

# The Catholic Charismatic Renewal

This article examines the problems with the post-conciliar movement of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

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## Introduction

### Baptized in the "Spirit"

"Baptized in the Spirit," "Praying in tongues," "The gift of prophecy," and "A personal relationship with Jesus" are all indispensable buzz-words of the so-called Catholic Charismatic Renewal (hereafter referred to as the CCR), a movement which traces its roots to an unsupervised student "retreat" at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University in 1967. By 1990, the movement claimed 72 million adherents worldwide and official organizations in 120 countries.[1] Such rapid growth both here and abroad, coupled with the movement's almost complete abandonment of even nominally Catholic practices, beliefs, and modes of discourse, has been a cause of concern for Catholics for quite some time. In light of the CCR's 30th anniversary last year, a closer look at its beliefs, practices, and underlying assumptions is in order.

The following typical quotation from the charismatic literature concerns one of the lynch-pins of the CCR, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," a "faith experience" in which one feels the release of the graces already received in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist and experiences God's presence in a deeply personal way. It offers a taste of the startlingly unorthodox view of the sacraments held in common by most of the movement's adherents:

*Every Parish has a number of groups with their own vision, purpose, and area of service [sic]. No one is uncomfortable with the Rosary Circle, the Legion of Mary, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, or with many other parish organizations—the list could be much longer. So why all the fuss about Charismatic Renewal? Surely a prayer group is a desirable thing for every parish? But the truth is that the CCR is not just a matter of a weekly prayer meeting. At its heart lies the Baptism of the Holy Spirit—a grace of God which I believe should be a part of the normal experience of every Christian [emphasis added]. Through it, everyone—clergy and laity, men and women, young and old, black and white, rich and poor—everyone has the opportunity to say a clear and definitive "yes" to God. But there's more to it than that. As well as making a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, we're saying "yes" to the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit and to his gifts—the charisms. Many of us failed to do this when we went through the process of Christian initiation. We can do it now by allowing the Holy Spirit to change us at the very heart of our being and to equip us for service in the Church and in the world.[2]*

### Doctrinal irregularities

The implications of this statement should be lost on no one with even a cursory knowledge of his catechism. From an orthodox standpoint and to give the author the benefit of the doubt, one could see this statement as a reference to the sacrament of Confirmation, the sacrament in which the

Holy Ghost comes to us in a special way to make us true Christians and perfect soldiers of Christ.

Were their thinking more sacramental, one might suspect that they posit an "eighth sacrament" needed to complete the other seven. On the contrary, charismatics deny any clear connection between "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" and the Catholic sacraments since "*sacramental rite and religious experience are complementary parts of the basic Christian initiation.*"[3] Since these features of "Christian initiation" are complementary, Charismatics see no reason to exclude non-Catholics or even non-Christians from the chance to experience the "charisms," as they usually refer to the *charismata*, the extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Ghost which so aided the expansion of the early Church and dwindled soon after the Apostolic Age.

Indeed, they hold that the complementary nature of the two parts of "Christian initiation" makes them easily reversible, *i.e.*, that the unbaptized may even experience this "*Baptism of the Holy Spirit*" and become, *ipso facto*, Christians, merely needing the "*sacramental rites*" to "*complete*" their "*Christian initiation.*"[4] The status of these people theoretically would be the same as that of a Catholic who, having received the sacraments, still awaits a conscious manifestation of invisible graces.

It is obvious that many people, sometimes even great saints, are never given notable consolations in their Faith, much less extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Ghost. To say that an unbaptized person who has experienced this "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is somehow as close to God as (or even closer than) a pious, baptized Catholic who has never had such an experience is clearly absurd.

The root of this absurdity is the false assumption that emotional experience always accompanies the conferral of grace—or at least its "release." On the contrary, as far as sacramental grace goes, often the only sensible indication of the conferral of grace is the sacramental sign itself. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* defines a sacrament as "*a visible sign of an invisible grace, instituted for our justification.*" It is, moreover, a sign which effects what it signifies. Since the visible signs of all the sacraments are completely objective and fixed by the Church according to Our Lord's command or inspiration, one's personal feelings have no bearing whatsoever on the conferral of grace in the sacraments (as long as no contrary intention is held, of course).

### **Scope: to expose the basic charismatic ideas and to show their incompatibility with Catholicism**

"Baptism in the Holy Spirit," this primary component of the CCR, rests, along with most of the others, on the false ideas about grace, experience, and their mutual relationship, held by its adherents. The major planks in the Charismatic platform, along with the false principles upon which they rest, will be examined one by one in the light of Catholic doctrine. Some of the errors, such as phenomenalism, gnosticism, ecumenism, Protestantism, and antiquarianism, have already been dealt with by the Church's magisterium at length. The CCR's faulty ecclesiology and major errors on grace, the will, and the sacraments will require a considerably deeper treatment.

It will become clear that, despite the modern Churchmen's enthusiasm for this movement, the CCR is fundamentally un-Catholic and irreconcilable with 20 centuries of Catholic teaching. After a brief look at its roots, the entire tree will be examined branch by branch and all of its bitter fruit sampled in order to heed the Apostle's command: "*Test all things; hold fast to that which is good*" (1 Thess. 5:21).

## Brief history of the movement

### Protestant roots

However much the Charismatics try to trace their overt manifestations of "the Spirit" to an unbroken Apostolic tradition, they are bound to fail. Some concede that the early phenomena ceased because of the "stifling" attitude of the hierarchy. Nonetheless, the fact that the *charismata* were not known to exist after the Apostolic Age is demonstrated by this statement of St. Augustine's, made in the fourth century:

*Who in our day expects that those on whom hands are laid so that they may receive the Holy Spirit should forthwith speak with tongues.... These signs were adapted to the times. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Spirit in all tongues to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all the tongues over the earth. But that thing was done for the betokening, and it has passed away.[5]*

With the Apostolic tradition of the *charismata* ruled out, one must look elsewhere for the origin of these modern phenomena. Most writers trace the beginning of modern Pentecostalism to John Wesley, the famed ex-Anglican minister and founder of Methodism, in the 18th century. Wesley, himself the son of an Anglican minister, grew up trying to "spiritualize" the still-too-"Catholic" Anglican religion. He stressed a strongly emotional personal piety, a "*personal relationship*" with God. One day, after a long illness, Wesley felt an overwhelming manifestation of the "Spirit" and realized that all of his former religious works had been as so much rubbish. Thus "empowered," baptized in the Holy Spirit, having received his "second blessing," as he called it, he was able to go out and win the cold-hearted Anglican masses of nominal Christians to a deeper sense of the presence of God through his Methodist "prayer meetings."

The parallel between the birth of Methodism and the origins of the CCR becomes even more apparent when one considers the next step in the development of the former. Wesley began his movement as a supplement to the Anglican Church's Sunday worship. The prayer meetings were held, usually with clerical supervision, during the week. The Anglican authorities soon grew apprehensive about the directions they perceived the Methodists to be taking, and they refused to designate more clergy for them. Thereupon, Wesley broke the movement away from the Anglican hierarchy, starting his own church under his own authority, although not renouncing his Anglican "priesthood." The number of apostate Catholics whose apostasy—formal or material—is due to the CCR is significant. The writer knows of one Protestant Charismatic church made up almost entirely of apostate Catholics.

Pentecostalism proper began in the 19th-century Revivalist movement, which spawned, among others, the sect of one Charles Parham in Topeka, Kansas, in the year 1900. Catholic Charismatics trace the beginning of the "*outpouring of the Spirit*" in modern times to this heretical sect. A brief synopsis of the history of this sect can be found in William Whalen's book *Minority Religions in America*:

*The reappearance of glossolaly (speaking in tongues) was reported in 1901. Charles F. Parham, a Holiness preacher, was dismayed by the aridity of his own spiritual life. He rented a white elephant mansion in Topeka, Kansas, and started a Bible school with about 40 students. Together they set*

*out on an intensive study of scriptures and came to the conclusion that speaking in tongues was the one sign that a Christian had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At 7 p.m., on New Year's Eve in 1900, one of the students, Miss Agnes N. Ozmen, startled the assembled group when she began to pray in tongues. Within a few days, many more followed suit.*

*Parham spent the next five years as an itinerant preacher before opening another Bible school, this time in Houston. One of his students, a negro minister named W.J. Seymore, carried the "full-gospel" message to Los Angeles. A three-year-long revival in that California city attracted people from all over the country, and these people planted Pentecostalism in most of the major cities in the US, as well as in many European nations. The old Holiness churches refused to give emphasis to tongue-speaking, but dozens of independent Pentecostal Churches were soon organized.[6]*

After its firm establishment in the soil of Protestantism, Pentecostalism began to grow quickly. It was always looked upon by Catholic writers as a new heretical sect, never as a "sister-church." The [French] Revolution's entry into the Church at Vatican II was to change this attitude, and "opening the windows to the world" was to mean also an opening to the religions of the world—and of its Prince, Satan.

### **Catholic "transplant"**

In 1967, during the early post-Vatican II turmoil of ecumenical frenzy and widespread apostasy, students at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University began exposing themselves to Pentecostal influences because of spiritual aridity; they were envious of the "changed lives" among many Protestant friends and decided to pray for similar "graces." A weekend "retreat"—of sorts—proved to be the key to their answer. Various people approached various Protestant ministers, laity, and prayer groups; all received "Baptism in the Spirit" after having heretical hands laid on them in prayer.

The importance of this action cannot be overestimated. These Catholics submitted themselves to a non-Catholic quasi-sacramental rite—obviously a mockery of the sacrament of Confirmation—and the emotional thrill brought about by this sin (objectively speaking, of course) convinced them of the holiness of the entire experience. They came away as "Catholic" Charismatics, and their influence spread like wildfire all over the country—first on college campuses and then to the world at large.

If ever there were an argument for listening to the Church, this is it. The Church has warned her children to stay away from heretical "worship" for almost 2000 years because she knows what the consequences will be, both for the individuals involved and for the Mystical Body at large. Yet the CCR unabashedly admits—even praises—its ecumenical, *Protestant* roots!

The tacit assumption is that the Church—the Body of Christ—had lost a major part (Charismatics would say the major part) of the Faith while the Holy Ghost maintained that aspect in Protestantism. Protestants, hence, were restoring to the Church her lost patrimony. This is an audacious and clearly false position which flatly contradicts two dogmas of the Faith: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—outside the Church, no salvation, and the indefectibility of the Church. Both will be addressed below.

Today, practically every diocese has an official Charismatic liaison office. There are Charismatic prayer groups, seminars, conventions, retreats, etc., all across the country and the world. No level of the hierarchy is without its contingent, and Charismatics are numerous among the clergy—especially the Regulars [i.e., the monastic clergy; webmaster's note]. As will be shown, even Rome is not immune to their influence.

## Firm establishment in the soil of the Church

### The authorities

Despite Charismatic attempts to make personal endorsements of high-ranking Church officials into official approbation by the Church, no such approbation exists. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have received Charismatics many times in audience and spoken of them in their addresses on many occasions; in 1990, the Pontifical Council for the Laity recognized the Catholic Fraternity of Covenant Communities (an international Charismatic organization) as a private association of the laity;[7] nonetheless, no official pronouncement has been made on the CCR. Charismatics, like all liberal Catholics, tend to ascribe "creeping infallibility" to unofficial papal pronouncements in their favor as much as they disregard authoritative condemnations of other liberal practices and beliefs.

Nevertheless, there is no dearth of Charismatic adherents at any level of the hierarchy or clergy. Deacons, priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes have been and are great enthusiasts for the Charismatic cause, if not members themselves of the CCR. That people supposedly well trained in the sacred sciences should be taken in by such sensational and utterly groundless beliefs and practices is a great reproach to this age.

The quasi-official "studies" by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops have never been accepted by that body as official positions; they have been accepted merely as "pastoral guidelines" for the individual dioceses. The 1969 report claimed that:

*Theologically the movement has legitimate reasons for existence. It has a strong biblical basis. It would be difficult to inhibit the working of the Spirit which manifested itself so abundantly in the early Church.... Admittedly, there have been abuses [in the exercise of the so-called charismata], but the cure is not a denial of their existence but their proper use.[8]*

The conclusion of the 1969 report recommends allowing the movement to develop under episcopal supervision and with priestly participation.

It is interesting to note that, here, the bishops accept without argument one of the most glaringly dangerous underlying assumptions of the CCR: That today's phenomena which resemble the descriptions of the true *charismata* in the New Testament are the true *charismata* simply in virtue of this resemblance and that the Holy Ghost is the author of these current phenomena simply in virtue of the fact that He was the author of the true *charismata* 2000 years ago. To their own peril and to that of the whole Church, they completely discount the possibility that these extraordinary phenomena (which the CCR is trying to make ordinary) could be deceptions of the Devil, who does not mind in the least that people pray more in the short term if he is more likely to take them to hell in the end.

In 1975, the U.S. bishops issued a "Statement on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal" which characterized itself as "*pastoral in tone and content*" and "*not an exhaustive treatment.*" This document recognizes some of the dangers inherent in the movement: elitism, biblical fundamentalism, exaggeration of the importance of the gifts, reckless ecumenism, and the so-called small faith-communities. It encourages sound leadership and guidance of the movement. It is interesting that the bishops specifically do not commit themselves to say that the CCR is the work of the Holy Ghost, although they do admit to encouraging signs of this in some quarters.[9]

Perhaps the most outspoken advocate for the CCR among the hierarchy was His Eminence Leo Jozef Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop Emeritus of Malines-Brussels, who was, incidentally, one of the outstanding liberal voices heard at Vatican II. In the years after his mandatory retirement in 1979, Cardinal Suenens spent himself endlessly in travel and writing in support of the CCR. For the 25th

anniversary of the CCR, the cardinal wrote the following as part of a commemorative article:

*Christians today have to rediscover the heart of the Christian message; they have been sufficiently "sacramentalized"; they have not been sufficiently "evangelized." We are now faced with the task of rediscovering and explaining what really makes a Christian. We must help Christians to become more continually aware of their faith and to live it on a more personal level. Many must exchange a sociological or an inherited Christianity for a full and active life of faith, based on a personal decision and embraced with full consciousness.[10]*

As with most liberal statements, this is ambiguous enough to be interpreted in an orthodox way; however, the Protestant terminology used should escape no one.

Pope John Paul II addressed the 6th International Assembly of the CCR in 1987 as follows, combining in an unbelievable way the tacit assumption mentioned above in regard to the US Bishops (which will presently be shown to have its roots in phenomenalism), an admission of the movement's grounding in the "Spirit of Vatican II," and the Holy Father's own perennial preoccupation with the coming New Millennium:

*The vigor and fruits of the Renewal certainly testify to the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church during these years following the Second Vatican Council. Thanks to the Spirit, the Church constantly keeps her youth and vitality. And the Charismatic Renewal is an eloquent manifestation of this vitality today, a vigorous affirmation of what "the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (Apoc. 2:7), as we draw near to the end of the second millennium [sic].[11]*

One positive result of the total crisis of authority in which modern Catholics find themselves is a healthy appetite for the history of the Church and the study of her magisterial documents. The wisdom exhibited by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, prelates truly guided by the Holy Ghost, is both astoundingly deep and overpoweringly clear and concise. "Spiritualist" sects have arisen before in the history of the Church, and a look at how their contemporary Churchmen dealt with them will shed much light on the modern situation.

#### **Historic parallels**

It is undeniable that extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Ghost occurred during the Apostolic Age and were quite helpful in spreading the Faith throughout the known world at that time. Anyone can see this simply by reading the Acts of the Apostles. Such manifestations had specific purposes: to spread the Gospel to hearers of a different language (e.g., St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost) or to prove the credibility of a speaker or his holiness.

However, it is also undeniable that these extraordinary phenomena dwindled considerably and disappeared after the Apostolic Age. The Church had by then achieved a moral universality and was established in such a way that these manifestations were no longer either useful or necessary.

Nonetheless, at times, "spiritualist" groups have arisen and merited by their strange beliefs and practices the condemnation of the Church. Chief among these were the Joachimites, followers of Joachim of Fiore in the 12th century, the Fraticelli, schismatic Franciscans in the 13th and 14th centuries, and the Molinists (or "Quietists") in the 17th century.

Joachim (c. 1132-1202) was a Cistercian abbot who specialized in scripture study. He was of quite a mystic mindset and spent many years pouring over the Sacred Scriptures searching for the hidden meanings of the most minute passages. (This practice, "led by the Spirit," is a hallmark of modern-day Charismatics.) At the end of his life, his work completed, he submitted his writings to Rome.

Joachim had first posited errors concerning the Blessed Trinity, although he had retracted them

when they were anathematized by the Fourth Lateran Council. His mystical idea of history, however was more problematic. Joachim held the history of the world to be divided into three distinct phases, each corresponding to a Person of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, the first age of the world was marked by God the Father's majestic rule, the second (our age) by the Wisdom of the Son and his Church, and the third (still to come) by the Holy Ghost in an outpouring of universal love and the waning of all formal religion in favor of a world ruled by the spirit of the Gospel. This teaching was condemned by Pope Alexander IV after Joachim's death, in the 13th century.[12]

The similarity between this rather odd teaching and the constant Charismatic chatter about a "new age of the Spirit" hardly needs comment. Rather more worrisome is the Holy Father's fascination with the New Millennium. Speaking of the preparation for the Great Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul designates 1998 as the "Year of the Spirit":

*The Church cannot prepare for the new millennium in any other way than in the Holy Spirit. What was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit "in the fullness of time" can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church.[13]*

The Holy Father goes on:

*The primary task of the preparation for the Jubilee will thus include a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit... [Signs that this is happening include]... greater attention to the voice of the Spirit through the acceptance of charisms and the promotion of the laity, a deeper commitment to the cause of Christian unity, and the increased interest in dialogue with other religions and with contemporary culture.[14]*

These startling quotations reveal the Pope's clear association of ecumenism, secularization, and laicization with the New Millennium and the work of the Holy Ghost. The similarity between this type of thinking and Joachim's (that the "rule of the Spirit through universal love" will bring about the waning of formal religion under the spirit of the Gospel) is quite alarming to say the least.

Joachim's chief disciples were a group of "spiritualist"[15] Franciscans. The direct philosophical descendants of this group became, within a century of Joachim's death, the Fraticelli, and their personal interpretation of the Gospel got them into major trouble with their order and with the pope. They ended by saying that the Church was corrupt and carnal, in contrast to their own "spirituality," and that they were the only true followers of the Gospel. They were excommunicated by Pope John XXII in 1318.[16]

The Charismatics talk about being "full Catholics" and make such statements as the following, made by a certain Betty Nunez: "I'm not saying that other Catholics don't believe, but when you're renewed by baptism in the Holy Spirit, your faith comes alive." [17] Now, giving Mrs. Nunez every benefit of the doubt, this is quite an insult to non-Charismatic Catholics. It is tantamount to saying that they have a dead faith and that the Charismatics have a living faith. This typical statement is painfully close to the position of the Fraticelli.

Michael of Molinos (1628-1696) misunderstood Catholic teaching on nature and grace. Rather than believing that grace builds on nature, he taught that the only path to sanctification was complete abandonment of one's soul to the actions of God (the Holy Spirit, of course). Once again, this sounds orthodox at first, when heard in an orthodox context, but it contains grave error. Molinos would have the soul completely passive while God works through it. His fourth condemned principle sums up all the others: "Natural activity is the enemy of grace, and impedes the operations of God and true perfection, because God wishes to operate in us without us." This is not a question of conforming one's own will with the Divine Will but of annihilating one's will and

replacing it with the Divine Will. After this "annihilation" takes place, one is freed from all responsibility for his actions because he is, essentially, an automaton.[18]

The common Charismatic question is "Is Jesus Lord of your life?" Catholics, of course, want Our Lord to be "king and center of all hearts" and King of the whole world—the Social Reign of Christ the King should be one of our banner causes. It is important, however, to understand the difference between these two positions. Catholics want to form their wills to be in accord with the Divine Will. The natural achieves its fullest perfection only when guided by and ordered to the supernatural. Molinists (and Charismatics) want to annihilate their own wills and to be completely passive vessels of the Divine Will's action. The following is a typical quotation from the Charismatic literature on the subject:

*Jesus learned the Father's will by living in daily fellowship with Him....[19] Am I growing in "the practice of the presence of God" throughout my day? Do I move ahead out of a compulsive mode of doing and accomplishing or in a responsive mode [sic]. Is my inner ear trained, listening, seeking to hear the Holy Spirit and go with His gentle movement? Following the Spirit is like stepping into a river's flow and allowing the current to give you direction.[20]*

One must imagine this to be the disposition that a Charismatic enters into before giving a physical manifestation of "the Spirit." How else could one account for the capacity of seemingly ordinary people to writhe, cavort, and gush forth garbled gibberish in church? Either one of two explanations seems probable: that the subject really wills—perhaps unconsciously—to perform this act because of group dynamics (or mass hysteria) or that his utter relaxation of the will leaves him open to a true manifestation of the "spirit"—and not the Holy Spirit! Speaking a language one does not understand is a classic sign of diabolical possession, after all.

#### **The offshoot**

One offshoot of the Charismatic tree not to be overlooked is the phenomenon known to its adherents as the Marian Movement and to Catholic outsiders as "apparition mania." While a thorough examination of this blight on our times is beyond the scope of this article, the largest and most poisonous fruit should certainly be sampled.[21]

The Charismatics have always had a special (but not too special) place for the Blessed Virgin Mary, calling her "*the First Charismatic*" who "*conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was present among Jesus's disciples at Pentecost when they were filled with the Spirit.*"[22]

As admitted by many Charismatics, the movement began to wane in the early 1980's. So-called apparitions were happening in several places around the world, and another was announced two weeks before its onset at a Charismatic prayer meeting in Rome. A "prophecy" was given concerning an apparition which would begin soon in the Balkans—in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As promised, "Our Lady" appeared as scheduled and has been coming around every single day since!

Obviously, the supposed spiritual manifestations claimed by Charismatics and the supposed apparitions claimed by the "visionaries" of Medjugorje fall into two different categories of supernatural phenomena, but the overlap between the Charismatics and the Medjugorje adherents is almost complete in the experience of the writer. Charismatics flock to Medjugorje despite the Church's ban on pilgrimages and the diocesan bishop's judgment that the phenomena supposedly occurring there are not supernatural at all. One would assume that "the Spirit" leads them to disobey this explicit ban placed by Rome just as "Our Lady" leads the Franciscans in charge of the local parish to disregard the diocesan bishop's censures resulting from their own overt sinful behavior. As long as the rosaries still turn to gold, no one seems to give these things much thought.

"Our Lady" gives periodic messages to the world which usually sound strangely like the "prophecies" uttered by Charismatics in prayer meetings. The content is usually a platitude on the level of a grade-school catechism, and the style is usually a gibbering mish-mash of sentimental tripe. Here are two examples, side by side.

#### Charismatic "prophecy"

*My people, I have put my praise on your lips. Bring my praise into every situation in your lives, and I will show you the power of my praise, says the Lord! My people, turn away from evil, come to me. Be in the world but not of it, honor my Son and I will give you peace and contentment, says the Lord! Even should a woman forget the child she bore, I will not forget you. Your name is written on the palm of my hand, says the Lord. Give me your sick and I will heal them, your worries and I will dispel them, your burdens and I will carry them. My people, I want to set you free, says the Lord [sic]. [23]*

#### Medjugorje "message" of May 9, 1985

*Dear children! You do not know how many graces God is bestowing on you these days when the Holy Spirit is working in a special way. You do not want to advance. Your hearts are turned to earthly things and you are occupied by them. Turn your hearts to prayer and ask that the Holy Spirit be poured upon you. Thank you for your response to my call [sic]. [24]*

The lies, deceit, disobedience, and open clerical immorality surrounding this supposed apparition should be enough to convince anyone of its falsity. Rome's prohibition on pilgrimages and the bishop's decision on the authenticity of the phenomena should keep any obedient Catholic away, but people still come, thousands per year, because of the "good fruits"—so-called conversions, healings, miracles of the sun, etc.

The Catholic Faith teaches that truth has no admixture with error, good with evil, truth with falsehood. As stated above, Satan minds not in the least if people go on "pilgrimage," pray more, and feel more emotional about God and the Blessed Virgin Mary; on the contrary, he helps them onto the airplane, if he can only be sure of taking them to hell in the end.

#### Charismatic ideas and Catholic doctrine: a comparison

The orthodoxy of any given practice or belief in the final analysis depends not on how one feels about it, or what the priest, the bishop, or even the pope (teaching as a private theologian) says about it; it depends, rather, on the teaching of the Church's magisterium. The constant teaching of the popes and the councils throughout its 2000-year history determines whether a particular belief is Catholic or not. The denial of this basic fact by liberal Catholics is a central factor in the crisis in which the Church finds herself now, and it is not surprising to find Charismatics holding beliefs which, even 50 years ago, would have caused them no small amount of trouble with Church authorities.

In order to have a clear picture of what is wrong with the CCR, it is necessary to examine its underlying principles in the light of Catholic doctrine. While it is certainly beyond the scope of this article to undertake a detailed theological analysis of the movement, several basic points will be raised which should invite further study by competent theologians.

Although the CCR is a vast, nondescript, intentionally imprecise group of groups from a doctrinal standpoint, certain specific principles may be distilled from the vast amount of literature available. These principles may not be held consciously by all, or even most Charismatics, but they are to be found—explicitly or implicitly—in their writings.

### Phenomenalistic ideas

Phenomenalism, with its roots in the so-called Enlightenment of the 18th century, is a major underlying factor of the Charismatic movement. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* defines phenomenalism as follows:

*Phenomenalism literally means any system of thought that has to do with appearances. The term is, however, usually restricted to the designation of certain theories by which it is asserted: that there is no knowledge other than that of phenomena—denial of the knowledge of substance in the metaphysical sense; or that all knowledge is phenomenal—denial of the thing-in-itself and assertion that all reality is directly or reflectively present to the consciousness.*

Thus, to the Charismatic, one does not truly "know" God until one has experienced Him consciously, *i.e.*, until one has had a sensory experience (usually emotional, sometimes overtly physical as in the case of the *glossolalia*—or speaking in tongues) of "His Spirit" at work in one. Indeed, spiritual experience over-rules public revelation and the 2000-year teaching of the magisterium in matters such as, to name only one example, ecumenism (see below).

To the Charismatics, the very presence today of phenomena supposedly identical to the true *charismata* present in the early Church proves their divine origin. The experience is what matters, not the intellect's legitimate questions, such as "*Why the 2000-year lapse? Is this experience really the same as the phenomena described in Scripture? Is 'the Spirit' leading us toward a more fully Catholic life or toward apostasy?*" The failure of Charismatics to "try the spirits" [1 Jn. 4:1] is possibly their most dangerous blunder since the Devil can produce prodigies which mimic truly supernatural phenomena from God.

Indeed, the intellect is radically discounted by members of the CCR. There is widespread talk of a so-called "*18-inch drop from the head to the heart*" among Charismatic literature on the first stages of "*spiritual growth*." "*It isn't so much the 'head knowledge' that counts; it's the 'heart knowledge' that's important here. The former is theological, while the latter is spiritual.*" [25] As stated previously, such "heart knowledge," warm, cozy feelings about God, are not spiritual at all; they are, on the other hand, purely emotional—which means physical! These Charismatic "spiritual writers" degrade the intellect as if God had not given it to Man: "*Intellectum tibi dabo*" (Ps. 31).

To the Charismatic phenomenalist mind, even the sacraments are not immune to subjectivist thought on grace. Catholics know that the sacraments produce grace *ex opere operato*, without regard to the spiritual state of the minister or the recipient. Of course, the recipient may be more or less well-disposed to receive the graces produced, but the grace is produced notwithstanding either party's subjective dispositions. To the Charismatic, anything in the spiritual life which does not produce subjective "consolation" or emotion is not a valid "faith experience" and, hence, does not confer grace.

Thus, the following excerpt from a Charismatic priest's article on the "Healing Sacraments" explains confession fully:

*During the sacrament of Reconciliation we receive healing in the form of forgiveness and in the form of greater resistance to temptation. That's why we feel so much better after making a good confession.* [26]

Even Holy Communion is not immune from such subjectivist prattle:

*When you're praying after Communion, I suggest that you envision rays of healing light coming*

*from the consecrated host that you've just received and flowing through you.[27]*

To the phenomenalist, as to the Charismatic, the object has no true existence apart from the subject. At its logical extreme, the question becomes one of the relationship of the consciousness to itself. It is, therefore, not difficult to see why the modern religion, Conciliar Catholicism, has become, according to some accusations, the religion of Man worshipping himself.

### **Gnostic tendencies**

Various forms of gnosticism have plagued the Church through the centuries; they have differed in detail, but the central underlying factor among them has been the alleged existence of a "secret knowledge," or *gnosis*, which makes its possessors the true believers and, thus, the only ones really bound for heaven. With Charismatics, this *gnosis* becomes the experience of God through interior or exterior manifestations of "His Spirit," which makes those experiencing these strange phenomena the "true believers" (See the above quotation concerning "Baptism in the Spirit.").

### **Ecumenism**

The Charismatic phenomenalist philosophy has interesting repercussions in the area of ecumenism. To the Charismatic, at Vatican II "*The Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture....*"[28] The fact that non-Catholics have shared the same Charismatic experiences independently of the Church supposedly proves the validity of their heretical sects. This attitude is phenominalism, pure and simple: God's Spirit is producing phenomenon "x" in Charismatic Catholics; phenomenon "x" is also present in Protestant sect "y"; therefore, Protestant sect "y" shares the true Faith with Charismatic Catholics. The fact that the least experienced elementary logic student could debunk this false syllogism bears no relevance to the problem from the Charismatic standpoint since logic falls into the category of "head knowledge" rather than the truer "heart knowledge" which they boast because of their experience.

As this rather lengthy quotation demonstrates, Charismatics think that mutual charity based in experience is the principle of Christian unity:

*While the entire Church, clergy and laity alike, must grapple with and respond to this mandate to pursue unity, in a unique way, this is true for leaders of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal because both the origins of our Pentecostal renewal and the actions of God himself in the renewal are ecumenical. The renewal has an ecumenical dimension which is not accidental, but is part of its nature. Thus, the charismatic renewal has often been described as an ecumenical grace for the church.*

*Three points of modern history are helpful here. At the end of the last century, while Pope Leo XIII was leading Catholics everywhere to pray for the renewal of the Holy Spirit [sic], many evangelical Protestants were avidly seeking a renewal in the Spirit. Secondly, the ecumenical thrust of Vatican II was a principal component of the new Pentecost prayed for by the whole Catholic Church before and during the Council. Thirdly, when the Pentecostal renewal began among the Catholics in the late 1960's, the same renewal of baptism in the Spirit, charisms, and mutual service and love...[were] simultaneously evidenced among Christians from other ecclesial communities throughout the world....*

*A key to success is genuine mutual respect among leaders [of both Protestant and Catholic Charismatics]. When both Catholic charismatic and evangelical, Pentecostal, and non-denominational Protestant leaders accept the validity of the faith of their counterparts, there is a good foundation. Mutual recognition of the fact that faith in Jesus Christ and baptism makes [sic] us brothers and sisters in Christ and members together of His body, is fundamental to building*

*relationships of mutual trust, respect, and friendship. There is a direct relationship between such a foundation, of solid personal relationships, and the success of any ecumenical enterprise [emphasis added].*[29]

Catholics know that true Christian unity means only one thing: the return of all those in error to the one true Church, founded and headed by Christ and administered by his Vicar on earth, the Roman Pontiff. The unity of the Church is based on objective Truth, guarded and proclaimed by the Papacy, which is the principle of the unity of the Church. Those not in unity of faith and communion with the Church are, at least objectively speaking, heretics because of the former and schismatics because of the latter point. The unbroken Tradition of the Church bars them, objectively speaking, from salvation as long as their disunity persists:

Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.[30]

Contrary to the Charismatic position, Pope Pius XII writes, in his magnificent encyclical *Mystici Corporis*:

*"Christ," says the Apostle, "is the Head of the Body of the Church." If the Church is a body, it must be an unbroken unity, according to those words of Paul: "Though many we are one body in Christ." But it is not enough that the Body of the Church should be an unbroken unity; it must also be something definite and perceptible to the senses as Our predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Satis Cognitum* asserts: "The Church is visible because she is a body." Hence they err in a matter of divine truth, who imagine the Church to be invisible, intangible, a something merely "pneumatological [spiritual]" as they say, by which many Christian communities, though they differ from each other in their profession of faith, are united by an invisible bond [emphasis added].*[31]

Regarding membership in the one Church, the same holy Pontiff has this to say:

*Actually, only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed. "For in one Spirit," says the Apostle, "were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free." As therefore in the true Christian community there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Baptism, so there can be only one faith. And therefore, if a man refuse to hear the Church, let him be considered—so the Lord commands—as a heathen and a publican. It follows that those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a body, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit [emphasis added].*[32]

Thus, from a Catholic standpoint, one must admit that the existence of true charismatic phenomena among Protestants is highly unlikely. If these true phenomena were present at all, they would be so in such a way as to be clearly exceptional and not normative, and they would have one and only one end—the conversion of the Protestants involved to Catholicism. Therefore, if even true charismatic phenomena would not be the basis of true unity among Catholics and Protestants (as Protestants), the idea that such suspect phenomena as are now occurring might be the basis of a false and irenistic "unity" between disparate faiths is clearly un-Catholic and betokens a certain loss of the Faith on the part of those who think in this way.

### **Protestantism**

Given the CCR's ecumenical Protestant roots, it should surprise no one that the Charismatics' thinking is slanted markedly towards Protestantism. One of the hallmarks of Protestantism is the

proposition sola scriptura (scripture alone), e.g., personal interpretation of scripture based on the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit." At the root of this problem lies the Charismatics' typically Protestant rejection of Tradition as a source of Revelation. As the following quotations demonstrate, Charismatics share wholeheartedly in this dangerous teaching:

*...The foundation of the Charismatic Renewal movement...is scripture. Short scripture readings are part and parcel of the action at prayer meetings....In my experience a thirst for the Scriptures is one of the great blessings of these times....Yet it strikes me as self evident that those who desire a personal relationship with God ought at least make themselves familiar with this book....Holy Spirit, inspirer of the Scriptures, inspire us with a love of your word. Lead us to the passages which will be of most effacacy [sic] in our lives and to an ever greater knowledge of the Father and the Son. [emphasis added][33]*

*Through the centuries, the saints have agreed that relating to God intimately in prayer enables God to relate intimately to us by sharing the divine wisdom with us....As we commune with God, He communes with us. But the opposite is also true: if we open our hearts to His holy Word, an exhilarating prayerful experience of faith, hope, and love will burst forth in our souls....As one becomes more and more aware that "the letter kills but the Spirit gives life" (II Cor. 3:6), eventually the Holy Spirit leads the devout soul to grasp the inner core of any given passage. Even if one doesn't know the "exactly correct" interpretation of a passage, the devout reader should depend on the Spirit to provide insight as to the right application of it.... Perhaps our problem is that we read God's Word too much and experience it too little. There's a great difference between memorizing passages and thinking biblically with the "thoughts of God" (I Cor. 2:11). There's a difference between having the Scriptures lodged dry as dust in your head, and having them throbbing with soul-stirring inspiration in your heart. [emphasis added][34]*

Of course, Catholics know that the interpretation of Sacred Scripture belongs exclusively to the Church—which is truly led by the Holy Ghost—and not to the individual reader. The following excerpt from the proceedings of the Council of Trent explains this principle clearly, and the punishment promised to those sharing in this heretical belief and practice should give Charismatics pause, to say the least:

Furthermore, in order to curb impudent clever persons, the synod decrees that no one who relies on his own judgment in matters of faith and morals, which pertain to the building up of Christian doctrine, and that no one who distorts the Sacred Scripture according to his own opinions shall dare to interpret the said Sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which is held by Holy Mother Church, whose duty it is to judge regarding the true sense and interpretation of holy Scriptures, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, even though interpretations of this kind were never intended to be brought to light. Let those who shall oppose this be reported by their ordinaries and be punished with the penalties prescribed by law.[35]

This teaching was reaffirmed by the profession of Faith of the Council of Trent and by the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith of the First Vatican Council.[36]

### **Antiquarianism**

A common liberal tendency is to feign a desire to return to the practices of the early Church. Luther, Huss, and countless heretics have used the same ploy to mask their innovations. Catholics know that the Faith of the early Church was entirely orthodox and that the liturgical forms and practices of the Church followed a genuine development (not evolution!) toward the point where the outward form of the cult of the Church was most appropriate to express its inward belief. Thus, the supposed "accretions" into the sacred liturgy posited before Vatican II were not really

accretions at all but legitimate organic developments of the liturgy which brought greater external solemnity to the worship of the Godhead.

Pope Pius XII dealt with this error, already widely expressed during his reign:

*The desire to restore everything indiscriminately to its ancient condition is neither wise nor praiseworthy. It would be wrong, for example, to want the altar restored to its ancient form of a table, to want black eliminated from the liturgical colors, and pictures and statues excluded from our churches; to require crucifixes that do not represent the bitter sufferings of the divine Redeemer.[37]*

Analogically, to those who argue that the presence of the *charismata* in the early Church proves their suitability (or even necessity) today, Catholics can reply that one does not follow from the other. The *charismata* served a very specific purpose at a very specific time—to give impetus to the worldwide expansion of the fledgling Church. As Pope Pius XII says:

*The Church which He founded by His Blood, He strengthened on the Day of Pentecost by a special power, given from heaven. For, having solemnly installed in his exalted office him whom He had already nominated as His Vicar, He had ascended into heaven; and sitting now at the right hand of the Father He wished to make known and proclaim His Spouse through the visible coming of the Holy Spirit with the sound of a mighty wind and tongues of fire. For just as He Himself when He began to preach was made known by His Eternal Father through the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Him in the form of a dove, so likewise, as the Apostles were about to enter upon their ministry of preaching, Christ our Lord sent the Holy Spirit down from Heaven, to touch them with tongues of fire and to point out, as by the finger of God, the supernatural mission and office of the Church. [emphasis added][38]*

As previously stated, the end of these external manifestations of the Holy Ghost corresponded roughly with the Church's achievement of moral universality. The desire to return to practices which were suited to an earlier time and never intended to be ordinary is antiquarianism pure and simple. As pointed out previously, the discounting of Tradition, such as that exemplified in the quotation of St. Augustine above concerning the *charismata*, is a Protestant trait—as is the justification of this disregard based on the "inspired" Bible reading of each individual Charismatic.

## **False ideas about the Church**

### **Her mission**

Charismatics assert that the mission of the Church is praise: "*Praise is the raison d'être of the Church.*"[39] Although praise is certainly and undeniably something which men owe to their Creator in justice, this can hardly be considered the reason, sine qua non, for which Christ instituted his Church. On the contrary, Our Lord did not found the Church in order to procure for Himself a ready-made fan club; He founded it in order to perpetuate his work of Redemption for all time. As the Fathers of the First Vatican Council explain in their First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ (*Pastor Aeternus*):

*"The Eternal Pastor and Bishop of our souls" [1 Pet. 2:25], in order to render the saving work of redemption perennial, willed to build a holy Church, in which, as in the house of the living God, all the faithful might be contained by the bond of one faith and charity. [emphasis added][40]*

This teaching of the Church's Magisterium resoundingly contradicts the Charismatics' false notion of the mission of the Church and explodes the ecumenical basis of the entire movement.

Although, undeniably, the ultimate purpose of every external action of the Blessed Trinity is the increase of the glory of God, the immediate purpose of the founding of the Church was to apply the fruits of the Redemption to man. "*The sanctification of men by the communication of the truth, of the Commandments, and of the grace of Christ is the immediate purpose of the Church.*"[41] Objectively speaking, God's glory is shown forth more brightly because of this act; subjectively speaking, man wishes to praise Him more ardently as a result. This confusion of the subjective with the objective is a hallmark of the CCR and has its roots in phenomenism.

### **Her indefectibility**

The Charismatics' assertion that the *charismata*, despite their disappearance for almost 2000 years, are essential to the mission of the Church (see above) is a direct assault on the indefectibility of the Church, one of her indirectly essential attributes. This indefectibility is a corollary of Our Lord's promise to St. Peter (Mt. 16:18). "*The Church instituted by Jesus Christ is given to endure forever at least in its essential attributes*" (emphasis added).[42] This doctrine guarantees only that the Church will remain forever, but it does not rule out the destruction of major portions of the Church. Still, these must be considered as non-essential to the fulfillment of her divine mission.

The perpetuity (indefectibility) of the Church arises from its being the definitive religion which cannot relinquish its place to another. In order to accomplish its divine mission [which, from Revelation, we know it will], it is necessary for it to survive in all elements essential for the accomplishment of that mission.[43]

Thus, every facet of the Church which has not been constant and universal (at least according to its nature) is not essential to the accomplishment of the Church's mission. The *charismata* are unarguably such a facet, and they are, therefore, non-essential to the Church's mission and not protected by her indefectibility. In fact, the Charismatics' assertion of the essential nature of the *charismata* is, as previously stated, an assault on the very principle of her indefectibility; for, if an essential element of the Church has disappeared for almost 2000 years, Our Lord's promise is a lie.

### **Her magisterium**

Our Lord Jesus Christ founded a visible Church that is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. He told His Apostles, the first bishops, "*Going therefore into all the world, teach all nations*" (Mt. 28:19), and "*He who heareth you heareth Me*" (Lk. 10:16). The magisterium, or teaching office of the Church, is infallible either when:

*a pope speaks ex cathedra or a general council united with a pope makes a definitive statement concerning faith and morals, or the ordinary pronouncements of a pope, council, or bishop correspond with infallible teachings already established.*

The question of the magisterium is central to the entire modern crisis in the Church because the liberals think that they can blithely sweep away 20 centuries of Catholic teaching on the whim of the contemporary Churchmen. To this criterion the Charismatics would add the "personal inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

One often hears talk of the difference between "pre-Conciliar" teaching and "post-conciliar" developments in theology, morals, etc. It must be stated unequivocally that a given pope or council cannot—by divine guarantee—unilaterally eradicate a previously defined infallible teaching of the Church's magisterium. Once again, it is not a question of what one feels Catholicism to be; on the contrary, infallible Catholic teaching is a matter of historical fact completely independent of the personal "inspirations" of the individual—be he pope, cardinal, bishop, priest, cleric, or layman. As Pope Pius XII says:

*For, together with these sacred sources [Scripture and Tradition], God has given a living magisterium to His Church, to illumine and clarify what is contained in the deposits of faith*

*obscurely and implicitly. Indeed, the divine Redeemer entrusted this deposit not to individual Christians, nor to theologians to be interpreted authentically, but to the magisterium of the Church alone [emphasis added].*[44]

## The root of the problem

### Catholic teaching on grace

Perhaps it is in the area of the concept of grace that Charismatics make their most striking departure from Catholic doctrine and reveal the taproot of their entire system of errors. As previously stated, Charismatics posit the necessity of a sensible phenomenon to accompany and signify the reception of grace by (or at least its "release" in) the soul. In other words, Christians in whose soul God really works always sense His work. This is utterly false.

Sanctifying grace, which "*sanctifies the soul,*" "*bestows supernatural beauty on the soul,*" "*makes the just man the friend of God,... a Temple of the Holy Ghost,... a child of God,... [and] gives him a claim to the inheritance of heaven,*"[45] is entirely insensible to the soul. This does not discount a special divine revelation to the individual about his state of grace, but such a revelation would certainly fall into the realm of the unusual and not be, despite what the Charismatics claim, normative. As the Council of Trent says:

*Everyone, when he considers himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may entertain fear and apprehension as to his own grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God [emphasis added].*[46]

Of course, God may grant sensible actual graces (although certainly not all actual graces need be sensible) to whomever He wills, but, even among actual graces, sensibility is not the *sine qua non*. Since many actual graces are sensible and the Charismatics insist on the sensibility of grace, the practical result is that they confuse sanctifying grace with actual grace, in effect denying the former altogether.

A practical denial of sanctifying grace actually means a denial both of the Catholic doctrine of justification (as infallibly expressed in the canons of the Council of Trent) and, consequently, the Catholic doctrine concerning the external operations of the Holy Trinity, which will be discussed below. The seriousness of this should be lost on no one. It has been said truly that seemingly small errors in the principles lead to major errors in the conclusion. Thus, the Charismatic insistence on the sensibility of graces is the taproot of their entire system of errors.

### Catholic teaching on the *charismata*

It is undeniable that God sometimes gives sensible actual graces, even extraordinary phenomena, to certain people. The true *charismata*, present in the early Church, are examples of these extraordinary phenomena. One of the Charismatics' biggest blunders is to try to make something extraordinary ordinary—even necessary for all (see above).

The graces which God gives to man may be divided into several categories. One of the divisions is between so called *gratia gratis data* (grace given freely) and *gratia gratum faciens* (grace making pleasing). The former, often called "gratuitous grace," is used to signify those graces which are conferred on particular persons for the salvation of others. To this class belong such extraordinary gifts of grace as the *charismata* (prophecy, gift of miracles, gift of tongues; cf. I Cor. 12:8 et seq.), the priestly power of consecration, [and] the hierarchical power of jurisdiction. The possession of these gifts is independent of the personal moral composition of their possessor....[47]

*Gratia gratum faciens* is used to describe the grace of personal sanctification for all men; both

sanctifying grace itself and actual grace which prepares one for justification fall into this category. These graces are necessary for all, unlike the gratuitous graces. St. Thomas Aquinas, pointing out this distinction, deals with both categories of grace in the *Summa* in two separate sections of the II-IIæ called the "Treatise on Grace" and the "Treatise on Acts Pertaining Especially to Certain Men." The *charismata* are discussed in the latter.

It is interesting to note that St. Thomas never refers to the *charismata* as being contemporary phenomena. He speaks about them only in regard to Apostolic times. For a thorough theological explanation of these phenomena, see his writings.

Basically, the true *charismata* were gifts which enabled the early Church to spread to the ends of the known world rapidly and become well established before the death of the Apostles. As stated previously, and as elucidated in St. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, the purpose of the gifts was the building up of the Church, not the sanctification of those to whom the gifts were given.

*Glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues, was given to enable the Gospel to be preached to everyone in attendance regardless of his language. Prophecies, healings, miracles, etc., were given to prove the claims of the Church and to foster conversions. With the achievement of the Church's moral universality, the need for such phenomena ceased for several reasons, primarily because of the presence in the Church of people of every nationality and because of the Church's proven record as the true religion, short though it was.

The same argument can be made today against the true *charismata*'s contemporary presence. Since the Church is now both morally and physically universal, containing people—even clergy—of every nation, what need could there possibly be of the *glossolalia* for evangelization? Since the Church has a 2000-year record as the true religion, what further need has she to prove her claims? As St. Augustine says:

Whereas even now the Holy Ghost is received, yet no one speaks in the tongues of all nations, because the Church herself already speaks in the languages of all nations: since whoever is not in the Church, receives not the Holy Ghost.[48]

On the other hand, St. Thomas admits the possibility of the gross diabolical caricature of the true *charismata* in questions which the reader is free to peruse:

- II-IIæ, Q.172,A.5:Whether any prophecy comes from the demons (ANSWER:YES);
- II-IIæ, Q.172,A.6:Whether the prophets of the demons ever foretell the truth (ANSWER:YES);
- II-IIæ, Q.178,A.2:Whether the wicked can work miracles (ANSWER:YES).

It is well known that the Devil and his demons can produce prodigies which appear as miracles to unwary men, as in the story of Simon Magus and his "miraculous" levitation debunked by St. Paul. Therefore, it is extremely dangerous to accept any such extraordinary phenomena as divine on face value alone. The great mystical doctor of the Church, St. John of the Cross, so oft-quoted and misunderstood by modernist spiritual "gurus," had these things to say concerning supposed personal "revelations from God" experienced among his contemporaries:

*And I greatly fear what is happening in these times of ours: If any soul whatever after a bit of meditation has in its recollection one of these locutions, it will immediately baptize all as coming from God and with such a supposition say "God told me," "God answered me." Yet this is not so, but, as we pointed out, these persons themselves are more often the origin of their locution.[49]*

Through the desire of accepting them one opens the door to the devil. The devil can then deceive one by other communications expertly feigned and disguised as genuine. In the words of the

Apostle, he can transform himself into an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14).... Regardless of the cause of these apprehensions, it is always good for a man to reject them with closed eyes. If he fails to do so, he will make room for those having a diabolical origin and empower the devil to impose his communications. Not only this, but the diabolical representations will multiply while those from God will gradually cease, so that eventually all will come from the devil and none at all from God. This has occurred with many incautious and uninstructed people.[50]

Indeed, Our Lord Jesus Christ warns the Church of the dangers of taking supposed miracles at face value:

*For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) the elect. (Mt. 24:24)*

Far more chilling is His warning:

*Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity. (Mt. 7:21-23)*

#### **Catholic teaching on the Holy Trinity**

Of course, a thorough dogmatic exposition on the Holy Trinity is beyond the scope of this article, but, in order to grasp the gravity of the Charismatics' errors, it is essential to understand the so-called external missions. A mission, or sending, presupposes a sender, one sent, and a place to which one is sent. Regarding the sender and the sent, theologians speak according to "appropriations" of God the Father as He-who-sends, God the Son as He-who-is-sent-and-sends, and God the Holy Ghost as He-who-is-sent-but-does-not-send. Catholic doctrine on the Trinity teaches that (by "circumcession") all external operations of the Holy Trinity are common to the three divine Persons. Regarding the place to which one of the divine Persons is sent, it must be made clear that, although God is present everywhere in the universe, His mode of presence in any given place changes when one of the divine Persons is sent.

There are two types of external mission of the Holy Trinity: the visible and the invisible. The invisible mission is, fittingly, insensible to the person to whom the divine Person is sent, the visible mission sensible. The invisible mission follows on the bestowal of sanctifying grace and has as its object the indwelling of God in the soul of the just. In Holy Writ the indwelling is generally ascribed to the Holy Ghost, but with the Holy Ghost the Father and the Son also come to dwell in the souls of the just.[51]

The visible mission of the Holy Ghost has encompassed such sensible phenomena as His appearance as a dove at Our Lord's baptism, His descent in the form of tongues of fire upon the Apostles at Pentecost, and the true charismata in the Apostolic Age of the Church. By its very nature, the visible mission is transitory.[52] The invisible mission is accomplished in the conferral of sanctifying grace; this takes place most normally in the worthy reception of the sacraments:

But the principle work of the Holy Ghost is the sanctification of souls through grace.... It is most especially through the sacraments, and notably through the sacrament of Confirmation, that the Holy Ghost communicates His graces and His gifts.[53]

Thus, the insistence on the sensibility of grace, in its practical denial of sanctifying grace, denies also the invisible mission of the Holy Ghost and reduces the sacraments from their exalted status as the ordinary channels of grace to being merely ecclesiastical rites whose role is "complementary"

with the sensible "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" in the process of "Christian initiation" (see above).

#### **Catholic teaching on sanctifying grace and the will**

Catholic doctrine teaches that sanctifying grace, which the Charismatics practically deny, is a certain participation in the Divine life. In thinking about this fact, two extremes must be avoided. The first is that rationalistic error which sees participation in the Divine life as a mere moral union with God, brought about by human imitation of His perfections. The other extreme is a quietistic, pantheistic idea that the soul is annihilated and transformed into the Divinity. This is the logical end of the Charismatic ideas on the will described above.

Catholics know that grace perfects nature without destroying it. God positively shapes the soul into His image and assimilates it into His Divine life by a power transcending all created powers of the soul but utilizing those created powers in free cooperation with the Divine will. It is neither laudable nor necessary to annihilate the will; it must be subdued, with the help of grace, and ordered toward the Divine will.

Concerning the will and the operation of the Holy Ghost in the human soul, Pope Pius XII sums up the Catholic position:

*No less far from the truth is the dangerous error of those who endeavor to deduce from the mysterious union of us all with Christ a certain unhealthy quietism. They would attribute the whole spiritual life of Christians and their progress in virtue exclusively to the action of the Divine Spirit, setting aside and neglecting the collaboration which is due from us. No one, of course, can deny that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is the one source of whatever supernatural powers enter into the Church and its members. For "The Lord will give grace and glory" as the Psalmist says. But that men should persevere constantly in their good works, that they should advance eagerly in grace and virtue, that they should strive earnestly to reach the heights of Christian perfection and at the same time to the best of their power should stimulate others to attain the same goal, all this the heavenly Spirit does not will to effect unless they contribute their daily share of zealous activity. "For divine favors are conferred not on those who sleep, but on those who watch," as St. Ambrose says. For if in our mortal body the members are strengthened and grow through continued exercise, much more truly can this be said of the social Body of Jesus Christ in which each individual member retains his own personal freedom, responsibility, and principles of conduct. For that reason he who said: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" did not at the same time hesitate to assert: "His [God's] grace in me has not been void, but I have labored more abundantly than all they: yet not I, but the grace of God with me." It is perfectly clear, therefore, that in these false doctrines the mystery which we are considering is not directed to the spiritual advancement of the faithful but is turned to their deplorable ruin.[54]*

#### **Undeniable contradiction**

Given these comparisons of Charismatic ideas and Catholic doctrine, it should be clear that, whatever the individual adherent's dispositions toward the Church and the Faith might be, the CCR as a whole is not a Catholic movement at all but a deception of the Devil. The average Charismatic may well deny that he holds errors concerning grace, the Holy Ghost, the external missions of the Blessed Trinity, etc., but his deliberate renunciation of intellect and will renders his implicit errors explicit.

Charismatic thinking closely parallels errors from the earlier days of the Church and frankly admires the heresies of Protestantism. Charismatics' evolutionary idea of the Church's magisterium guarantees that they will defend themselves against all such allegations as have been raised here by scoffing at such "pre-Conciliar" thinking. Their nearly-Protestant disregard for Tradition will lead them to an entirely Biblically-based defense of their so-called *charismata*, which they received, of course, after scandalously submitting themselves to a non-Catholic quasi-sacramental rite

performed by heretics.

The fact that the Churchmen have not condemned the CCR will go down in history as a blight on the 20th century's record of similar proportions to the failure of Vatican II to condemn Communism. Indeed, one may legitimately wonder whether the "Spirit" the Charismatics claim adherence to is the same as the "spirit of Vatican II," i.e., the spirit of the world.

## **The Catholic response: apologetics**

Since the Charismatics' beliefs and practices are undeniably based in heresy, one may be allowed a legitimate doubt concerning the orthodoxy of those who profess affiliation to the movement. Of course, only God can judge souls, but one cannot, out of motives of so-called charity, call someone orthodox whose actions and words reek of heresy. To do so would be an injustice as well as a lie equal to that of those who maintain an attitude of religious indifferentism.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," said Our Lord to His Apostles (Mt. 7:20). From the poisonous fruits of the Charismatic movement, anyone can see its inherent incompatibility with Catholicism and the grave danger it poses to the Faith. The ignorance or complicity of high-ranking Churchmen notwithstanding, one must be truthful about the movement and the danger it represents to countless souls.

Obviously, unless there is a miraculous shift in the prevailing ecclesiastical winds, the duty of fighting the blight of the CCR must remain at the level of the orthodox clergy and laity. The apologetic offense must be three-fold:

1. Catholics must study to know their Faith better, especially in the areas attacked by the Charismatics, and develop a strong, objective, liturgical piety based on this Faith—not on the experience of consolations.
2. Catholics must politely refuse to accept any discussion of the so-called *charismata* present in today's Church as orthodox. True argument can only be carried out based on shared principles, and deception or prevarication on this major point will not lead to genuine advances for the truth, as today's Catholic-Protestant "dialogues" so plainly demonstrate.
3. Catholics must know and be able to present, in simple terms, the true teachings of the Church on the sacraments, grace, the will, the nature and mission of the Church, and the *charismata*. Those Charismatics who consider themselves orthodox and really desire to know the truth will listen. As for those who refuse to listen, the words of St. Augustine seem most appropriate at this point:

*Why does truth call forth hatred? Why is Your servant treated as an enemy by those to whom he preaches the truth, if happiness is loved, which is simply joy in the truth? Simply because truth is loved in such a way that those who love some other thing want it to be the truth and, precisely because they do not wish to be deceived, are unwilling to be convinced that they are deceived.[55]*

## **Summary**

The Catholic Charismatic Movement is a blighted tree bearing poisonous fruit, sown by the Devil among Protestants and transplanted into the Church after Vatican II. The delirium of contemporary Churchmen has watered it, and the lack of an adequate Catholic formation among priests and laity has cleared and tilled the fertile soil in which it has grown. More people eat of its deadly fruit yearly, and the vulnerable young, so eager for the profound knowledge of God and the sense of the

supernatural denied them by the Conciliar Church, are especially at risk. A generation of children is growing up thinking of Charismatics as perfectly normal (or even superior) Catholics.

This fruit is truly a seed of destruction and one of the most perilous fruits offered to man since the first fruit offered to the first Eve by the same serpent. May the new Eve, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom it has been given to crush the serpent's head, intercede for the Church and free the world from the peril in which it now lies as a result of the Catholic Charismatic Movement!

#### Footnotes

1 Rev. Thomas Foster, S.J., *The Catholic Experience of Renewal*, (1993).

2 Charles Whitehead, *Charismatic Renewal—A Challenge*, (1993).

3 Rev. Vincent M. Walsh, *A Key to the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church* (St. Meinrad: Abbey Press, 1974), p.46.

4 *Cf.*, the story of Cornelius the centurion and his family, pagans all, who spoke in tongues before their baptism by St. Peter in Acts, chapter 10. This is an example of an actual grace, and God may pour out actual graces on anyone He chooses, regardless of the state of his soul vis à vis sanctifying grace. Nonetheless, St. Peter immediately baptizes them and makes them Catholics, though the conciliar Church would have them remain pagans and rejoice in the "ecumenical grace" poured out on "all believers."

5 As quoted in William Whalen, *Minority Religions in America* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1971), p.179.

6 *Ibid.*, p.179–80.

7 Charles Whitehead, *Catholic Charismatic Renewal—At the Heart of the Church?* Part II, (1993).

8 Geroge Martin, *An Introduction to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, Servant Books (1975), p.8.

9 *Ibid.*, pp.9–10, *passim*.

10 As quoted in Charles Whitehead, *Catholic Charismatic Renewal—At the Heart of the Church?* Part III, (1993).

11 *Ibid.*

12 Edmund Gardner, "Joachim of Flora," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Charles Herbermann, *et al.*, eds. (New York, 1909): Robert Appleton, VIII, pp.406–407. For a refutation of Joachim's teaching, see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-IIae, Q.106 A.4.

13 Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, †44.

14 *Ibid.*, †45–46.

15 It is interesting to note that people who refer to themselves as "spiritualists" are usually really "emotionalists." Since emotions reside in the senses, these are really not "spiritual" at all but rather "sentimental"!

16 Michael Bihl, "Fratricelli," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Charles Herbermann, *et al.*, eds. (New York, 1909): Robert Appleton, VI, pp.244–249.

17 As quoted in Richard Scheinin, "Charismatic Catholics: Exuberant Worship Style is part of a Startling 'Renewal' For San Joseans," *San Jose Mercury News*, June 15, 1996, Page 1E.

18 As quoted in Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy Deferrari, (Powers Lake: Marian House), †331–338, *passim*.

19 No attempt will be made to correct each heresy found in the Charismatic literature; only those which have particular relevance to the topic at hand will be considered.

20 Patty Harrison, "Jesus, Lord of My Life," *Living Water*, January 1994.

21 For an excellent treatment of this subject, see Michael Davies, *Medjugorje: A Warning*.

22 Scheinin, *loc. cit.*

23 Andy O'Neill, *The Power of Charismatic Healing: A Personal Account by Andy O'Neill*. (Cork, Ireland, 1985): Mercier, extracted by Eoin O Riain as "The Charism of Prophecy."

- 24 Rev. Rene Laurentin, *The Apparitions at Medjugorje Prolonged: A Merciful Delay for a World in Danger?* (Milford: Riehle Foundation, 1987), p.67.
- 25 Rev. John Hampsch, C.M.F., "Getting excited about the Bible," SCRC Vision, (Los Angeles, 1993).
- 26 Rev. Dave Schwarz with Sandra Perior, *The Healing Sacraments*, (1994).
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, †3.
- 29 Kevin Ranaghan, "Ecumenism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Today," *ICCRS: Palazzo della Cancelleria*, (Vatican City, July–August 1996).
- 30 Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*.
- 31 Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*.
- 32 *Ibid.*, †22.
- 33 Andy O'Neill, *The Power of Charismatic Healing: A Personal Account by Andy O'Neill*. (Cork, Ireland, 1985): Mercier, extracted by Eoin O Riain as "The Charism of Scripture."
- 34 Hampsch, *loc. cit.*
- 35 As quoted in Denzinger, *op. cit.*, †786.
- 36 *Ibid.*, †995 and 1788.
- 37 Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*.
- 38 Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*.
- 39 Andy O'Neill, *The Power of Charismatic Healing: A Personal Account by Andy O'Neill*. (Cork, Ireland, 1985): Mercier, extracted by Eoin O Riain as "The Charism of Praise."
- 40 As quoted in Denzinger, *op. cit.*, †1821.
- 41 Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Patrick Lynch, trans. and ed. James Canon Bastible, (Rockford: TAN Books, 1974), p.275.
- 42 Rev. A. Boulenger, *La Doctrine Catholique*, (Lyons: Libraire Catholique, 1906). N.B.: All translations from this work are the writer's.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*.
- 45 Ludwig Ott, *op. cit.*, pp.257–259, *passim*.
- 46 As quoted in Denzinger, *op. cit.*, †802.
- 47 Ludwig Ott, *op. cit.*, p.221.
- 48 St. Augustine, *Tract.* xxxii, in Joan.
- 49 St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, Chap. 29.
- 50 St. John of the Cross, *op. cit.*, Book II, Chapter 11.
- 51 Ludwig Ott, *op. cit.*, p.74.
- 52 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q.43, A.7.
- 53 A. Boulenger, *loc. cit.*
- 54 Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*.
- 55 St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 10, Section 23.