March 30, 1999

Dr. Frank Macchia
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Dear Frank,

On the way back from SPS, while flying from Memphis to Chattanooga, I jotted down some thoughts that were sparked by the meeting. They have been lying on my desk since then. But Spring Break now gives me a chance to do what I thought on a whim to do earlier: type them up and send them to you. One reason for my hesitancy is that I’m not sure what they are worth, since they have to do with matters that move a bit outside my specialized discipline. Passing them to you also gives me the chance to express my appreciation to you for your key role in a very good meeting.

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1. Frank Macchia, since the time of this letter, has moved to Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, CA.

2. The Society for Pentecostal Studies, 28th Annual Meeting, convened on 11-13 March 1999 at Evangel University in Springfield, MO under the program theme, ‘Toward Healing Our Divisions.’
I thought the testimony by John Ceresoli was just great! I’m working with John to do a fuller version of the presentation, so that we can publish it in *JPT*. I cannot imagine a better beginning for a conference on the theme of ‘healing our divisions’.

Amidst the steps toward healing that this meeting facilitated, there was one area where I saw signs of what could prove to be a freshly growing rift. It appeared in several sessions I attended in the biblical studies area, and I heard that it cropped up elsewhere. It had to do with what might be termed a Reformed Evangelical Pentecostal reaction to the more Wesleyan Pentecostal hermeneutical work that has been emerging recently. A focal point for the debate was *Sola Scriptura*. This brings me to the thoughts I jotted down on the plane ride:

The irony of *Sola Scriptura* is that it is not found in *Scriptura*! Still, *Sola Scriptura* seems to be viewed by some as a formulation beyond questioning. Others are beginning to sense a problem with a formulation which so often gets ‘pushed’ in ways which seem to quench or oppose the Spirit. Defenders of *Sola Scriptura* are quick to argue that this formulation does not entail this opposition, for it is always *Sola Scriptura with the Spirit*. Scripture is always attended by the Spirit.

But wouldn’t *Solus Spiritus* be a better formulation? It would always be *Solus Spiritus with the Scripture*, because the Spirit always attends Scripture, which has all come forth from the Spirit. Indeed, all the words of Scripture are from the Spirit, even though not all of the words of the Spirit are from the Scripture. *Solus Spiritus* is thus not as subject to overstatement as is *Sola Scriptura*, because the Spirit is God and Scripture is not!

*Sola Scriptura* seems prone to excess and overstatement as is often the case with language forged in the heat of division and protest. Extreme words like ‘always’ and ‘only’ (*sola*) are all too easily and quickly seized when partners and parties push apart. Such words as ‘only’ are claimed as pulling for the whole truth, but in truth they are

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3. This presentation now appears as the preceding piece of this issue.

4. It subsequently has been brought to my attention that the prospect of such a formulation is raised in Larry Christenson (ed.), *Welcome Holy Spirit: A Study of Charismatic Renewal in the Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), pp. 133-34. *Solus Spiritus Sanctus* is proposed as one of the “four more “alones”’ that should be traced from Luther’s theology.