata) recorded in Scripture and of being filled with the Holy Spirit in different ways and on multiple occasions.
  2. Beware of any tendency to make dramatic emotional or miraculous experiences the center of the Christian life, to underplay the foundational value of the fruit of the Spirit in sanctification, to restrict the things of the Spirit to charismatic phenomena, or to minimize the positive way God uses suffering for our good.
  3. Acknowledge the gift of prophecy today, subject to the overriding authority of Scripture and the discernment of the Christian body.
  4. Beware of any claim to prophecy that goes beyond Scripture, that does not respect the authority of the church leadership, or that fosters dissension rather than loving edification.
  5. Be fervent in prayer and expect God to do great things as a result. Think of prayer as a dialogue, not a monologue, and be attentive to what God is saying as you pray.
  6. Accept with gratitude that God continues to give both physical and emotional healing in response to prayer, whether through the marvelous sophistication of contemporary medical science, or through medically inexplicable ways. At the same time, accept that God in his sovereignty often does not heal and manifests his love in and through suffering and death.
  7. Acknowledge the present reality of the demonic impact on human life and the authority of Jesus Christ to liberate humans from its enslaving and oppressive impact on every area of life. With discernment and caution, engage in a deliverance ministry in the authority and name of Jesus Christ against demonic powers.
  8. Affirm that the apostolic office belongs to the foundational period of the church, giving rise to the canonical writings of the New Testament, and reject all claims of contemporary leaders to the apostolic office.
- C. That synod receive the report of the study committee and recommend it to the churches for study and discussion.
- D. That synod declare the work of the committee completed and dismiss the committee with thanks.

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II  
(majority report)

Amanda Benckhuysen

Gerard L. Dykstra (ex officio)

Jeff Stam

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Ray Vander Kooij, reporter

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## Appendix A

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**Appendix B**  
**Executive Summary of Survey Results**  
**(prepared by Rodger Rice, Ph.D.)**

**I. Survey purpose and background**

- Purpose of the survey was to learn the extent of familiarity, types of experience, and variety of views of third wave Pentecostalism among CRC parish pastors.
- Survey was sent to 684 parish pastors by e-mail; 419 or 61 percent returned it completed.

**II. Familiarity with this topic**

- Familiarity of parish pastors with third wave Pentecostalism: twenty-one percent intimately familiar or a lot of familiarity, 42 percent some familiarity, and 37 percent little or no familiarity.
- Extent of reading 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism: fifty-nine percent say read all or most of it, 11 percent read selected parts, 11 percent scanned it, and 20 percent did not read it at all.
- Helpfulness of 1973 report today: two percent say so helpful that no new guide needed, 45 percent very or somewhat helpful, 14 percent little or not at all helpful, and 39 percent unable to say how helpful (had not read report and/or not familiar with third wave Pentecostalism).
- The greater the extent of pastors' reading the 1973 report, the more helpful they found the report.
- The greater the familiarity of pastors with third wave Pentecostalism, the more helpful they found the report.

**III. Experience with this topic**

- Attendance of conferences, seminars, courses, and workshops on third wave Pentecostalism topics such as inner healing, deliverance ministries, signs and wonders, and spiritual warfare: Thirty-eight percent of pastors attended at least one on these or related topics.
- Use of training materials in their congregations on topics of inner healing, deliverance ministries, signs and wonders, and spiritual warfare: Twenty percent of pastors used such materials in last five years.
- In the last five years, 39 percent of pastors used Alpha course, 17 percent used Freedom in Christ Ministries studies, and 8 percent used Dunamis video courses in their congregations. Almost half (48%) used at least one of these three in last five years in their congregations.
- Alpha course: 70 percent of pastors in Canada used it in last five years, 26 percent of pastors in United States did. Used more in organized churches and Anglo congregations; used most frequently in largest churches.
- Freedom in Christ Ministries studies: Eighteen percent of pastors in Canada used in last five years, 16 percent of pastors in United States. Used most frequently in largest churches.

- Dunamis video courses: Thirteen percent of pastors in Canada used in last five years, 6 percent of pastors in United States.
- Of twenty-five practices associated with third wave Pentecostalism, three—public prayers for healing, private prayers for healing, and prayer ministry teams—took place frequently in last five years in the congregations of nearly half or more of pastors. Each of the other twenty-two practices were said to have taken place frequently in their congregations by fewer than 20 percent of pastors.
- Eighty-four percent of pastors say their congregation frequently experienced at least one of the twenty-five practices in the last five years; 39 percent of pastors say their congregation frequently experienced at least one of twenty-two practices (excluding public and private prayers for healing and prayer ministry teams) in the last five years.
- Over 90 percent of pastors say that mass conversions and shaking of the sanctuary room never happened in their congregation in last five years; 80 percent to 90 percent say same about holy laughter, being slain in the Spirit, public speaking in tongues, holy dancing in the Spirit, interpretation of tongues, and uncontrollable shaking; and 60 percent to 80 percent say same about exorcism of demons, confrontation with demons, miraculous instant healings, and speaking a prophecy.

#### IV. Views on this topic

- Using same list of twenty-five practices associated with third wave Pentecostalism, 90 percent or more of pastors say five are biblically based: public and private prayers for healing, calls to fasting, miraculous instant healings, and other miracles; 80 percent to 90 percent say same about anointing with oil, interpretation of tongues, supernatural demonstrations of God’s power, prayer ministry teams, confrontation with demons, and mass conversions. Sixty percent to 80 percent say same about another nine ranging from speaking a prophecy to free uninhibited praise.
- Holy laughter, uncontrollable shaking, and being slain in the Spirit are thought not to have biblical basis by more than 50 percent of parish pastors.
- Using the list of twenty-five practices, more than 80 percent of pastors say four should be part of the life of the Christian church today: public and private prayers for healing, prayer ministry teams, and calls to fasting. Sixty percent to 80 percent of pastors include other miracles, inner healing, anointing with oil, special service of healing, supernatural demonstrations of God’s power, miraculous instant healings, and praying in the Spirit.
- Whether pastors are asked about how often they occur in their congregations, whether they have a biblical basis, or whether they should be included in the life of the church today, in all three cases, the way in which pastors ordered the twenty-five practices is very similar.

- Level of frequency of the twenty-five practices is much less than level of their support expressed by pastors, gauged either by thought to have biblical basis or by deserving inclusion in life of the church.
- At almost a two-to-one ratio, more pastors agree (51%) than disagree (27%) that they need to guard against the dangers of church members' looking for outward signs and gifts.
- At more than a six-to-one ratio, more pastors agree (79%) than disagree (12%) that they need to guard against the dangers of church members' preoccupation with the spectacular.
- At a three-to-one ratio, more pastors disagree (58%) than agree (19%) that manifestations of the spectacular gifts of the Spirit have resulted in an increase in involvement in the church's ministry to the community.
- At a six-to-one ratio, more pastors disagree (66%) than agree (11%) that manifestations of signs and wonders have resulted in an increase in involvement in the church's ministry to the community.
- At a six-to-one ratio, more pastors disagree (66%) than agree (12%) that influences of third wave Pentecostalism have affected the numerical growth of their congregation.
- While a majority of pastors feel the need to guard their flock against the dangers of certain third wave Pentecostalism practices, a majority of pastors are of the opinion that manifestations and influences of third wave Pentecostalism have not resulted in greater involvement in the church's ministry to the community or numerical growth of the congregation.

## Appendix C

### Models of Protocol for Receiving and Sharing Prophetic Words

#### I. Practical principles for administrating the gift of prophecy in the church

[Excerpted, with permission, from the Student Workbook (pp. 132-33) of the Dunamis Video Course II, "In the Spirit's Power," a program expression of Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International (PRMI).]

The expression of the gift of prophecy has often been problematic for the church. The following observations are made by The Rev. Bob Whittaker, a prominent leader in the charismatic renewal that touched the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the 1960s and 1970s:

In the prayer groups, church services, and large gatherings we need to develop helpful ways of encouraging prophecy, and regulating it in such a way that the good is received and the church is protected from the false.

Over the years I have found some workable ways of administrating prophecy:

1. A helpful approach in large corporate meetings is that any person believing they had a message from the Lord was expected to submit it first to the leaders of the meeting. They were prepared for this by public announcement or by written notice in the bulletin. They would then walk to the front of the meeting place, sit down next to the one appointed to discern prophecies, share what was on their heart, and be told if they could or could not give it to the whole assembly.

This may be helpful in large congregational gatherings. However, in small prayer groups it may quench the Holy Spirit.

2. We developed a trained core of good models through the give and take of small group prayer and share groups. In such an atmosphere persons could try their wings in sharing what God put on their hearts, and receive feedback in a caring atmosphere of mutual encouragement.
3. If someone in a larger gathering should speak in a way that is really "off" or "out of bounds" I would say something like, "Thank you for your desire to contribute, but in the light of thus and so scriptural truth, I think we need to be careful about that or re-examine that." In other words, I raise a question which usually confirms everybody's question. Or I might say, "We need to pray about that."
4. For persons who repeatedly spout off in unwise ways or dominate meetings with "words," we will admonish them gently in private and/or have someone sit near them and pray for them silently to be still.
5. Most prophecies are simply reaffirmations of biblical truth spoken at the guidance of the Holy Spirit into the *kairos* moment. For example: "The Lord is with us," "He loves each one of us very much," "He is telling us not to be afraid and to trust Him to see us through." If the message sounds right and is biblical and in the right spirit, I will respond with an "Amen" or "Thank you, Lord." If it is harmless, but questionable, I will say nothing. Usually, such things are happily overlooked and forgiven.
6. When a prophecy is predictive, or directive, or heavy, or controversial, then something needs to be said or done by the leaders in response. If it obviously requires an immediate response to prevent harm to the body, the leaders can quickly huddle and then publicly respond.

Over the years PRMI has applied many of these practical guidelines by Rev. Whittaker. They have helped us avoid error, but also have encouraged people to grow in experiencing the gift of prophecy.

## II. A Protocol for Receiving Prophetic Words in Public Worship

(From Community CRC of Meadowvale, Mississauga, Ontario. Used with permission.)

### Preamble

The Governing Elders of the Community Christian Reformed Church of Meadowvale re-affirm our commitment to welcoming the Holy Spirit and every expression of all His good gifts into the life of this congregation. Using His word as the standard and His Spirit as our guide, we will grow together in the grace of discerning and interpreting prophetic words. We welcome the prophetic gifts in the great variety of ways and through the holy assortment of people, young and old, through which they come. And we welcome the prophetic word and the prophets that God sends to instruct (1 Cor. 14:31), to strengthen, to encourage, and to comfort us (1 Cor. 14:3).

### Biblical Instructions and Safeguards:

1. We will choose the way of Love. Because one can only ever prophesy “in part” and because we will only ever see “through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13:9-10), we need all the love-gifts of patience, kindness, protection, trust, humility and perseverance. And when we fail one another in the way of love, we will ask for the grace to forgive and be forgiven.
2. We will not be afraid. Though St. John warns us against believing everything we hear, he does so in a context of reassuring us that we are God’s children and that “the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).
3. We will test every word. “Dear friends,” St. John writes, “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God...” (1 John 4:1). John was responding to a question about a specific teaching to which the church was being exposed. Every spirit is tested with this question: Do you acknowledge that Jesus has come in flesh? This test is one safeguard. Furthermore the prophetic word must be in congruence with the text of Scripture. And finally, there must be an internal witness given by the Holy Spirit to those giving oversight that the word is or is not true. Such testing and discernment are not dependent on a full, immediate understanding of the word, only that all the tests have been satisfactorily performed.
4. We will seek God’s peaceable order in receiving prophetic words. Those who are welcomed to this pulpit will be individuals that are trusted in the Body of Christ – known by their work and testimony here or in other parts of the worldwide Church as those “who correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We intend to give the Holy Spirit every freedom to speak even extemporaneously through those he sends to us. Confident that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets,” we will together seek God’s “fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40).
5. We will exhort the Body to “be eager to prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:39). We will not knowingly “put out the Spirit’s fire” or “treat prophecies with contempt” (1 Thess. 5:20). But we will “test everything. Hold onto the good. [And] avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22). Therefore we will continue to encourage the church to bring prophetic words. At times those words will be given to the corporate Body during appropriate times in public worship. The pastor and elders will in those moments test and discern the words and respond publicly. We also recognize that as this gift operates in the Body, individuals will receive prophecies from other individuals. The same safeguard tests are to be followed.

## Conclusion

The prophetic gifts are essential to the vitality of the Community Christian Reformed Church of Meadowvale. Moreover, they can be evangelistic—signs of God’s mercy and grace to those who don’t believe in God among us (1 Cor. 14:24-25). When wholly integrated with all the other spiritual gifts, we grow up strong and mature into Jesus. We will not always recognize His voice. So the Body itself—our relationships being shaped by His Word and Spirit—is also a divine safeguard. We need each other. In our eagerness to have spiritual gifts, may God help us to “excel in the gifts that build up the church” (1 Cor. 14:12).

## Outline of the report

### I. Introduction

### II. Questionable beliefs not adequately addressed by the majority report

#### A. General

1. First questionable belief
2. Second questionable belief

#### B. Prophecy

1. Concerns associated with this belief
2. Evaluation of this belief

#### C. Healing

1. First questionable belief
2. Second questionable belief

#### D. Prayer

#### E. Spiritual warfare

1. First questionable belief
2. Second questionable belief
3. Third questionable belief
4. Further questionable beliefs

### III. Recommendations

#### I. Introduction

Synod 2007 decided to withhold action on the recommendations of both the majority and the minority reports of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism. The grounds for this action were

- a. By not providing sufficient biblical study and theological reflection on key aspects of the third wave movement, both reports fail to adequately fulfill the synodical mandate "to examine the biblical teaching, Reformed confessions, theological implications and pastoral dimensions related to third wave Pentecostalism (spiritual warfare, deliverance ministries, and so forth) with a view to providing advice to the churches" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 608).
- b. Overture 36 raises significant issues and questions that need to be addressed.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 614)

Synod 2007 also decided to recommit the majority report and augment the membership of the majority study committee in order to fulfill the study committee's original mandate and to report to Synod 2009. In its grounds for this decision synod said,

- c. The majority report needs to:
  - 1) Address the issues and questions raised in Overture 36 in the areas of prophecy, prayer, healing, and spiritual warfare by providing adequate biblical study and theological reflection to ground the affirmations, cautions, and recommendations of the report.
  - 2) Incorporate key elements of Report 34 of 1973, and address the relevance of that report to the specifics of the third wave movement.

- 3) Provide a more fully developed biblical-theological rubric (guidelines) to assist pastors and others in the church to exercise discernment when they encounter specific manifestations of the Spirit that could be identified as third wave.

(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 614-15)

The undersigned was the author of Overture 36 to Synod 2007 and was added to the majority committee in that year. I have worked amicably with the other members of the committee and have helped shape parts of their report. At a number of significant points, however, my biblical and theological study has led me to conclusions that differ from those of other members of the committee. Thus I have found it necessary to submit this minority report instead of signing the report of the majority.

Sections I through IV of the majority report provide an informative overview of the third wave movement and explanation of its appeal. I differ with the majority primarily in section V, "Evaluating the third wave movement," and section VI, "Recommendations." This minority report consists of my evaluation of some questionable third wave beliefs that in my view are not adequately addressed in the majority report. The report concludes with recommendations that would modify the recommendations of the majority.

*Note:* To avoid duplication, the bibliographies of this report and the majority report have been combined in Appendix A of the majority report.

## II. Questionable beliefs not adequately addressed by the majority report

### A. General

The Reformed worldview framework set forth in the majority report is valuable and helpful. However, under the "General" heading, the report fails to address two questionable beliefs associated with the third wave.

1. First questionable belief: It is possible for Christians to have the Spirit *within* them for sanctification, but not *upon* them for empowerment. Thus it may be necessary for Christians to ask for an *initiatory* baptism or infilling with the Spirit *subsequent* to conversion that will empower them for successful ministry (and will often be accompanied by manifestations).

Many proponents of the third wave do *not* believe that it is necessary for Christians to ask for an initiatory and empowering baptism with the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion. However, Presbyterian and Reformed Ministries International (PRMI), which identifies itself as third wave, *does* teach that asking for such an initiatory baptism for empowerment may be necessary for believers. In their 1996 book *Receiving the Power: Preparing the Way for the Holy Spirit*, Brad Long and Doug McMurry describe the "perplexing vision" of

whole congregations of Christians who have attained godly character but who manifest no power for ministry. American churches house many sweet, godly people with no effective ministry in bringing others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Too many Christians are content to be only half-filled with the Holy Spirit. They are "filled" (*pleitho*) but not "filled" (*pleiuro*), having "the Spirit upon" but not "the Spirit within," or vice-versa.

Again Long and McMurry write

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a threshold across which we may pass into the works of God, just as Jesus did at age 30. It involves us in a personal

and spiritual crisis in which we give up a life based on rational certainty and surrender our desire for personal control. . . . [W]e long for significance in the Kingdom of God, power to bring the Kingdom here on earth “as it is in heaven. . . .” The power of the Holy Spirit . . . is for those who seriously want to accomplish a work of God, not just a work for God. The world is full of people doing works for God. Many of those are well-intended but badly managed. . . . But now this crisis has brought us to a place where we are tired even of working *for* God. We want to do something that is *of* God.<sup>1</sup>

Since PRMI is influential in the Christian Reformed Church through the workshops of its Dunamis Project, it is important to evaluate this questionable teaching.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

The belief that it is possible for Christians to have the Spirit within them for sanctification, but not upon them for empowerment is of concern because it divides believers into two groups, those empowered by the Holy Spirit and those unempowered. Such a division carries with it the potential for spiritual elitism on the part of those who supposedly are empowered, and feelings of spiritual inferiority on the part of those who supposedly are unempowered.

b. Evaluation of this belief

The PRMI materials appeal to the book of Acts as the primary biblical foundation for their teaching that Christians may need a baptism of the Spirit to be empowered. The 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34) does a good job of setting forth the biblical teaching regarding baptism with the Spirit and filling with the Spirit. The report affirms that all who believe in Christ are baptized with the Holy Spirit at conversion. Then it continues,

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

If then the Holy Spirit is given to all who enter the new age and is the means by which they enter the kingdom, does it follow that there are no new experiences of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers? Of course not. The Holy Spirit continues to reveal his presence in various ways and at times in a decisive manner. The congregation in Jerusalem, which had received the Spirit at Pentecost (or subsequently), experienced

<sup>1</sup> Long and McMurry, 1996:100-1.

another decisive manifestation of the Spirit during a time of persecution (Acts 4:31). But this is called being “filled with the Holy Spirit.” And the Apostle Paul can exhort Christians to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Thus being filled with the Spirit is a repeatable event. As believers who live under the new covenant, they must seek to be continually filled with the Spirit.

(Acts of Synod 1973, pp. 437-38)

As Report 34 shows, Scripture does not support the idea that believers can have the Holy Spirit within them for sanctification and not have the Holy Spirit upon them for empowered ministry. It is simply not the case that unless one has a second experience of baptism or infilling of the Spirit, separate from conversion, one will have “no spiritual power to set people free from bondage or fulfill the task of evangelism and making disciples.” It is also misleading to assert that when one has had this experience, one will have power to do the works of God as never before. When believers receive the gift of the Spirit at their conversion, they at the same time receive the gifts and the power of the Spirit. And they must constantly seek to be filled with the Spirit. But having the gifts of the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit do not guarantee evangelistic success. As Donald Macleod has written,

In order to have success the Spirit must come not only on the witness but also on the world, convincing it of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. No experience which is personal to the preacher can guarantee this divine cooperation. A man may be the most spiritual person on earth and yet know little blessing on his evangelistic labors. It was so with Isaiah and Jeremiah and even with our Lord himself. He had the Spirit without measure and yet at the close of His ministry all His converts could be gathered in one room.<sup>2</sup>

The third wave emphasis on being filled with the Holy Spirit should be welcomed. But the PRMI teaching that Christians must sometimes seek an *initial* infilling or baptism with the Holy Spirit for empowerment that is separable from their conversion cannot be endorsed.

2. Second questionable belief: Various psycho-physical experiences, often referred to as “manifestations,” are caused by the Holy Spirit and may even be called “signs and wonders” of the Spirit. These include trembling and shaking, falling (forward or more commonly backward), running, jumping, mourning, laughter, and spiritual “drunkenness.”

In 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul writes, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” Then he lists a series of spiritual gifts. In third wave and other charismatic literature, “manifestations” are not only spiritual gifts but also what have been termed “psycho-physical experiences.”<sup>3</sup>

These experiences and behaviors have appeared at other times in church history. The Cane Ridge revival that occurred in Kentucky in the early 1800s was marked by psycho-physical phenomena. Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924), sometimes called the “Trance Evangelist,” had people “falling under the power” during her ministry in the 1880s. Various phenomena, including falling, have been associated with the

<sup>2</sup> Macleod, 1986:55.

<sup>3</sup> Kelsey, 1978:43; Dobson 1986.

ministries of prominent “first wave” Pentecostal evangelists. The falling phenomenon was transferred from Kathryn Kuhlman to “second wave” (neo-Pentecostal) charismatic ministries in the 1970s, including Roman Catholic healing ministries.

All of the phenomena listed above have been present in the Vineyard and other third wave circles. They are associated with baptism and/or empowerment with the Holy Spirit and with healing ministry.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

The belief that these experiences are caused by the Holy Spirit is of concern because it may lead people to focus primarily on “manifestations” as evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

b. Evaluation of this belief

1) Does the Bible attribute these experiences to the Holy Spirit?

It is certainly *possible* that the Holy Spirit is giving psycho-physical experiences to people today that are *not* attributed to him in Scripture. But if the Holy Spirit is edifying the church through psycho-physical phenomena, it seems more likely that they would be phenomena that *are* attributed to him in Scripture. With this in mind, let us review what Scripture says regarding some of the psycho-physical phenomena that are common in the third wave movement.

The Bible never associates literal trembling or shaking with the work of the Holy Spirit, nor is it a sign of blessing. The Bible also never attributes running or jumping to the work of the Holy Spirit. (The only exception might be Elijah’s running in 1 Kings 18:46.) In Acts 3:8 the lame man who has been healed by Peter and John responds by “walking and jumping, and praising God.” But it appears that this was a natural, human response to a supernatural healing.

Those who fall forward in Scripture do so in response to an awesome revelation of God’s majesty (Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 8:17-18; Matt. 17:6; Rev. 1:17). In such instances, no mention is made of the operation of the Holy Spirit. There seems to be no case in Scripture where a person is prayed for and falls backward. Perhaps the closest parallel is Peter’s rooftop experience of going into a trance (Acts 10:10). However, Peter was not being prayed for, nor does Luke mention that he fell down backward.

Mourning may be a human response to the Spirit’s work of conviction of sin. But in the Bible, it is not said to be caused directly by the Holy Spirit. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and obviously joy may at times be expressed in laughter. But joy is not the same as uncontrollable laughter that has no apparent cause (“holy laughter”). Such laughter never appears in Scripture, nor is it attributed to the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual “drunkenness” is not found in Scripture. When the disciples were accused of drunkenness on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13), that was because they were speaking languages unfamiliar to many of their listeners. There is no evidence in the text that they were behaving like those who have had too much to drink.

None of the psycho-physical experiences we are considering are called “signs and wonders” in Scripture. In the New Testament, the nature of the “signs and wonders” referred to is often not specified. But they appear to be primarily miracles of healing and exorcisms (John 4:48; Acts 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:13; 14:3; 15:12).

- 2) In light of biblical revelation and principles, is it likely that these experiences are caused by the Holy Spirit?

What follows is an attempt to evaluate two of the psycho-physical phenomena we have been considering by seeking to answer this question.

- a) Falling backward

Given that those who fall backward may be (and have been) seriously injured<sup>4</sup> and that “catchers” must be employed to keep this from happening, this phenomenon seems more likely to have a psychological cause and less likely to be caused by the Holy Spirit.

- b) Spiritual “drunkenness”

Drunkenness caused by overindulging in alcohol is often condemned in Scripture (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3). And part of the fruit of the Spirit is “self-control.” Thus it seems unlikely that the slurring of speech and loss of motor control associated with spiritual “drunkenness” would be caused by the Holy Spirit.

- 3) Do aspects of these experiences or the circumstances in which they occur help in determining their cause?

Those familiar with psycho-physical phenomena in the third wave report the following:

- These experiences sometimes happen to people who are not expecting them to happen or to those who do not want to experience them. This is often viewed as evidence that the experiences are caused by the Holy Spirit. However, a charismatic writer on the falling phenomenon notes that those who do not want to fall may nevertheless fall as a result of auto-suggestion.<sup>5</sup>
- Those who have these experiences sometimes say they have visions or are blessed with significant emotional healing or spiritual renewal while having these experiences. The spiritual blessings associated with the experiences may be evidence that the experiences themselves are produced by the Holy Spirit. Or the experiences may be a human, psychological response to the working of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> MacNutt (1990:170-71) records an instance early in his ministry when a woman “went down and hit the back of her head with a horrendous cracking noise.” Although the woman got up, she was later hospitalized with a concussion. MacNutt also reports that in 1989 a 67-year-old woman was hurt when she fell over backward during a healing service conducted by evangelists Charles and Francis Hunter. She spent two months in the hospital, and a jury ordered the Hunters to pay her \$300,000.

<sup>5</sup> Dobson, 1986:42.

- In some cases, unbelievers have had these experiences without repenting of their sins or coming to faith in Christ.<sup>6</sup> This would seem to point to a purely psychological origin for at least some of the experiences.
- Certain personality types appear to be more prone to have these experiences. Others are labeled “HTR” (“hard to receive”).<sup>7</sup> This may indicate that the experiences have a psychological rather than a supernatural cause.

Often those attending meetings and events are expecting that the falling phenomenon or “holy laughter” will take place and desire these experiences for themselves. Healing ministers sometimes prepare people by explaining the falling phenomenon and other “manifestations” ahead of time. “Catchers” are positioned behind those being prayed for by these ministers. Those who see others fall are often more likely to fall themselves. All of these factors point to a psychological cause for many instances of the falling phenomenon and other phenomena.

Some ministries become known for particular phenomena. Trembling and shaking was associated with the ministry of John Wimber. Holy laughter and spiritual drunkenness have been associated with the Word Faith movement (which is infected with serious theological error<sup>8</sup>), the ministry of Rodney Howard-Browne, and the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. Such connections make it seem likely that expectations, imitation, and the power of suggestion are often at work in producing these phenomena.

#### 4) Conclusion

The Holy Spirit may bless those subject to unusual psycho-physical experiences with spiritual and emotional renewal, even though the experiences themselves have a psychological cause. For such blessings of the Spirit we should give thanks to God.

As we reflect on the meaning of psycho-physical experiences, the following points should be kept in mind:

- a) Being filled with the Holy Spirit should not be confused with having such experiences. One may be filled with the Holy Spirit without having such experiences. One may have such experiences without being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- b) Our focus should not be on having such experiences, but on being filled with the Holy Spirit and having the gifts and fruit of the Spirit, so that we may bring glory to Jesus Christ.

#### B. Prophecy

The majority report accepts the third wave understanding of the New Testament gift of prophecy. This understanding, however, is very much open to question.

<sup>6</sup> Beverley, 1995:96-98.

<sup>7</sup> MacNutt, 1990:135-40; Beverley, 1995:74; Mullen, 2000:77.

<sup>8</sup> Charismatic theologians Tom Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright speak of Word Faith teaching as heresy (Smail, et. al. 1994:73-92).

Questionable belief: The New Testament gift of prophecy is “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.”<sup>9</sup> God spontaneously brings to a person’s mind a revelation (i.e., a truth of Scripture or an insight about a person or congregation that is needed at that particular time). Prophecy is a *fallible* human report of such a divine revelation.

Wayne Grudem is probably the most scholarly exponent of the third wave understanding of prophecy. In his view, the revelations that God spontaneously brings to mind are generally related to the specific situation of a congregation or an individual. God brings to mind a truth of Scripture or an insight about a person or congregation that is needed at that particular time. Prophecy is a report in human words of such a divine revelation. As such, it is fallible. Grudem believes that what people in the charismatic movement call “words of knowledge” are actually prophecies.

Grudem distinguishes prophecy from teaching. In contrast to New Testament prophecy, he says that teaching in the New Testament is not based on receiving a revelation. Rather, teaching involves interpreting and applying Scripture (or in New Testament times, the “authoritative teachings of Jesus and the apostles”).

Grudem believes that potentially anyone in the congregation can prophesy. He says that prophecy should be encouraged but also needs to be regulated. Because prophecies are fallible, they need to be tested and weighed on the basis of Scripture. All members of the congregation, and especially its leaders, are responsible for carrying out this testing.

#### 1. Concerns associated with this belief

This belief is of concern because it involves a misunderstanding of the nature of prophecy in the New Testament. It can also result in confusion and disillusionment when misleading or false statements are presented as modern-day “words from God.”

#### 2. Evaluation of this belief

##### a. The prominence of prophecy in the New Testament

In evaluating this understanding of prophecy, it may be helpful to begin by reviewing the prominence of prophets and prophecy in the New Testament.

1 Thessalonians 5:20 is the earliest reference to the gift of prophecy in the New Testament. This verse shows that prophecy was a part of the life of a newly planted church from its founding. Paul deemed prophecy sufficiently important to be concerned about it being treated with contempt. Some years later, when Paul wrote to the church in Rome, a church he had never visited, he listed various gifts and how they should be used. The first gift he mentions is prophesying (Rom. 12:6), which he assumes will be present in the Roman church. The importance of the gift of prophecy is confirmed by what Paul says about it in 1 Corinthians 12-14. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 he lists prophets as second only to apostles. Again, in 1 Corinthians 14:1 he writes, “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.” In Ephesians too New Testament prophets are listed alongside apostles (Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11).

<sup>9</sup> Grudem, 1994:1049, italics his.

Prophets appear frequently in the book of Acts. They include Agabus and other prophets from Jerusalem (11:27-28; 21:10-11), the prophets at Antioch (13:1), Judas and Silas (15:32), and the four unmarried daughters of Philip the evangelist (21:8-9). These prophets warn the church and give guidance to Christian leaders. They also encourage (or exhort) and strengthen their fellow believers.

The book of Revelation is itself a written prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). The prophets it mentions are evidently not just Old Testament but also New Testament prophets.<sup>10</sup> “Saints and apostles and prophets” rejoice over the fall of Babylon in 18:20. According to 22:6, “The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.” And in 22:9 the angel reminds John, “I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book.”

b. The definition of New Testament prophecy

Third wave writers make a fairly sharp distinction between prophecy in the Old Testament and prophecy in the New Testament. Grudem says that Old Testament prophets spoke “God’s very words.” Because of that, their words had “absolute divine authority.” He says that New Testament prophets, by contrast, speak “merely human words to report something God brings to mind.” Thus the words of New Testament prophets are not the word of God. Rather, they are fallible and need to be weighed and evaluated.

This distinction between Old and New Testament prophecy is questionable. The New Testament church gained its understanding of prophecy from the Old Testament. This can be seen in the case of the prophet Agabus, who according to Luke performs a symbolic action, like an Old Testament prophet, and prefaces his message with the words, “Thus says the Holy Spirit,” much as an Old Testament prophet would (Acts 21:10-11). As commentator Gordon Fee writes,

Paul’s understanding—as well as that of the other NT writers—was thoroughly conditioned by his own history in Judaism. The prophet was a person who spoke to God’s people under the inspiration of the Spirit. The “inspired utterance” came by revelation and announced judgment (usually) or salvation. . . . Often the word spoken had a futuristic element, so in that sense [the prophets] also came to be seen as “predictors”; but that was only one element, and not necessarily the crucial one.<sup>11</sup>

Grudem does seem to be correct in making a distinction between New Testament prophecy and the New Testament gift of teaching. As he notes, prophecy appears to be based on a revelation of some kind given directly to the prophet (1 Cor. 14:30; cf. also Eph. 3:5). Teaching, by contrast, is never said to be based on a revelation given directly to the teacher. Rather, New Testament teaching is based on truth that has been revealed to others. That truth may consist of the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the received teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Thus, what the New Testament calls teaching is more or less the same

<sup>10</sup> Beale, 1999:546.

<sup>11</sup> Fee, 1987:595; see also Aune, 1983:195; Hilber, 1994:243-58.

as what we call preaching.<sup>12</sup> Report 34 would appear to be incorrect when it says that preaching is prophecy.<sup>13</sup>

c. Was New Testament prophecy fallible?

Grudem and other third wave writers argue that New Testament prophecy was fallible on the following grounds: (1) Paul requires that prophecy should be evaluated (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 14:29); (2) Paul allows prophecies to be lost (1 Cor. 14:30); (3) Paul implies that there was no word of God from the Corinthian prophets (1 Cor. 14:36); (4) the prophets at Corinth appear to have less authority than an apostle (1 Cor. 14:37-38); (5) Paul appears to disobey the prophecy given in Acts 21:4; (6) the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21:11 appears to contain errors.<sup>14</sup>

We will take these points up one by one:

- 1) Paul's requirement that prophecy should be evaluated need not imply that true prophecy in the New Testament was fallible. It need only imply that true prophecy had to be distinguished from false prophecy. In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Bruce writes: "The gift of prophecy lent itself to imitation, and it was important that counterfeit prophets should be detected."<sup>15</sup> In 1 Corinthians 14:29 Paul says, "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (literally, "the others should discern [*diakrinet san*]"). It seems likely that the others who discern are especially those with the gift of discerning spirits. As in 12:10, they must discern "the spirits," that is, the spirits of the prophets (see v. 32). They must determine whether or not the prophets are speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) As Paul gives instructions regarding prophets speaking during church gatherings, in 1 Corinthians 14:30 he writes, "And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop." Grudem understands this to mean that "the first prophet's prophecy would be intentionally neglected, and probably never heard by the church."<sup>16</sup> But intentional neglect need not be involved. Paul may believe that if the Spirit gives a revelation during a church gathering, that is a signal that God now wants to convey a message through the prophet who has just received the revelation. It is at the same time a signal that the first prophet's message is complete.
- 3) Paul's statement need not be taken to mean that there was no word of God coming through the Corinthian prophets. The NIV translation of 1 Corinthians 14:36, "Did the word of God originate with you?" is a good translation. Paul is being sarcastic, asking the Corinthians if the word of God (the gospel of Christ) originated with

<sup>12</sup> Grudem, 2000:113-24.

<sup>13</sup> "Report, 34: Neo-Pentecostalism." *Acts of Synod 1973*: 451.

<sup>14</sup> Grudem, 2000:51-87.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce, 1982:125-26.

<sup>16</sup> Grudem, 2000:64.

them, or if they are “the fountainhead from which all Christian truth derives” (Fee).<sup>17</sup>

- 4) In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul insists that the prophets at Corinth acknowledge that what he is writing is the Lord’s command. He says that anyone who thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted will demonstrate the reality of his gift by making such an acknowledgment. But that need not imply that true prophets at Corinth spoke prophecies that were fallible.
- 5) In Acts 21:4 Luke says that “through the Spirit” disciples at Tyre “urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.” Paul went anyway. Does this mean that Paul considered their prophecy fallible? Longenecker gives a more likely interpretation:

Probably . . . we should understand the preposition *dia* (“through”) as meaning that the Spirit’s message was the occasion for the believers’ concern rather than that their trying to dissuade Paul was directly inspired by the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

- 6) The prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21:10-11 is referred to by Grudem and others as an example of a prophecy that includes mistakes. Luke writes,

After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’”

When this is compared with Luke’s account of Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem, there appear to be some inconsistencies. In Acts 21:27-33, the Jews seize Paul in the temple, drag him out of the temple and then try to kill him. The commander of the Roman troops takes officers and soldiers and runs down to the crowd. Then the rioters stop beating Paul, and the commander arrests him and orders him to be bound with two chains. Grudem sees “two competing factors” in this passage. One is the introductory phrase Agabus uses: “The Holy Spirit says . . .” or literally, “Thus says the Holy Spirit. . . .” This, says Grudem, “suggests an attempt to speak like the Old Testament prophets, who said, ‘Thus says the Lord. . . .’” The other factor is the fact that Agabus makes two mistakes in his prophecy: (a) The Jews did not bind Paul, the Romans did; and (b) the Jews didn’t hand Paul over to the Romans, rather the commander came and arrested him. According to Grudem, these mistakes were serious enough to have resulted in the condemnation of an Old Testament prophet.<sup>19</sup>

Grudem then says,

[T]he best solution is to say that Agabus had a “revelation” from the Holy Spirit concerning what would happen to Paul in Jerusalem, and gave a prophecy which included his own interpretation of this revelation (and therefore some mistakes in the exact details). Luke then

<sup>17</sup> Fee, 1987:710.

<sup>18</sup> Longenecker, 1981:516.

<sup>19</sup> Grudem, 2000:78.

recorded Agabus's prophecy exactly, and recorded the subsequent events exactly, even including those aspects of the events which showed Agabus to be slightly wrong at some points.<sup>20</sup>

The difficulty that results from this interpretation is Agabus's introductory phrase, "Thus says the Holy Spirit. . . ." What are we to make of the fact that Agabus attributes his prophetic mistakes to the Holy Spirit? Grudem gives three possible interpretations, but says he prefers the view that the introductory phrase "means here not that the very words of the prophecy were from the Holy Spirit but only that the content generally had been revealed by the Holy Spirit."<sup>21</sup>

In evaluating Grudem's interpretation of these verses in Acts, we must ask whether Grudem and other modern commentators have a greater concern for precision than the Holy Spirit does. Grudem is concerned that Agabus speaks of Paul being handed over to the Romans when that is not literally what happened. But in Acts 28:17 Luke presents Paul as speaking in the same way. Speaking to Jewish leaders in Rome, Paul says, "I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans," (literally, "A prisoner from Jerusalem I was handed over into the hands of the Romans"). Strictly speaking, one might argue that Paul is being inaccurate here, since he was saved from the Jews by the Romans. However, Clowney appears to be on the right track when he writes,

Neither the prophecy of Agabus nor the report of Paul is in the least mistaken. The Jews seized Paul and may well have tied him—with his own belt for that matter. They also handed him over to the Romans, however reluctantly. Without the Jews, he would never have been delivered to the Romans.<sup>22</sup>

Clowney makes the further point (made by several commentators) that both through his report of the prophecy of Agabus and through his report of Paul's account of his arrest, Luke is probably highlighting the parallel between Jesus, who was "handed over to the Gentiles" (Luke 18:32), and Paul who was handed over to the Gentiles (Acts 21:11) or the Romans (Acts 28:17).<sup>23</sup>

In summary, none of the third wave arguments purporting to show the fallibility of New Testament prophecy are particularly persuasive or conclusive.

d. Are there prophets in the church today?

If New Testament prophets, like their Old Testament counterparts, "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21), are such prophets present in the church today? If such prophets exist, their words potentially would have the same authority as the words of Scripture itself.<sup>24</sup> However, even within the New Testament

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 82; see also 83.

<sup>22</sup> Clowney, 1995:267; see also Saucy, 1996:231.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* See also Longenecker, 1981:515; Barrett, 1998:1239.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the way the writings of Ellen G. White function within the Seventh Day Adventist Church: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

there is evidence that the role of prophets in the church may have been intended to be temporary rather than permanent.

In Ephesians 3 Paul talks about “the mystery of Christ”—the mystery “that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Jesus Christ.” In verse 5 he says that this mystery “was not made known to [people] in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.” So the prophets of the New Testament, along with the apostles, were recipients of this key revelation regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles as part of the people of God. Perhaps because of their role in receiving and communicating such revelations, Paul describes the church in Ephesians 2:20 as being “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Once the foundation of a building has been laid, the superstructure can be built upon it. Today most Christians recognize that because of their foundational role, we no longer have apostles in the church. The same may also be true for prophets. While they had great prominence in the early church, the time may have come when their work of receiving and conveying revelation was finished and the spiritual gift of prophecy was no longer given.

Certainly we see little evidence in the church today of people who on the basis of an extra-biblical revelation they have received can say with authority, “Thus says the Holy Spirit,” or “Thus says the Lord.” It is true that some associated with the third wave have claimed to have the gift of prophecy. But the exercise of this gift by some of the more prominent third wave “prophets” does not inspire much confidence that they are truly gifted by the Lord.<sup>25</sup>

#### e. Conclusion

The third wave view that New Testament prophecy differs substantially from its Old Testament counterpart is difficult to sustain on the basis of the New Testament evidence. The model of prophets who receive revelation from God and then fallibly and imperfectly report it is a model that fits with the exercise of “prophecy” in third wave circles. But it is not easy to find this model in the New Testament itself.

### C. *Healing*

The majority report’s observations and evaluation under the heading “Healing” are helpful. But some questionable third wave beliefs are not dealt with. And while some of the dangers of inner healing techniques are noted, a more complete discussion of these dangers is necessary.

1. First questionable belief: There is a high-degree of continuity between the healing ministries of Jesus and the apostles and our healing ministries today. Thus Christians should expect to see and perform many “signs and wonders” of miraculous healing today.

This belief appears in many of the works by John Wimber. He taught that Jesus and the apostles are direct models for the church’s ministry today. We are to engage in “power evangelism” as they did, “combining the

<sup>25</sup> Beverley, 1995:121-47; Oropeza, 1995:51-81.

proclamation with the demonstration of the gospel” through the use of spiritual gifts to do signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Charles Kraft echoes this teaching, as does C. Peter Wagner.<sup>27</sup> Some third wave writers (e.g., Deere) seem to recognize some degree of discontinuity between the ministry of Jesus and the apostles and our ministries today. However the concessions they are willing to make in this regard are quite limited.<sup>28</sup>

a. Concerns associated with this belief

Most Christians believe that God does heal people miraculously in answer to prayer. But if one adopts the third wave belief that Jesus and the apostles are models for our ministries today, then one will expect to see dramatic miracles (“signs and wonders”) of healing on a regular basis. And if such miracles do not occur, disappointment and disillusionment may result. The third wave belief regarding “signs and wonders” has also led to extravagant claims of divine healing that have subsequently been discredited.<sup>29</sup>

b. Evaluation of this belief

1) The earthly ministry of Jesus and his disciples

Because Jesus was the Messiah promised by God in the Old Testament, his earthly ministry was unique. He performed miracles as signs of the presence of God’s saving rule (God’s kingdom), which had arrived with his coming. In describing Jesus’ ministry, the writers of the Gospels highlight the fact that he taught and acted with authority (Mark 1:22, 27). This authority was evidently related to his identity as the Messiah, God’s promised Savior-King. Jesus demonstrated his authority as he healed people, usually instantaneously, by issuing a command, much as a centurion commands those under him (Matt. 8:8-9). Jesus claimed that he had authority to forgive sins, and proved that by enabling a paralyzed man to walk (Mark 2:1-2). He also showed his authority over the creation by performing so-called nature miracles—multiplying loaves and fish, walking on water, and stilling a storm.

In the course of his ministry, Jesus called twelve disciples to be with him, their number corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. He “gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1, 2; see also Matt. 10:1). The Twelve were an extension of Jesus’ own ministry. They were given authority, although not the unique authority of Jesus himself. As Meier writes, “The mission of the Twelve was something more than a piece of missionary strategy; it was one more prophetic-symbolic step toward the reconstitution of eschatological Israel.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Wimber, 1986:xix-xx; 1987:xviii, 40, 41; according to Turner, 1998:338-39, Wimber later changed his mind about using Jesus and the apostles as direct models for healing today.

<sup>27</sup> Kraft, 1992:86; see also Williams, 1993:175-91; Wagner, 1996:132.

<sup>28</sup> Deere, 1993:66-67, 114.

<sup>29</sup> Beverley, 1995:103-20; Walker, 1994:117; see also Poloma, 2003:167-68, on claims regarding fillings in teeth being turned to gold.

<sup>30</sup> Meier, 2001:163; see also Smedes, 1992:29-33.

Luke tells us that Jesus also “appointed seventy-two [or seventy] others, and sent them two-by-two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go” (Luke 10:1). Again, the seventy-two appear to have extended Jesus’ earthly ministry. When they entered a town and were welcomed, they were to heal the sick who were there and tell the people, “The kingdom of God is near you” (Luke 10:8-9).

In the Great Commission Jesus told his disciples to teach the nations to obey everything he had commanded them (Matt. 28:19). Because of that, third wave authors argue that the instructions Jesus gave to the twelve disciples and the seventy-two are applicable to the church today. But as D.A. Carson notes, “The application of the text [containing these instructions] to all Christians is fraught with difficulties.”<sup>31</sup> Jesus barred the Twelve from going to the Gentiles or the Samaritans. He sent the seventy-two “two by two ahead of him.” He required them not to “take a purse or bag or sandals” and not to greet anyone on the road. Most would agree that these instructions are not binding on believers today. How then can we be sure that believers today are called to heal the sick in the same way that these disciples did? Ridderbos writes as follows about the mission of the Twelve:

There is not yet any question of a permanent office. Their apostolate—as well as that of the seventy (-two) in Luke 10—is still of a temporary nature. From this it follows that the instructions given by Jesus [just as those to the seventy (-two) later] refer to this particular charge and need not have a permanent and universally valid significance.<sup>32</sup>

Another text third wave writers see as showing the continuity between the earthly ministry of Jesus and our ministries today is John 14:12. There Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” According to third wave authors Greig and Springer, in this verse “Jesus linked the miraculous works He did with the ongoing miraculous works He would do through anyone who believes in Him in the postresurrection period.”<sup>33</sup> Greig and Springer do not really explain in what sense these postresurrection works done by believers are greater than those done by Jesus. D.A. Carson points out that the “greater things” that the believer will do cannot simply be “*more spectacular* works.” There is no evidence that believers have performed more spectacular miracles than those of Jesus. So in what sense are the “greater things” greater? Carson suggests that they are greater because of the *time* in which they are done: they are accomplished after Jesus’ crucifixion, his resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They “will therefore more immediately and truly reveal the Son.”<sup>34</sup> Greig and Springer argue that the greater things are

<sup>31</sup> Carson, 1992:104.

<sup>32</sup> Ridderbos, 1962:370-71.

<sup>33</sup> Greig and Springer, 1993:393-95.

<sup>34</sup> Carson, 1991:496.

primarily miracles. But as Carson points out, they may well include other works besides miracles.<sup>35</sup> The verse does not necessarily mean that every believer (or even many believers) will have the ability to perform miraculous healings.

2) The ministries of the apostles and others in the book of Acts

In Acts Luke describes how the apostles and others were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The twelve apostles especially were empowered to be Christ's witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As part of this apostolic witness, Peter and John healed a man crippled from birth instantaneously by invoking the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 3). The apostles continued to perform many miraculous signs and wonders among the people (Acts 2:43; 5:12). "People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them." All of those brought for healing were healed (Acts 5:15-16).

Eventually, because some of the needy widows were not being adequately cared for, seven men known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom were chosen to carry out this ministry (Acts 6:1-6). Two of the Seven showed themselves to be remarkably gifted. Stephen did "great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). Later Philip went to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah and the good news of the kingdom. He too did miraculous signs, including casting out demons and healing people who were paralyzed and crippled (Acts 8:5-13).

Luke then describes how a zealous Jew named Saul of Tarsus had a vision of the risen Christ and was dramatically converted. Saul (or Paul) was eventually called to engage in mission work among Jews and Gentiles. In Lystra a man lame from birth was healed instantaneously when Paul saw that he had faith to be healed (Acts 14:8-10). On his second missionary journey, Paul commanded a spirit to leave a slave girl "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:16-18). Luke reports that in Ephesus "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:11-12). In 2 Corinthians 12:12 Paul speaks of the presence of the miraculous in his ministry. He writes, "The things [literally, "the signs"] that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance" (see also Rom. 15:18-19).

As eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection, the apostles (including Paul) had a unique and foundational position in the history of redemption. Because of that, it is a mistake to conclude that the signs and wonders that were part of their ministry should *necessarily* be part of our ministries today. It is true that in the book of Acts, people other than the apostles perform miracles, notably, Stephen and Philip. Both of them, however, were part of the seven, who appear

<sup>35</sup> Carson, 1992:108-10.

to have served a unique role as assistants to the apostles. Thus the ministries of Stephen and Philip, like those of the apostles, do not necessarily provide a pattern for our ministries today.

### 3) Healing in the New Testament letters

It is striking that the New Testament letters have relatively little to say about miraculous healing. In Galatians 3:5 Paul asks the following rhetorical question: “Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” The implication seems to be that God is continuing to work miracles in the churches in Galatia, although that is not entirely clear. In 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 Paul lists “gifts of healings” and “workings of miracles” among the gifts given by the Holy Spirit (see also vv. 28 and 30). But we have no information as to how these gifts actually functioned within the church.

James, in chapter 5:14-15, gives the following instruction,

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

This text cannot mean that in every single case prayer will make the sick person well. Moo’s interpretation may be correct: “Prayer for healing offered in the confidence that God will answer that prayer *does* bring healing; but only when it is God’s will to heal will that faith, itself a gift of God, be present.”<sup>36</sup>

There is evidence in the Pauline letters that even for Paul at some points in his ministry, healing was not a foregone conclusion. Some of his coworkers who were sick were not immediately healed. Timothy had a problem with his stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). Trophimus was too sick to come with Paul from Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). Epaphroditis almost died of an illness, and Paul attributed his recovery to the mercy of God (Phil. 2:27).

It might be argued that because the New Testament letters were written to address specific situations, miraculous healing is mentioned infrequently simply because it was not controversial. Be that as it may, these letters provide little positive evidence that “signs and wonders” should be a regular part of our ministries today.

### 4) The practice of healing ministry in the third wave

Somewhat surprisingly, the *practice* of healing ministry within the third wave is not necessarily consistent with the stated *belief* that we should follow the example of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus and the apostles did not pray for healing. Rather, they touched the afflicted person or spoke a word, and the person was healed. John Wimber sometimes spoke words of command to accomplish healing.<sup>37</sup> But more commonly he prayed that the sick might be healed, and that is now the usual third wave practice. Thus third wave ministry more

<sup>36</sup> Moo, 2000:245.

<sup>37</sup> Wimber, 1987:208-10.

closely resembles the kind of ministry described in James 5 than it does the ministries of Jesus and the apostles.

In addition, the healings recorded in the Gospels and the book of Acts are nearly all instantaneous. Healings accomplished through third wave ministries are often gradual rather than instantaneous.<sup>38</sup> According to the New Testament, on some occasions at least, Jesus and the apostles healed everyone who came to them (Matt. 8:16; Acts 5:16). In third wave ministries of healing, some are said to be healed, but others see little or no improvement in their condition. Turner reports that in praying for children with Down syndrome, John Wimber saw improvement "in only one in about two hundred cases." Wimber claimed "between 3 percent and 8 percent success in prayer for different types of blindness."<sup>39</sup> At least some of the healings claimed by the third wave are of psychosomatic illnesses.<sup>40</sup> And a number of claims of healing, when examined closely, have not been verified.<sup>41</sup>

## 5) Conclusion

In summary, few Christians would deny that God does heal people in extraordinary and miraculous ways and that praying for healing according to the model in James 5 is appropriate. But the belief that we should follow the example of Jesus and the apostles by performing signs and wonders of healing has little biblical support. Nor does it appear that the actual practice of healing ministry in the third wave measures up to this belief.

2. Second questionable belief: Inner healing is a safe, effective process of guided prayer, in which (a) repressed memories are brought to consciousness and experienced, and (b) Jesus is visualized as being present in the memory and speaking and acting so as to heal the inner wounds.

Inner healers believe that memories of being wounded early in life or even before birth are often repressed and buried in the unconscious mind. They are convinced that such memories are a significant cause of problems such as depression, defensiveness, or a performance orientation. Although the very existence of repressed memories has been the subject of intense debate, here we will focus not on the reality of such memories, but rather on the process by which inner healers claim to heal them.

After praying for the Holy Spirit's leading, inner healers may direct those seeking healing to relax, close their eyes, and think back to significant memories in their childhood. Brad Long and Cindy Strickler of PRMI encourage praying in tongues during this time as "an effective way of allowing the Spirit to dredge up stuff from the unconscious."<sup>42</sup> Sometimes the prayer counselor may receive and share a "word of knowledge" that brings a repressed memory to consciousness. The memory may come in the form of an image, including the image of a child ("the inner child of the past"). Once a painful memory has been retrieved, inner healers say that the Holy Spirit can heal that memory as the person visualizes Jesus

<sup>38</sup> F. MacNutt, 1977:27; Lewis, 1989:21-43 (with references to degrees of healing).

<sup>39</sup> Turner, 1998:335-36.

<sup>40</sup> Walker, 1994:117.

<sup>41</sup> Beverley, 1995:103-20; Walker, 1994:117; Poloma, 2003:167-68.

<sup>42</sup> Long and Strickler, 2001:131.

speaking and acting in the situation that has been remembered. Typically, the person is reminded that because Jesus is omnipresent, he really was there when the event happened, or when the person's "inner child" was in the remembered situation.

Long and Strickler describe a case of using imagery, in which the prayer minister and the recipient of ministry "saw" Jesus dealing with the recipient's inner child of the past. Then they ask the question "Was this real? Was it really Jesus in the imaginations of both Portia and Janet?" They answer,

While there is controversy over the issue, the great Christian pioneers of the spiritual realm, including Jesus, have used the imagination as the portal in the unconscious for entering spiritual reality. We may construct the doorway through active imagination and the use of symbols. If these are inspired by the Holy Spirit and are consistent with the doctrines of the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible, the Holy Spirit may choose to walk through the image or symbol and bring us to the actual presence of Jesus Christ, who actively works within us.<sup>43</sup>

a. Concerns associated with this belief

The process used by inner healers to bring repressed memories into consciousness could easily lead to the recovery of false memories of childhood abuse. In addition, the practice of visualizing Jesus as a way of promoting inner healing has the potential to be spiritually misleading.

b. Evaluation of this belief

In the 1980s and 1990s, a form of psychotherapy known as recovered-memory therapy was in vogue. Patients who were treated using this therapy often recovered supposedly repressed memories of horrible sexual abuse and even involvement in satanic rituals. These memories led to accusations that destroyed family relationships and sent some alleged abusers to prison. Then increasingly patients subjected to recovered-memory therapy began to conclude that the memories they had "recovered" in therapy were actually false and had been implanted during therapy. Some patients successfully sued their former therapists. The American Medical Association issued warnings about the unreliability of recovered memories.

Studies have shown that it is not especially difficult to implant false memories in a person's mind. Such memories may be vivid and detailed, and those who have them may be absolutely convinced that they are true.<sup>44</sup> The process used by inner healers to bring repressed memories into consciousness could easily lead to the recovery of distorted or false memories of childhood abuse. Relaxation and focusing on "whatever the Lord may reveal," can produce a trance-like state. Long and Strickler recommend praying in tongues as part of inner healing ministry. Speaking in tongues can in some cases involve an altered state of consciousness.<sup>45</sup> Such mental states have been shown to increase the likelihood of generating false memories.<sup>46</sup> The danger of

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 138.

<sup>44</sup> McNally, 2003:229-59; Brainerd and Reyna, 2005:404-15; Loftus and Davis, 2006:478-80.

<sup>45</sup> Malony and Lovekin, 1985:108-12.

<sup>46</sup> On the altered state of consciousness produced by hypnosis, see McNally, 2003:218, 245-46; Brainerd and Reyna, 2005:388-91; Loftus and Davis, 2006:484.

implanting false memories is especially great when the prayer counselor thinks that he or she has received an image or word in a “word of knowledge” and shares that with the recipient of healing. Such a suggestion could quite readily become the basis for a false memory.<sup>47</sup> Long and Strickler and also Charles Kraft show an awareness of the problem of false memory. Kraft warns against “guiding the imagery in such a way as to change what actually happened.”<sup>48</sup> In a section titled “What About ‘False’ Memories?” Long and Strickler give a tragic example of a man accused because of false memories of childhood sexual abuse. But they argue that even if memories are false, they may be “symbolically true” in the sense that they are “apt symbols” of some other problem. “Often,” they write, “discerning the actual facts is less important than seeing the recollected memory as an open door into the human heart where healing may take place.”<sup>49</sup> Long and Strickler warn the prayer minister to be tentative in sharing images received in a word of knowledge. But they add, “Usually, if it is actually from God, one will know immediately because it will have hit a vortex memory, unleashing an immediate, obvious emotional response.”<sup>50</sup>

Long and Strickler’s relative lack of concern as to whether or not a recollected memory is factual is troubling. If a recovered memory is false, it has great potential to do harm. There is also no basis for their confidence that a memory that is factually false is “symbolically true.” In addition, the fact that an image provokes an emotional response is hardly a sufficient reason to believe that it comes from God. A false memory that is disturbing can easily bring about an emotional response.

What about the inner healing practice of visualizing Jesus? The Bible never speaks of visualizing Jesus as a means of healing one’s inner wounds. If this methodology is so effective, why is Scripture silent about it? Why did it have to be “rediscovered” by Agnes Sanford and other inner healers in the mid-twentieth century? Long and Strickler argue that Jesus often spoke in parables and that the Bible is “filled with vivid pictures and images.” “Words of reason reach only the surface,” they say, “but images touch the heart. Images and symbols are the language of the unconscious.” “The Holy Spirit may take God’s *logos* word in Scripture and speak it as a vivid image into our heart where it is ‘ . . . living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword’ (Hebrews 4:12).”<sup>51</sup>

In the context of Hebrews 4, the *logos* of God is the Word of God written in Psalm 95 (including any images it contains). This Word of God is “living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” While it is true, as any preacher knows, that images are powerful, it seems unwise to imply that biblical “words of reason” are lacking in power. Nor does the power of

<sup>47</sup> McNally, 2003:73-74, 264-66; Brainerd and Reyna, 2005:391-93, 415-19; Loftus and Davis, 2006:484-85.

<sup>48</sup> Kraft, 1993:119.

<sup>49</sup> Long and Strickler, 2001:134.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 132-36.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 139-40.

images provide sufficient warrant for the extensive use of visualization as a therapeutic technique. The use of this technique carries with it the danger that those receiving inner healing ministry will confuse the Jesus of their imagination with the real Jesus. Instead of being encouraged to visualize Jesus, individuals needing healing would be better served by being directed to listen to Christ speak to them through his Word.

Christian counseling that seeks to help people deal with painful memories, including memories of childhood sexual abuse, can be very valuable. The techniques of inner healing, however, which include the recovery and experiencing of repressed memories and the visualization of Jesus, are without biblical support. They also have the potential, through the implantation of false memories and the creation of spiritual confusion, of doing more harm than good.

#### D. Prayer

The majority report's observations and evaluation under the heading "Prayer" are helpful and deal adequately with the questionable beliefs of the third wave in this area.

#### E. Spiritual warfare

The observations and evaluation presented by the majority under the heading "Spiritual warfare" are for the most part helpful, particularly in the section on "strategic level spiritual warfare." But several questionable third wave beliefs regarding spiritual warfare are not presented and critiqued as clearly as they should be.

1. First questionable belief: It is possible to be inhabited by one or more demons without knowing it or giving evidence of demonic inhabitation to others.

Many writers on spiritual warfare, including those in the third wave, believe that people can be inhabited by demons for years and have no awareness of the inhabitation. They say that demons may sometimes manifest their presence only when commanded to do so in a counseling or deliverance session.<sup>52</sup>

- a. Concerns associated with this belief

This belief can lead one to suspect demonic inhabitation in oneself or others when no demons are actually present.

- b. Evaluation of this belief

The New Testament has a number of descriptions of people who are inhabited by one or more demons.<sup>53</sup> These people are delivered (or healed) when the demon or demons are cast out. Representative

<sup>52</sup> Wimber, 1987:114-15; Kraft, 1992:185-88; 1993:269; Long and Strickler, 2001:157-59,175-77.

<sup>53</sup> Most recent writers on spiritual warfare shy away from using the term "demon possession" because to their way of thinking "possession" implies ownership. In their view, it is impossible for a Christian to be "owned" by a demon, but he or she can be inhabited by one. These writers therefore prefer to speak of people being "demonized" (Dickason, 1987:37-40; Wimber, 1987:109-10; White, 1990:43-44; Kraft, 1992:35-37; 1993:258; Long and Strickler, 2001:146). In fact, the word "possess" need not imply ownership. It can mean to occupy or inhabit and dominate or control (Arnold, 1997:80). However, to avoid potential misunderstanding, we will speak of demonic *inhabitation* and will avoid speaking of *demonic possession*.

passages that describe exorcisms include the following: Mark 1:23-26; 1:32-34; 5:1-13; 9:14-29; Matt. 9:32-34; Acts 8:5; 16:16-18.

How does demonic inhabitation affect people? According to the New Testament in the more extreme cases, there is a “virtual eclipse of the victim’s personality by that of the demon.”<sup>54</sup> The person may also show unusual physical strength. He or she may be subject to fits of rage or show violent or self-destructive behavior or engage in verbal tirades. In some cases, demonic inhabitation makes the person unable to hear or to speak. Likewise, in modern cases of demonic inhabitation in the developing world (for example, *loa* possession in Haiti), distinctive behavior is associated with the inhabitation. The New Testament provides us with no evidence that when demons inhabit a person, that person and others may be totally unaware of their presence.

Third wave and other writers on spiritual warfare argue that “clinical evidence” from counseling and deliverance sessions supports their contention that one may be inhabited by demons without knowing it. However, they rarely consider the possibility that the “demonic manifestations” associated with deliverance ministries may be called forth by the expectations of both the deliverance counselor and the counselee. One can imagine an individual who receives instruction about spiritual warfare from third wave teachers or other sources. He learns that one can be inhabited by demons without knowing it, that demons can be inherited, and that demons may be attached to deeply rooted sins. Then he meets with a counselor who suggests or implies that his struggles with sin may be complicated by demonic infestation. After an intense time of prayer, the counselor commands the demon or demons to manifest themselves. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that this troubled individual expresses the expected manifestations. In the words of Powlison: “Counselors find what they are looking for; counselees produce what counselors are looking for.”<sup>55</sup>

All in all, the belief that one may be inhabited by demons without knowing it appears unlikely to be true, given what the Bible says about demonic inhabitation and given the circumstances under which the “clinical evidence” for this belief has arisen.

2. Second questionable belief: In cases where a person is inhabited (possessed) by a demon or demons, it is possible to identify a specific cause for the demonic inhabitation.

Within the third wave (and also in the majority report), the term “demonization” is sometimes used to refer to a variety of levels of demonic involvement in a person’s life. The stages of demonization include (a) demonic temptation, (b) demons gaining a foothold in a person’s life, (c) demons establishing a stronghold in a person’s life, and (d) the person being inhabited by one or more demons. (In most third wave teaching, the word *possession* is avoided because it is said that it implies, or seems to imply, ownership. Or *possession* is said to apply only to unbelievers.) According to this understanding of demonization, one stage of demonization often leads to the next. When a person nurtures anger or lust, demons

<sup>54</sup> Storms, “The Nature of Demonization.”

<sup>55</sup> Powlison, 1995:134. Note also the cautions of Page, 1995:181.

are said to gain a foothold or “ground” in his or her life. Satan and his demons then have a “legal right” to oppress or inhabit that person. When the sinful behavior becomes compulsive, it has then become a “stronghold.” A stronghold may or may not be understood as involving demonic inhabitation.

According to third wave writers, demonic inhabitation may be the result of inviting demons to enter (either consciously, through involvement in occult or New Age activities, or unconsciously, by allowing “spiritual garbage” such as resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness to accumulate). Demons can become “attached” to certain sins, in such a way that they identify themselves with names such as “Lust” or “Anger.” Demons can also enter a person by the invitation of others, such as parents or cult leaders. One can be inhabited by demons by inheriting an ancestral (inter-generational) spirit or by means of another person’s curse. Those who have been sexually abused can be inhabited by demons as a result of that abuse.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

Under the influence of third wave and other teaching about demons, suggestible people struggling with a variety of sins, addictions, and problems may be diagnosed or may diagnose themselves as having a demon, when they do not actually have one. Then they may be treated in accordance with this mistaken diagnosis. A failure to deal with their sins or problems in a biblical way can easily result.

b. Evaluation of this belief

The New Testament clearly teaches that Christians can experience varying levels of satanic or demonic temptation and influence. But third wave teaching about distinct stages of demonization (from gaining a foothold to establishing a stronghold to inhabitation) is not biblical. Ephesians 4:27, which speaks of “giving the devil a foothold,” is saying that by holding on to anger, one can give the devil “room to work” in one’s life or in the church through temptations to further sin. It is not saying that one is providing “an inhabitable space” for a demon. The “strongholds” spoken of in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 are “arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.” They are not entrenched sinful habits or compulsions, reinforced by evil spirits.

In the cases of demonic inhabitation in the New Testament, the cause of the person’s inhabitation is never explained. Contrary to third wave teaching, in Scripture demons that inhabit people are *never* identified as demons of lust, pride, or greed. Those who are inhabited by demons are instead grouped together with people who are victims of various illnesses and physical disabilities. When Jesus gives demon-possessed people relief, it is sometimes said that he has healed them (e.g., Matt. 4:24: “People brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them”).

It may seem logical that involvement in certain sins or activities could result in demonic inhabitation. But the Bible does not teach that. Instead, it presents demonic inhabitation as a kind of victimization for which the afflicted individual bears little if any responsibility. If accumulating

“spiritual garbage,” inheritance from ancestors, curses or sexual abuse could cause demonic inhabitation, one would think that the Bible would clearly warn us about that. However, no such warnings are given.

The idea that Satan and his demons can acquire a “legal right” to oppress or inhabit people is also not biblical. Satan is “the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:2), but not because he has a “legal right” to that position.

The following warning of the 1973 report (Report 34) appears to apply directly to third wave teaching and practice regarding demonic inhabitation and deliverance:

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

(Acts of Synod 1973, p. 463)

3. Third questionable belief: It is possible for Christians to be inhabited (not just oppressed) by one or more demons that then need to be cast out.

It is widely taught within the third wave that Christians can be *inhabited* (although not *possessed*) by one or more demons. Kraft estimates that “in many churches, at least a third of those who attend carry demons.”<sup>56</sup> It is common for third wave authors to assert that a human being consists of three parts (trichotomy): body, soul (or mind), and spirit. They teach that a demon can inhabit the bodies and souls of Christians, but not their spirits, which have been born anew and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

Christians who struggle with sinful habits or various psychological problems may come to believe that their problems are exacerbated by demonic inhabitation when in fact they are not.

b. Evaluation of this belief

Most Reformed theologians reject the idea that the Bible teaches trichotomy. They understand human beings to be a holistic duality of body and soul.<sup>57</sup> Thus, if Christians could be inhabited by demons, presumably the demonic inhabitation would affect both body and soul.

If demonic inhabitation is understood biblically, as a kind of victimization similar to being victimized by cancer, then it may be conceivable that a Christian could be inhabited by demons. Yet it is difficult to understand how a person whose “body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19) could at the same time be inhabited by a demon.

No clear example of a Christian having a demon is found anywhere in the New Testament. If demonic inhabitation were as common a problem among Christians as some third wave authors say it is, one would think that the New Testament would give some indication of that.

<sup>56</sup> Kraft, 1992:28.

<sup>57</sup> Berkhof, 1939:191-95; Berkouwer, 1962:208-18; Cooper, 1989:163-64; Grudem, 1994:472-82.

#### 4. Further questionable beliefs

- Demons can be associated with objects (e.g., objects used in pagan rituals). The objects then become a source of demonic influence.
- A house, apartment, or hotel room may be inhabited by evil spirits.
- Curses can result in demonic inhabitation.
- Evil spirits can be inherited from one's ancestors, or one can be inhabited by demons because of the sins of one's ancestors.

All of the above beliefs can be found in books on spiritual warfare by third wave and other authors. The belief that demons can be associated with objects has led people to destroy or remove the objects in order to be free of demonic influence. Neil Anderson is convinced of the possibility that demons may exert an evil power in a room and suggests a prayer for cleansing a home, apartment, or room.<sup>58</sup> As part of a ceremony to eradicate demons from homes or rooms, Charles Kraft recommends using anointing oil that has been "empowered" by "invoking Jesus' name over it in blessing."<sup>59</sup> Kraft also speaks of "spirits that are passed down through the generations within a family."<sup>60</sup> Regarding the sins or occult involvement of one's ancestors, Fred Dickason writes,

I have found this avenue of ancestral involvement to be *the chief cause of demonization*. Well over 95 percent of more than 400 persons I have contacted in my counseling ministry have been demonized because of their ancestors' involvement in occult and demonic activities.<sup>61</sup>

Neil Anderson provides a "declaration" one can use for renouncing the sins of one's ancestors.<sup>62</sup>

##### a. Concerns associated with these beliefs

These beliefs are of concern because they appear to arise from a spiritistic, animistic worldview rather than a biblical worldview. They tend to foster a superstitious attitude toward objects and rooms believed to be infected by demons, toward curses, and toward ancestral or generational spirits.

##### b. Evaluation of these beliefs

###### 1) Demonic attachment to objects and demonic infestation of houses and rooms

The Bible says nothing about the ability of evil spirits to attach themselves to objects or to infest rooms so that those who come into contact with them will be harmed. In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 Paul warns against becoming participants with demons by "having communion" with them through eating sacrifices offered to pagan gods. But he also teaches that the meat offered to a pagan idol is not harmful in itself.

Third wave writers assert that demonic attachment to objects or the presence of demons in rooms can be detected by a person who

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, 2000:247.

<sup>59</sup> Kraft, 1992:198.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 74.

<sup>61</sup> Dickason, 1987:221; emphasis his.

<sup>62</sup> Anderson, 2004a:20.

has the gift of the discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10). But most likely the gift of discernment of spirits has nothing to do with the ability to detect demons that may be attached to an object or lurking in a room. It rather has to do with the ability to discern between true and false prophecy.<sup>63</sup>

In animistic cultures, it is commonly believed that evil spirits inhabit trees, rivers, rocks, buildings, and other objects. Third wave and other teachers on spiritual warfare seem inclined to credit what animists say about this, assuming that animists know more about evil spirits than rationalistic Westerners. Yet since the devil is a liar and the father of lies, it is not clear that he gives his animistic children accurate knowledge about demons. It seems more likely that he misleads them so that they fear the presence of demons when no fear is warranted.

## 2) Curses that result in demonic inhabitation

Curses uttered in the name of the Lord may have power. But Scripture is silent about a connection between demonic power and curses. Proverbs 26:2 says, "Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest."

Animists believe that harm can be done to enemies by means of "verbal magic." Here again, it appears that third wave and other writers on spiritual warfare uncritically accept these animistic beliefs as valid.

## 3) Ancestral transmission of evil spirits

Third wave writers appeal to Exodus 20:5 and 34:7 when seeking to justify their belief that evil spirits can be inherited from one's ancestors or picked up because of the sins of one's ancestors. In those verses God speaks of "punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." But while these texts do speak of the punishment of sin, they say nothing about inheriting demons.

Third wave and other writers on spiritual warfare point to what they call "clinical evidence," which they say supports their belief that demons can be transmitted to children because of the sinful actions or demonic inhabitation of their ancestors. But this "clinical evidence" consists of the experiences of counselors in deliverance sessions. As noted in the evaluation of the first questionable belief regarding spiritual warfare, it appears likely that in these sessions, counselors find what they are looking for because both they and their counselees have similar (and erroneous) expectations.

## 4) Conclusion

Third wave books often include a chapter on worldviews, in which warnings are given against accepting a rationalistic, naturalistic Western worldview. These warnings are important and necessary. But in avoiding a rationalistic worldview, we must beware lest we fall into a spiritistic, animistic worldview, in which evil spirits are everywhere, curses have power, and the correct techniques must be used in combating them.

<sup>63</sup> See section I, B, 2, c, 1) of this report.

In their analysis<sup>64</sup> of third wave beliefs about the demonic, Priest, Campbell, and Mullen have noted that a number of third wave writers have served on the mission field. They suggest that perhaps unwittingly the thinking of these writers has been shaped by the magical and/or animistic worldviews that they have encountered. Kraft and Wagner vigorously dispute the idea that their worldview has been shaped by animism. But a number of third wave beliefs about the demonic have little if any basis in Scripture, and there are significant parallels in this area between third wave and animistic beliefs.

### III. Recommendations

- A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Rev. Timothy J. Brown, the writer of the minority report, when the matter of third wave Pentecostalism is addressed.
- B. That synod adopt the counsels recommended in the majority report with the following substitutions and additions:
1. Insert the following in place of section VI, B, 1 in the majority report: Acknowledge that this movement reminds us of our continual need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to make use of the spiritual gifts (charismata) that the Lord has given us.
  2. Insert the following in place of section VI, B, 3 in the majority report: Note that it is not clear that what the third wave calls the gift of prophecy is indeed the gift of prophecy described in the New Testament. Urge that whenever a believer claims to have received a message or “leading” from God, he or she should search the Scriptures and seek the counsel of fellow believers before acting on it.
  3. After section VI, B, 6 of the majority report, add (as section B, 7): Recognize that techniques used by some forms of inner healing ministry have the potential to implant false memories or to cause spiritual confusion.
  4. Insert the following in place of section VI, B, 7 in the majority report (as section B, 8): Acknowledge the reality of the believer’s warfare against the world, the flesh (sinful nature), and the devil (including demonic powers). Avoid accepting beliefs about the demonic and using methods of spiritual warfare that have no basis in Scripture.
- C. That synod recommend that the churches give consideration to the viewpoints expressed in the minority report as they seek to evaluate third wave teaching.

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II  
(minority report)  
Timothy J. Brown

*Note:* Please refer to Appendix A of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II majority report for the Bibliography for both the majority and minority reports.

<sup>64</sup> Priest, et al. 1995.