IS CATHOLIC PENTECOSTALISM CATHOLIC?

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Honors Thesis

PASS WITH DISTINCTION

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*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
In the Catholic Church, a movement began in the 60’s called the Catholic charismatic renewal (CCR), which originated from Protestant Pentecostalism. Its main tenets are that there is something called “baptism in the Holy Spirit” in which God’s Spirit comes in power into the believer, enlivening and strengthening his or her faith and giving him or her special gifts, called charisms. The most unusual of these charisms are speaking in incomprehensible “tongues,” giving prophecies in God’s name, and performing miracles, especially healings.

Many Catholics are shocked and scandalized by the CCR and do not understand it. I myself am Catholic and, having had some experience with both the CCR and Protestant Pentecostalism, decided that I would like to find out what exactly the CCR is and what role it has to play in the Catholic Church. In short, is it truly Catholic?

I think that this is an important question precisely because so many Catholics are confused by the CCR. Moreover, because of the extraordinary nature of the CCR which so emphasizes God’s involvement in life, it is worth seriously examining.

To answer my thesis-question, I relied largely on books written by leaders in the CCR, figuring out exactly what they believe and practice and focusing on those elements which diverge from more traditional forms of Catholicism. This insider’s perspective, I think, is the best way to study religion. As I learned what the CCR teaches, I compared it to Catholicism as found in the Bible and tradition, and as interpreted by the magisterium (the pope and bishops).

What I found was that the main beliefs of the CCR are well rooted in the Bible. Moreover, there is at least some support for extraordinary charisms in Catholic tradition. Likewise the magisterium generally approves of the CCR and praises its positive effect on Catholics, though it also warns of inherent dangers.
However, I also discovered some very serious problems with the CCR. The most important one is exclusivism or spiritual elitism.

It is a common, though not universal, sentiment among charismatic Catholics that they have something very important that other Catholics lack. Thus many charismatic Catholics feel that it is the mission of the CCR to make the entire Church charismatic, as the CCR is. This is incompatible with Catholicism because if the CCR were so necessary, it would always have been part of the Church and not largely absent for 1700 years.

Other problems that I encountered were an excessive regard for emotions, an antipathy for the Church's traditional structures and clergy, indifference to doctrine in favor of experience, obsession with the supernatural, presumption on God's ability to heal, naivety towards attributing things to divine or demonic intervention, as well as the general novelty of the CCR.

If the CCR is going to continue to flourish in the Catholic Church, it is going to have to abandon any conceptions that it is the best, or only, way to be fully Catholic. It is going to have to give up on trying to make the whole Church charismatic as such. It can continue to exist, though, as a legitimate part of the Catholic Church, much as groups like the Franciscans do. To accomplish these reforms, charismatic leaders need to be pro-active in discouraging exclusivism, which some of them already are doing.

Although I think that my research was sufficiently deep to answer my thesis-question, this is only a preliminary study and more research could be done. In particularly, more attention needs to be paid to the idea of Spiritual baptism in the Church's tradition. Also, conducting surveys and participating in charismatic prayer meetings, which I did not do, would be a good way to get an understanding of what the average charismatic believes, which is hard to do through books alone.
I. INTRODUCTION

The church is filled with the sound of loud, exultant music. All the worshipers are on their feet, arms raised in the air, eyes tightly closed, singing along triumphantly to a contemporary Christian hymn. In between songs, the music fades into the background while the prayer leader, a layman, shouts God’s praises, asking his blessing on everyone present. Everyone is praying aloud, creating a cacophony of sounds, in which can be heard incomprehensible tongues. Some people share prophecies given to them by the Lord. Things slowly settle down and then a Roman Catholic priest says, “In the name of the Father…”

Many people would be able to recognize such a scene as a Pentecostal, or charismatic, worship service—up until the point where the Catholic priest appears. Yet, it is far from an impossible scenario. On the contrary, for four decades Pentecostalism, with its tongues, prophecies, healings, and baptism in the Spirit, has found a home in the Catholic Church, although for six decades prior to that it had been an exclusively Protestant phenomenon, and a rather fringe and sectarian one at that.

The Question

For the Catholic Church, forty years is a drop in the bucket. Just because Pentecostalism has existed in the Church for that long does not that it must be there to stay, especially when it has never fully integrated itself into the life of the Church in the first place. Far from it. It remains a fringe movement and, for many Catholics, an object of great suspicion and confusion.

Most Catholics have had little exposure to the Catholic charismatic renewal, as it is often called (and this is the phrase that I will use, henceforth abbreviating it “CCR”), and do not understand it. Many do not even know that it exists! And those that do, unless they are part of it,
are often skeptical of it because of its Protestant origin and unusual way of worshiping. Some even doubt the mental health of those involved.

Nevertheless, the CCR appears to have biblical support\(^1\) as well as the blessing of two popes and general acceptance by the bishops, many of whom officially recognize charismatic groups within their dioceses. A lot of priests and religious are part of the CCR as well.

So, then, the question that is on many Catholics’ minds, including this one’s, is: **Is this Catholic? Or, to put it more clearly: What is the CCR and what role does it have to play in the Catholic Church?**

**Why?**

I am a convert to Catholicism. My conversion occurred by way of Classical Pentecostalism, specifically the Assemblies of God denomination, though I never officially joined that group, nor was I ever truly one of them. I never received baptism in the Spirit in any way that they would recognize, nor have I ever spoken in tongues or exercised any other extraordinary charisms. Nevertheless, in choosing to become Catholic, I repudiated very little of what I learned from them and greatly appreciate what they taught me about Jesus.

Consequently, even as a Catholic, I continue to hold within my heart a certain affection for Pentecostalism. I have even participated in a charismatic Catholic prayer workshop, which I enjoyed thoroughly. Sometimes I feel that there is a charismatic impulse within me which is just dying to get out.

Yet, I also harbor within me a certain skepticism which is itself very Catholic. The Catholic Church is not known for jumping on the bandwagon of every new fad that comes along, and she will only put her authority behind a report of supernatural activity after conducting a thorough and meticulous investigation. If I were ever to embrace something as unusual as

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\(^1\) Cf. McDonnell, p. 210
Pentecostalism, I would need to be sure that what I was doing was truly of God, and not merely a manifestation of my own desire to witness extraordinary spiritual phenomena, a desire against which the Catholic Church warns her children.

Thus, as is the case with most students and teachers of religion, it is with a deep personal interest that I have undertaken this project, in the hopes of shedding light on an unusual religious phenomenon, for both myself and for my brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The Bigger Picture

Every aspect of Catholicism fits together, as in the seamless garment of Christ (cf. Jn. 19:23). No question of Catholic faith or practice stands in isolation, nor is any an irrelevant bit of academic trivia. On the contrary, what one believes is foundational to how one lives. The CCR in particular is very much at the heart of many people’s lives.

Furthermore, because of its extraordinary and unusual nature, the CCR cannot help but stand as a challenge and “sign of contradiction” (cf. Lk. 2:34) to the modern world. Miracles, healings, tongues, Spiritual baptism—these things stand out quite powerfully in a culture shaped by rationalism, skepticism, and secularism. If in fact the CCR is an opus Dei (work of God), then the implications are far reaching in the extreme.

II. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

A. SCOPE AND RESOURCES

One can look at the CCR, as with anything, from different perspectives. In this case, I am looking at a movement within a movement, the larger being Catholicism. This greatly expands the number of possible perspectives that one could take to include several sometimes
overlapping approaches: non-charismatic, charismatic, Catholic, Protestant, secular, theological, sociological, historical, etc.

This paper will look at the CCR from a Catholic perspective, but without relying too heavily on insider information or outsider information. I will rely on insiders, that is, charismatics, to state what they believe, but those beliefs will then be evaluated in the broader light of Catholic faith and praxis to see if they truly fit. I have no bias for or against the CCR, as the fact that my opinions on it have fluctuated back and forth throughout the writing of this paper proves. I merely wish to evaluate it from a Catholic perspective.

Since I am a student of religion, this paper will focus primarily on the theological aspect of the CCR, as opposed to, say, the sociological, although there is a great body of literature on this subject. However, in the interest of being truly Catholic, that is, universal, I did read two sociological books on the CCR. After all, the Catholic Church affirms that the social sciences have an important role to play in the study of religion. I will also look briefly at the history of the beginning of Pentecostalism and the CCR for the sake of putting everything in a historical context.

Any paper that attempts to treat a religious movement, even a relatively small and recent one like the CCR, is of necessity going to be neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. Many good books on this topic are already in existence, and I certainly have not read all, or even a majority, of them. However, by choosing a few choice texts, I believe that I was truly able to get a firm grasp on the essentials of the CCR. These I will treat as thoroughly as necessary, within the

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3 Bord and Faulkner, and Williams
context of sound Catholic theology, by looking at what charismatics say that they believe and do. I will also look at various objections to the CCR.

In looking at the writings of charismatics, a few big names come up repeatedly. Among them are Dorothy and Kevin Ranaghan, two of the CCR’s founders; Edward O’Connor, CSC, Kilian McDonnell, OSB, and Réné Laurentin, all priests; and Léon Joseph Suenens, a cardinal. It is primarily through their writings that I have come to understand the CCR. That is not to say, however, that all charismatics agree with the opinions of these authors, nor even that the authors agree among themselves. But these certainly represent the mainstream(s).

On account of my Catholic perspective, I have also included a section devoted to looking at official statements of the Catholic magisterium on the CCR, as it has the final say in all things Catholic.

When all is said and done, not all will have been said and done, for there is always more to be learned and there remains a great deal of literature that I have not drawn upon in this preliminary study. Moreover, my conclusions are entirely subject to the authority of the Church’s bishops, for whom authentically teaching the Catholic faith is indeed their charism.

B. WHAT IS CATHOLIC?

In trying to answer the question, “Is this Catholic?”, regardless of whatever “this” one is talking about, an even more fundamental question pops up: “What is Catholic?” To answer this question, one must look at how Catholics do theology.

Catholicism can perhaps best be summed up in the first two verses of the Letter to the Hebrews: “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but
in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.”

To the Catholic, in its intellectual component, Catholicism is God’s revelation, or word, to the world through Jesus Christ his Son. In its lived component, it is the Church, the assembly of God’s chosen people on the road to heaven.

Catholicism, in all its teachings, practices, and laws, is based on God’s revelation completed in Christ, which can be found in two modes: sacred scripture (the Bible) and sacred tradition. These two modes together constitute the *depositum fidei* (deposit of faith), which Christ has entrusted to his Church to be guarded jealously as a “pearl of great price” (cf. Mt. 13:46). For any doctrine or practice to be considered Catholic, it must be founded in God’s word, that is, in scripture and tradition.

“But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.” This “living teaching office” is the magisterium, that is, the pope and bishops in communion with him. Though the magisterium’s pronouncements are not part of revelation itself, let alone above it, they are authentic interpretations of it. It is not up to the individual Catholic to interpret God’s word for himself or herself. Rather, “sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others.” If any movement is going to find a home in the Catholic Church, it will only do so with the magisterium’s approval.

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4 All scriptural quotations are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.


6 Ibid., 10 § 2

7 Ibid.
This is not to say, however, that every statement made by a bishop, even the Bishop of Rome, should be regarded as an infallible pronouncement. There is room for a great deal of theological diversity within the Catholic Church. Only those magisterial decisions are to be regarded as irrevocable that are given either by: the pope speaking *ex cathedra* (from the chair), an Ecumenical Council, or “the Bishops [when], dispersed throughout the world but maintaining the bond of union among themselves and with the successor of Peter, together with the same Roman Pontiff [they] authentically teach matters of faith or morals, and are agreed that a particular teaching is definitively to be held.” No pronouncement on the CCR possesses such authority. Thus there is room for true Catholic debate and divergence of opinion on the matter.

In addition to God’s revealed word, another factor has a part to play in Catholic theology: human reason and experience. Although few Catholic beliefs can be arrived at by purely human means, they are all considered to be fundamentally reasonable. That is, they can be understood by human beings, at least partially, though not in an exhaustive or comprehensive way. Thus, Catholic theologians always strive to interpret revelation in what seem to them to be the most reasonable ways which are consistent with human experience. Science, including the social sciences, has a valid place in Catholic theology. Nevertheless, these fallible human methods are entirely subjugated to the word of God, for “we believe to be true what he has revealed, not because we perceive its intrinsic truth by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself, who makes the revelation and can neither deceive nor be deceived.”

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8 CIC, can. 749 § 1; cf. Vatican I, “First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ,” 4 § 9

9 CIC, can. 749 § 2

10 Vatican I, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith,” 3 § 2
III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. A BRIEF HISTORY

Classical Pentecostalism

At the turn of the 20th century, during a time of religious experimentation and Protestant revivalism, a new, and yet also very old, form of Christianity, was (re)born called Pentecostalism.11 It derived its name from the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, descended upon Jesus' disciples, enabling them to speak in tongues (cf. Acts 2:1-4). It is also called the charismatic movement because of its emphasis on charisms, such as tongues.

On New Year's Day 1901, a small group of Methodists in Topeka, Kansas, who "were deeply impressed by the contrast between the gloominess of the present-day Church and the vibrant life of the early Church,"12 got together to pray. At this prayer meeting, Agnes Ozman, apparently at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, asked her pastor, Charles Parham, to lay hands on her in biblical fashion to receive the Spirit. He reluctantly did so and she felt "as though rivers of living water were proceeding from [her] inmost being"13 and began to speak in tongues.

Thus began Pentecostalism, whose experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, complete with speaking in tongues, quickly began to spread among other Protestants.14 However, Pentecostals were by and large rejected by their denominations as heretics, which resulted in the creation of new denominations like the Assemblies of God, Church of God, and United Pentecostal Church. This type of denominational Pentecostalism is called Classical Pentecostalism.

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11 Some historical background to the development of Classical Pentecostalism is given in Gerest.
12 Laurentin, 1997, p. 19
13 Ibid.
14 Gerest, p. 29, gives an annual growth rate of 10.7% at the beginning of the century, as opposed to 6 or 8% among other denominations.
Protestant Neo-Pentecostalism

Little attention was paid to Pentecostals in the beginning by other Christians, who regarded them as fringe and sectarian, until the 50’s and 60’s when Pentecostalism, which had formerly been rejected by them, began to infiltrate mainline Protestant denominations, beginning with the Episcopal Church in 1958.\textsuperscript{15} To be sure, this Neo-Pentecostalism, as it came to be called, was not identical to Classical Pentecostalism. In particular, it was not so connected with biblical “fundamentalism,” that is, with a literalistic interpretation of the Bible. Rather, Pentecostal spirituality was integrated into the existing denominations and their faith and practice. Sociologically speaking, Neo-Pentecostalism was less dominated by social outcasts and misfits than was Classical Pentecostalism, though it still appealed to them.\textsuperscript{16}

Catholic Neo-Pentecostalism (the CCR)\textsuperscript{17}

A revolutionary thing happened in the Catholic Church in the 60’s: the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).\textsuperscript{18} At it, the Catholic Church began to open herself up to the non-Catholic world more. Dialogue with Protestantism and even non-Christian religions was encouraged, among other important developments. The documents of the Council also made mention of charismatic gifts, which had largely been forgotten by Catholic theology, as being channels of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{18} The pope, John XXIII, at the beginning of the Council, prayed that the Holy Spirit would descend upon the Church and create in her a new Pentecost. The openness that the Council brought was a necessary pre-requisite to the Catholic Church ever accepting...
Pentecostalism. Many charismatic Catholics see the CCR as being a direct response by the Holy Spirit to Pope John’s prayer.

A year after the Council ended, in August 1966, some lay professors at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, an institution of the Holy Ghost Fathers appropriately enough, came into contact with Steve Clark and Ralph Martin. Steve had become interested in Pentecostalism by reading The Cross and the Switchblade by David Wilkerson, an Assemblies of God pastor. They, looking for something to enliven and empower their Catholicism, which seemed to them to be a too human endeavor,\textsuperscript{19} began discussing the book. A little later one of the professors, Ralph Keifer, found a book written by the editor of the first, They Speak with Other Tongues, by John Sherrill. Both were packed with Classical Pentecostal theology.

Shortly thereafter the curious group decided to gain some firsthand knowledge of Pentecostalism and sought out a group of Episcopal Neo-Pentecostals. After a few prayer meetings in January 1967, Ralph and another professor, Patrick Bourgeois, both asked to have hands laid on them to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit, just as Agnes had done 66 years earlier. They spoke in tongues and were reinvigorated in their faith. Later Ralph laid hands on two other professors from his university, who also received the Spirit’s baptism.

On Feb. 18-19, these professors decided to hold a prayer meeting, which came to be called the “Duquesne Weekend.” About thirty people—students and professors alike—attended, most of them having prepared by reading The Cross and the Switchblade. During this time more people were baptized in the Holy Spirit and more spoke in tongues.

Soon similar Catholic charismatic prayer meetings began taking place at Notre Dame, Michigan State University, and Iowa State University. Within seven years, the CCR had

\textsuperscript{19} Suenens, p. 73
expanded so much that thousands, perhaps millions, of Catholics were involved worldwide, though estimates vary wildly and are hard to pin down due to the CCR’s informal nature.\textsuperscript{20}

The CCR, which was spreading like wildfire in the Catholic Church, quickly caught the attention of the American hierarchy and the American Church in general. Many Catholics were skeptical. Words like “fanatic,” “cracked,” and “nut” were thrown around. Bizarre rumors spread: “If they touched you, you would learn to speak Chinese.” Others attributed the strange new movement to mass hypnosis, sexual frustration, or LSD.\textsuperscript{21} Some decried the CCR as being theologically unsound and un-Catholic. However, when the American bishops issued an official statement on it in 1969, they advocated cautious acceptance—a sort of “wait and see” attitude ala Gamaliel (cf. \textit{Acts} 5:38-39).\textsuperscript{22}

The CCR grew rapidly in the 60’s and 70’s, but then began to decline in the 80’s and 90’s. It continues to exist to this day and is especially strong in Latin America, where it is used to try to counteract the trend of hundreds of thousands of Catholics leaving the Church annually to join Classical Pentecostal communities.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{B. PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY}

\textbf{Mission}

The CCR’s primary purpose is found in its name: renewal. Charismatic Catholics are looking to renew the Church—the whole Church, even that part that is not Catholic. Thus it can

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Laurentin, 1997, p. 15, estimates that there were between two and four million charismatic Catholics worldwide in May 1975. O’Connor, 1979, p. 17, however, estimates only 50,000 in the US and Canada in 1973. Bord and Faulkner, p. 7, cite the Ranaghans as saying that there were 200,000 in North America in 1972.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ranaghan and Ranaghan, 1983, pp. 21, 26
\item \textsuperscript{22} The bishops’ statement can be found in McDonnell, pp. 209-210 and O’Connor, 1979, pp. 291-293.
\item \textsuperscript{23} This phenomenon is documented in Reinholz, Emling, and Maloney.
\end{itemize}
be said that the CCR’s goals are no different than those of the Church in general: the spread of the gospel, personal commitment to Jesus Christ, faith in God’s word, etc.

But the CCR also has its own specific mission, which is to foster “an intensified awareness of the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian life, marked by the reappearance of charismatic activity like that of the primitive Church."24 Put more simply, the CCR wants to show people that God is real and that he is here, now.25

The CCR can be compared to other groups within the Catholic Church, such as religious orders, although the CCR is principally a lay movement. However, many charismatics would not accept this comparison. While groups like the Franciscans seek to renew the Church through their particular spirituality without trying to create a Franciscan Church, many charismatics believe that their goal ought to be to make every Christian—the whole Church—charismatic. “[T]he charismatic renewal is for everyone. It is a renewal in something so basic to Christianity that it should never be the preserve of a special group.”26 “[I]ts potential is not merely to be a movement or a sect within the Church […] but to infuse and renew the entire Church.”27 For these people, if the CCR has any meaning at all, it is vital to Catholicism.28

Ideally, then, when the charismatic mission is completed, the CCR as such will disappear. “[T]he ambition of the Charismatic Renewal is to eliminate itself as soon as possible[. . .] The purpose is to disappear when the goal is reached, even as a river loses itself when it merges into the sea.”29 Explicitly rejected is the idea that there is a charismatic spirituality differentiable from Christian spirituality in general. There is only one true spirituality: Christian spirituality.30

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24 O’Connor, pp. 29-30
25 Cf. Clark, p. 20
26 Ibid., p. 27
27 Martin, George, p. 244
28 Byrne, p. 190
29 Suenens, p. 113
30 Ranaghan, Dorothy, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality,” p. 82; O’Connor, p. 30
Whatever is essential to the CCR, is also essential to Christianity, such that the two are ultimately synonymous. Christianity is charismatic.

This view of the CCR’s mission, which I shall call the exclusive view, stems from the fact that Christianity has been on the wane for the past few centuries. Christendom is gone. Church attendance is down and those that still do attend rarely show their faith in any noticeable way in their daily lives, or reject various Christian dogmas. During this widespread “crisis of faith,” the CCR is seen as “God pouring out his Spirit in a new way, forming something new to restore the old.”31 It is the holy leaven in a dying Church made up largely of “baptized pagans,” the remnant of the remnant.

But there is another perspective on the CCR and its mission which stands in tension to the exclusive one. This view believes that Christian spirituality is a broad category and that different groups give different parts of it different emphases, thus resulting in at least the appearance of different sorts of spirituality, one of which is the charismatic, which, as its name suggests, emphasizes charismatic gifts. Or, using its other name, Pentecostalism, it emphasizes the coming of the Spirit in power into the life of the believer as on Pentecost. “Viewed from this angle, there is no doubt that the charismatic renewal has its own distinctive character.”32 Suenens in particular seems to favor such an inclusive view.

Operating from this perspective, we should not be surprised to see that in some places charismatic communities have popped up, in which some people even take vows of celibacy.33 The similarity here to religious orders is unmistakable. However, these communities do not necessarily preclude the possibility of adopting the exclusive view, for the communities can just be bastions to foster the spread of the CCR, which is still intended for the whole Church. They

31 Clark, p. 18
32 O’Connor, p. 30
33 Cf. Laurentin, 1979, pp. 182-184; Ghezzi describes three such communities.
can even function as parallel, or substitute, churches where the traditional churches are deemed ineffective. 34

Both these contrasting inclusive and exclusive views of the CCR’s purpose show up in the writings of charismatics. Rather than adopting one position over the other absolutely, both are usually acknowledged to different degrees, and so the problem remains fundamentally unsolved:

Everyone in the charismatic renewal will experience this tension. […] Every age of renewal, though, has produced the same tensions[. …] The authentic solution […] has always been to live fully and deeply, to accept fully the new outpouring of graces that God is giving, resisting the temptation to close in on oneself, to become a sect or un-Christian elite.35

The Prayer Meeting and Growth

The backbone of the CCR is the prayer meeting. Charismatics simply come together on a regular basis to pray and exercise their various charisms.

Prayer meetings come in a variety of forms and sizes, but all share certain common elements. Very often they contain a sizeable portion of non-Catholics who have recourse to the CCR for want of something similar in their own local communities. The primary purpose of these meetings is to offer "a time of personal worship and witness and service to others in the context of a shared experience."36 These meetings can mature into communities that are comparable to churches.

A major part of a charismatic prayer meeting is “the sharing, reading, and proclaiming of the written Word of God in the Bible.”37 Another is exuberant prayers of praise and thanksgiving combined with the exercise of charisms, like tongues, prophecy, and healing.

34 Cf. Martin, Ralph, pp. 152-3; Ghezzi, p. 165; Clark, p. 33
35 Martin, Ralph, p. 162
36 Ranaghan, Kevin M, p. 40
37 Ibid., p. 57
Lively musical worship is also important, especially in the form of songs that can be memorized and reused.\textsuperscript{38} Since the CCR is basically a lay movement, prayer meetings are usually led by lay leaders and not clergymen.

Prayer meetings in the CCR are not characterized by the sort of frantic activity associated with Classical Pentecostalism, shout as shouting, jumping, rolling on the floor (from which comes the unflattering term "holy rollers"), etc. The American bishops’ first report on the CCR pointed out that compared to Classical Pentecostalism, the CCR “tend[s] to be quiet and somewhat reserved.”\textsuperscript{39} Prayer meetings are both structured and ordered, even if exuberant.

The CCR grows in a way similar to the way that the Church in general grows, or the way any movement grows. Those involved spread the news of what they are doing to others by their words and deeds, and interested people are drawn to see what the fuss is about. Those that like what they see and seek to join the prayer groups are prayed over to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is in effect the CCR's initiation rite, much as sacramental baptism is the initiation rite of the Church at large. Once a person has received Spiritual baptism, he or she is now charismatic and is expected to participate regularly in prayer meetings, as well as help to bring new people into the fold.

Here many charismatics stress that Spiritual baptism is not just a strengthening for the Christian, who is then sent away. On the contrary, one that has been baptized in the Spirit has been initiated into the CCR and must remain with it. Ensuring that this actually happens is one of the problems that charismatics talk about, just as all religious groups strive to make sure that their new converts stay faithful. “The ‘baptism in the Spirit’ [is not] an isolated religious

\textsuperscript{38} Cavnar, p. 61
\textsuperscript{39} McDonnell, p. 209
experience, which a person 'gets' and then does as he pleases. It is simply one of the things involved in entering into a stable and growing life in the Spirit in community."  

**Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The beginning of Pentecostalism in history and in the individual is found in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which can generally be described as the coming of the Holy Spirit in power into the life of the believer, as happened to the original disciples on Pentecost. “The baptism in the Holy Spirit […] calls forth, it sends forth, an individual with a newness and empowering of the Spirit in the same way that the first apostles were sent forth.”

The coming of the Spirit in power works a profound change in the person that receives him, though this change is felt in different ways. Sometimes a physical or emotional healing will take place. The essential element, though, is that the person’s faith in Jesus Christ is renewed and strengthened. Thus, “[t]he people involved in the charismatic renewal are basically men and women of new and richer faith.” Charismatic gifts are also bestowed at this time, one of which is very often tongues. Charismatic literature describes the effects that Spiritual baptism had had on certain people’s lives, often in miraculous, or at least dramatic, ways which result in a sudden, marked increase in Christian devotion and piety.

O’Connor gives three specific marks of the baptism in the Spirit that can be used to separate it from other religious experiences:

1) The baptism in the Spirit has the character of a new beginning, a rebirth, an entry into a way of life directed and supported by the Holy Spirit in a more or less manifest way. 2) It always involves a moral transformation [...] 3) Finally, the experience, at least when it is conscious, seems to have the character of a “being filled.” “My cup is running over.”

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40 Martin, Ralph, p. 157
41 Ranaghan, Dorothy, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” p. 8
42 Ibid., p. 9
44 O’Connor, pp. 135-136
Laurentin also lists increased attraction to prayer, both private and communal (including liturgical), the Bible, the sacraments and especially the eucharist, and love of neighbor as common effects of Spiritual baptism.  

Baptism in the Spirit does not come upon people forcefully any more than sacramental baptism does. Rather, it must be requested. Thus at charismatic prayer meetings where the uninitiated are present, time will be spent explaining what Spiritual baptism is and why it ought to be desired. Then an opportunity will be given for people that want to receive Spiritual baptism to be prayed over and have hands laid on them. The laying on off hands by someone that has already received the Spirit is often an element although it is not a necessity, for the Spirit blows where he will (cf. John 3:8). The logistics of how this all works out vary from group to group, but the essential pattern is always the same.

Dorothy Ranaghan gives an example account of a person receiving Spiritual baptism which gives a very clear picture of the whole concept, the effect it has, its relation to the sacraments, and to what degree it is an emotional experience. It seems expedient to quote the passage here in its entirety:

A man may come to seek baptism in the Holy Spirit because he has seen and believed the work of the Spirit in the life of a friend. He then trusts Jesus in prayer and expects that the Lord will renew in him the gifts and fruits bestowed in baptism but not fully activated in a living way. In the answer to that prayer, Jesus often becomes more real to the believer. He is much closer, more present in one’s life. He is not only at the right hand of the Father; he the risen Lord is really alive among the members of his body. This old belief becomes a new awareness, becomes really real to the believer. The relationship in faith between this man and the Father through Christ has been deepened, transformed, and has become the center of personal experience. It would be false to characterize this new-found faith-life as a purely emotional experience. Certainly human emotion is involved in any act of love, and people respond emotionally according to their temperament. But it seems better to speak of this new faith on the level of penetration and all-encompassing awareness and conviction which involves the

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45 Laurentin, 1997, pp. 30-31
46 Cf. ibid., 57
whole body-person with all of his human qualities in a response of deep commitment.\textsuperscript{47}

The receipt of Spiritual baptism is not always a dramatic, noticeable event. Its effects sometimes are not felt until later when the person notices that his or her faith has been enlivened. The manifestation of charismatic gifts may not occur until much later. Speaking in tongues is not considered a necessary proof that baptism in the Holy Spirit has occurred, as it often is in Classical Pentecostalism.

*Spiritual Baptism in the Bible*

The phrase “baptism in the Holy Spirit” comes from *Acts* 1:5 in which Jesus says to his apostles: “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” This baptism with the Spirit was the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, which was also accompanied by tongues. Other verses in the *Acts of the Apostles* give credence to this “second baptism”: 8:15-17, 10:44, 11:15, and 19:6.

In *Acts* 8:15-17, Peter and John lay their hands on some Samaritans who then “received the Holy Spirit.” This reception is dramatic enough that Simon wanted to buy the power of the Spirit from the apostles (vv. 18-19). Then again in 10:44 we see that “the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word,” and those that received him spoke in tongues (v. 46). This is repeated in 11:15, at which point Peter identifies the experience with what happened on Pentecost (v. 17). Yet again in 19:6, “[w]hen Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” Thus it seems that Spiritual baptism is a common thread throughout the *Acts of the Apostles* as people hear the word of God and are converted.

Here a problem arises in trying to figure out the connection between sacramental baptism, which Catholics believe truly imparts the Spirit (cf. *John* 3:5), and baptism in the Spirit. They

\textsuperscript{47} Ranaghan, Dorothy. “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” pp. 9-10
cannot be identical because in Acts 10:47, Peter, seeing the Holy Spirit descend on the Gentiles, says, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people that have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

Among Classical Pentecostals, this is not a problem because they do not believe that water baptism imparts the Spirit. It is merely a symbolic gesture, like the baptism of John. This fits well with Acts 8:16 where the fact that the Samaritans do not have the Holy Spirit is explained as being because "they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," but it does not fit as well with Acts 19:2-5, where John’s baptism is specifically contrasted with Christian baptism. Indeed, Catholic charismatics would regard identifying Christian baptism with John’s purely symbolic baptism as "a grave mistake."48

The Catholic charismatic’s solution to the problem of the "two baptisms" actually helps to support his or her Pentecostal experience. The Spirit is indeed given in sacramental baptism, but in a hidden way. Spiritual baptism, however, is manifest and unlocks the power of the Spirit that the believer has always had.49 Because the Spirit is already present by virtue of sacramental baptism, Suenens prefers to speak of baptism in the Holy Spirit as being something "which does not come from outside, but springs up from within."50 Likewise Laurentin quotes various authors as calling it a "release," "actualization," "manifestation," or "reviviscence" of the Spirit already given in sacramental baptism.51 The Ranaghans say that it "does not replace baptism and confirmation. Rather, it comes as an adult reaffirmation and renewal of these sacraments, an opening of ourselves to all the graces they bring."52 Lest some object that the Holy Spirit can be

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48 O’Connor, p. 132
49 Cf. ibid.
50 Suenens, p. 80
51 Laurentin, 1997, p. 38
52 Quoted in Gerest, p. 32
"released" in any fuller way after sacramental baptism, it must be remembered that the sacrament of confirmation alleges to do just that.

Lastly, let it be noted that two of the verses that charismatics might wish to use to support baptism in the Spirit already have an interpretation in Catholic theology, namely *Acts* 8:17 and 19:6, where the apostles lay hands on people who then receive the Spirit. The Catholic Church has always identified this practice as the sacrament of confirmation.\(^{53}\) However, since in *Acts* 2:1-4, 10:44, and 11:15 nothing like confirmation is mentioned, it seems that some sort of Spiritual baptism separate from sacramental baptism and confirmation can legitimately be affirmed as belonging to the apostolic faith.

Although the phrase "baptism in the Spirit" is scriptural, to avoid confusion some charismatic authors advise against its usage, lest it eclipse and render meaningless sacramental baptism, as has sometimes happened. In 1972, the Puerto Rican bishops warned that some Catholic charismatics believed that sacramental baptism was "merely an external and empty act" and that those that have been Spiritually baptized "are assured salvation," two statements that plainly contradict Catholic teaching.\(^{54}\) Because of this problem, Suenens argues for coming up with an alternative phrase, though he himself does not provide one.\(^{55}\) Likewise, a leading charismatic theologian named Simon Tugwell said that the phrase is "unacceptable in the last analysis, being exegetically unsound, theologically confusing, and very risky pastorally."\(^{56}\) Yet another theologian, Francis Sullivan, thinks that it implies "that most Christians have not been

\(^{53}\) In the "Doctrinal Bible Index" of the *Saint Joseph Edition of the New American Bible*, a Catholic translation, *Acts* 8:17 and 19:6 are both listed under the entry on the sacrament of confirmation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also quotes *Acts* 8:14-17 in paragraph 1315 to support confirmation.

\(^{54}\) McDonnell, p. 367

\(^{55}\) Suenens, p. 80

‘baptized in the Holy Spirit,’” which leads to spiritual exclusivism and elitism.\(^{57}\) In spite of these theological recommendations, however, “baptism in the Spirit” is still the most common appellation given to the experience by charismatics.

**The Importance of Baptism in the Spirit**

The Catholic Church teaches that sacramental baptism is ordinarily necessary for salvation (cf. *Mark* 16:16), but charismatics do not hold the same to be true of Spiritual baptism. It is not necessary for salvation, “even though God wishes all to have it.”\(^{58}\) One could easily imagine Catholics saying similar things about, for example, the sacrament of confirmation or the rosary. They bring such spiritual blessings that they should be earnestly desired, though one can get by without them.

Different charismatics give Spiritual baptism varying levels of importance, though it does seem to be universally accepted as the initiation rite of the CCR and a very good thing, indeed a marvelous gift of God. This notwithstanding, some charismatics believe that the Holy Spirit works through all faithful Christians, whether they are connected with the CCR or not, and that he comes in manifold ways and not just through what they call Spiritual baptism. A more exclusive attitude, though, can be seen in the vision statement of the Western Washington CCR: “[B]aptism in the Spirit is key to normative Christianity.”\(^{59}\)

**Charismata**

The word “charismatic” comes from the Greek word “charism” (or “charisma”) (Greek, χαρίσμα\(^{60}\)), which means “gift.” It is derived from the word “charis” (Greek, χάρις\(^{61}\)), which

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\(^{58}\) Laurentin, 1977, p. 36

\(^{59}\) “Our Vision”

\(^{60}\) Strong #5486

\(^{61}\) Strong #5485
means “grace.” It may also be derived from the word “charizōmai” (Greek, χαριζομαι⁶²), which means “to give gratuitously.”⁶³ Thus it is clear that charisma is “grace given” or “gratuitous gift,” in this case from God. Charisms are not earned.⁶⁴

The word “charism” appears in the New Testament seventeen times: Rom. 1:11; 5:15; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6; 1 Cor. 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 2 Cor. 1:11; 8:4; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; and 1 Pet. 4:10.⁶⁵ All but the last of these are Pauline texts, and even 1 Peter was written under Pauline influence.⁶⁶ In some of these instances (Rom. 1:11; 5:15; 6:23; 11:29; and 2 Cor. 1:11) the concept of “gift” is used generally, though in the others it refers to something more specific.⁶⁷

The apostle Paul gives us several lists of charisms, which he variously writes as both roles and acts:⁶⁸

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rom. 12:6-8</th>
<th>1 Cor. 12:8-10</th>
<th>1 Cor. 12:28-30</th>
<th>Eph. 4:11</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>Word of wisdom</td>
<td>Apostles</td>
<td>Apostles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Word of knowledge</td>
<td>Prophets</td>
<td>Prophets</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhorter</td>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>Deeds of power</td>
<td>Pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giver</td>
<td>Miracles</td>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>Assistance</td>
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<td>The compassionate</td>
<td>Discernment of spirits</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Tongues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interpretation of tongues</td>
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Although Ephesians never mentions charisms by name, the list found in 4:11 is clearly along the same lines as Paul’s others that do use that word.

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⁶² Strong #5483
⁶³ Laurentin, 1978, p. 4
⁶⁵ Cf. Laurentin, 1978, pp. 4-5; Strong, p. 385. 2 Cor. 8:4 actually uses the word “charis,” but in the sense of “charism.”
⁶⁷ Laurentin, 1978, p. 5
⁶⁸ Cf. Dussel, p. 39
It has become traditional to divide the charisms into ordinary and extraordinary ones, although Paul makes no such distinction. Things like ministry, teacher, exhorter, giver, leader, the compassionate, assistance, evangelists, and pastors would all be “ordinary,” while things like deeds of power (miracles) and everything found in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 would be “extraordinary.” Laurentin and Suenens specifically oppose thinking of any of the charisms as being extraordinary: “In God the extraordinary is ordinary.” All charisms are freely given by the Holy Spirit to all Christians. They also believe that charisms are not supernatural as such, but that the Spirit merely “sets free natural gifts.” Nevertheless, for my purposes, I will continue to make the distinction, since I am not concerned with such charisms as teaching and giving, which are not controversial to anyone nor at all unique to the CCR.

Paul favored some charisms over others. For instance, apostles are always at the top of the list, with prophets (including the words of wisdom and knowledge) coming in a close second. Tongues is second-to-last and the interpretation of tongues last. Indeed Paul shows his preference for prophecy over tongues quite explicitly in 1 Cor. 14:1-5. Despite the low place given to the gift of tongues by Paul, it is the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of Pentecostalism.

From a biblical standpoint charisms are clearly part and parcel to Christianity. The Catholic Church was no less ambiguous about this at the Second Vatican Council: “[The Holy Spirit] both equips and directs [his Church] with hierarchical and charismatic gifts.”

[God] distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church[...]. These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.

69 Suenens, p. 64; cf. Laurentin, 1978, p. 7
70 Laurentin, 1978, p. 7
71 Vatican II. “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” 4
72 Ibid., 12 § 2; cf. ibid., 7 § 3, 7 § 6; Vatican II. “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 3 § 3
However, the Council also sounded a note of caution about extraordinary charisms:

Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.73

The Purpose of Charisms

Charismatics do not consider the charismata to be the ultimate goal of their activity. Rather, they are means to an end, the end being faith, hope, and love, Paul’s “still more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). “They are nothing without the charity within which they have to operate.”74 Likewise the pope has said, “Renewal in the Spirit will be authentic and have real fruitfulness in the Church, not so much according as it gives rise to extraordinary charisms, but according as it leads the greatest possible number of the faithful [...] to make a humble, patient, and persevering effort to know the mystery of Christ better, and to bear witness to it.”75

“Not your gifts, Lord, but you!”76 The Spirit himself is the ultimate gift, pure Gift, who produces the fruits of the Spirit, which are more important than the gifts: “joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). The Spirit’s gifts help one in the obtainment of his fruits and virtues. Thus the charisms are tested by their fruits (cf. Mt. 17:20). A good charismatic prayer meeting is not one where many extraordinary gifts are seen, but one where people grow in holiness and love for God and neighbor.

Charisms are not usually given for the individual, but for the edification of the Christian community.77 This is not absolute, though, since Paul specifically says that the charism of tongues is for the edification of the speaker (cf. 1 Cor. 14:4). In what way do charisms lead to

73 Vatican II. “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” 12 § 2
74 Laurentin, 1978, p. 8
75 Armstrong, “Recent Popes’ and Bishops’ Statements Concerning the Catholic Charismatic Renewal”
76 Suenens, p. 82, attributed to Augustine
77 Cf. Laurentin, 1978, p. 9
faith and love and build up the Christian community? Dorothy Ranaghan answered this question by saying that they show that “the Christian proclamation of the good news of salvation is [...] more than abstract theory or pious platitudes.” They make Christianity into a lived religion instead of just a philosophy.

**Tongues**

Paul considered the gift of tongues the least of God’s gifts. Likewise charismatics complain that outsiders pay too much attention to tongues. However, it is also well known that the majority of charismatics speak in tongues, so it is a very prevalent gift. Moreover, this gift is probably the most striking features of Pentecostalism simply because it is so strange.

The word for “tongue” in Greek is “glōssa” (γλῶσσα). It refers to both the oral organ and to spoken languages. It is from this word that the technical term for the gift of tongues is derived, glossolalia.

The New Testament uses the word “tongue” 27 times in reference to the charism: *Mark* 16:17; *Acts* 2:4, 8, 11; 10:46; 19:6; *1 Cor.* 12:10 (twice), 28, 30; 13:1, 8; *14:4, 5* (twice), 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, and 39. The vast majority of these instances are found in Paul’s *First Letter to the Corinthians*.

**What Are Tongues?**

Nowhere is it explicitly spelled out in the New Testament exactly what tongues are. The texts that do give some context are confusing. In *Acts* 2:6 and 11 those that hear the apostles speak in tongues for the first time apparently hear their own native languages. This would indicate that the gift of tongues allows one to speak real languages that one has not learned.

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78 Ranaghan, Dorothy. “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” P. 14
79 Cf. Laurentin, 1977, p. 58
80 Ibid., p. 60
81 Strong #1100
82 Strong, p. 1067

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However, that same passage in verse 13 has some people scoffing that the apostles are merely drunk, which fits better with tongues being merely meaningless sounds and not real languages.

In 1 Cor. 13:1, Paul speaks of “the tongues of mortals and of angels.” The latter phrase may be a descriptor for the incomprehensible sound of glossolalia. Then in 14:2 he says that “those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit.” Combined with the rest of the chapter it becomes clear that tongues are usually incomprehensible, Pentecost excepted.

However, in 1 Cor. 14:10-11, Paul says, “Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me.” Then again in verse 21 he seems to indicate that tongues are foreign languages. This does not contradict what he said earlier, for if one does not understand a foreign language, it is incomprehensible to that person, especially if it is an angelic tongue. This also enables one to make sense out the account of Pentecost, where some people heard their own languages but others thought that the apostles were drunk. Perhaps the latter people did not hear any of their own languages and did not realize that what was being spoken were foreign languages, since they did not understand them.

In much Pentecostal literature it seems to be accepted that tongues are real languages, though ones that are generally not understood. This is also what the average charismatic believes: “Despite the lack of any proof, the opinion is widespread in Pentecostalism and Neo-
Pentecostalism that the tongues spoken are real languages." This was also the opinion of the Church Fathers, although they did not experience tongues during their day.

Sometimes tongues are allegedly identified as specific, earthly languages. For example, the first modern glossolalist, Agnes Ozman, had her tongues identified as Bohemian. O'Connor gives an example of someone distinctly hearing the words "Chaire Maria," which in Greek means "Hail Mary," while someone was speaking in tongues. Combined with some other interpretations given, this convinced the listeners that the person had been praying the Hail Mary in Greek.

Not all charismatics accept this, however. Suenens, for instance, declares that tongues are not real languages. To him glossolalia "is a verbal expression independent of any specific linguistic structure. [...] It is a profound religious experience in which one gives expression to the inexpressible." This understanding of tongues fits much better with sociological studies that have been conducted on glossolalia, of which none has ever verified a tongue as having been a known language.

One linguistic, William J. Samarin, conducted an extensive survey of tongues across the globe and came to the conclusion that tongues "are very rudimentary, lacking a grammar and other typical linguistic structures and giving little evidence of distinct 'words.' Moreover, the frequency of vowels or consonants corresponds to that which characterizes the native languages of the tongue speaker." Tape recordings of tongues have also failed to establish that they are

84 Laurentin, 1977, p. 67. He quotes a study that said that only 27% of tongue speakers do not think that their tongues are real languages.
85 O'Connor, 1979, p. 57. Laurentin, 1997, also gives several accounts of apparent identifications on pp. 68-70. Likewise, Williams, p. 113, quotes Kevin Ranaghan as having testified to being involved in twelve instances where real languages were identified, though he denied that tongues were always real languages.
86 Suenens, p. 99
87 Ibid., 101
88 Laurentin, 1997, p. 68
89 Ibid., pp. 73-74
real languages.\textsuperscript{90} Claims by people that they heard a certain language are often incomplete, as in the example above with only two Greek words. It is very plausible that in these instances people merely heard sounds that occasionally match up with real foreign words that they know.

Even if tongues are not real languages in general, that would not, of course, preclude the possibility that at certain times, perhaps at Pentecost, they have been. Such instances, though, would belong to the realm of non-repeatable miracles and not charisms.\textsuperscript{91} Still, one is left to explain why Paul seemed to think that tongues were real languages, and I have nowhere seen an answer to this question. Ultimately, though, it does not matter whether or not they are real languages, since one cannot understand them at any rate and it is not their purpose to convey information as in normal speech. Most charismatics also find the question trivial.

One misconception about glossolalia that seems rather prevalent is that it is ecstatic, that is to say, that it is out of the speaker’s control. At least among Catholic charismatics, this is not the case and they are quick to point as much out. The person that speaks in tongues has complete control over his faculty and can use or not use it as he or she wishes.\textsuperscript{92} This is consistent with Paul’s statement that “the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32).

\textit{What Is the Purpose of Speaking in Tongues?}

Many people ask what purpose speaking nonsensical sounds serves. Charismatics have given various answers to this question. Suenens was already quoted above as saying that it is a way of giving expression to the otherwise inexpressible.\textsuperscript{93} He goes on to say that glossolalia humbles a person because it forces him or her to act in a way that appears foolish.\textsuperscript{94} It can also be spiritually liberating, allowing the person to pray “in a way that transcends words and human

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., pp. 74-75
\textsuperscript{91} Cf. ibid., pp. 74-77
\textsuperscript{92} Cf. Laurentin, 1977, p. 65
\textsuperscript{93} Cf. Laurentin, 1977, p. 81-82
\textsuperscript{94} Suenens, p. 102
reasoning, bringing great peace and openness to spiritual communication with others."\(^95\)

Laurentin compared speaking in tongues to the Old Testament prophets and psalmists "pouring out their hearts" to the Lord (cf. Lam. 2:19; Ps. 42:5; 62:9).\(^96\)

Dorothy Ranaghan has a good explanation of tongues which I will quote here:

The gift of tongues […] is a gift of prayer and praise that […] serv[es] as the threshold of a life of walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the externalization of the interior work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, on the level of corporeality, it makes the experience of the Spirit real. Once a person has yielded his tongue and voice to the words the Lord gives him […] the power of this dynamic seems to flow tangibly and visibly through his life.\(^97\)

It seems then that praying in tongues is a sublime, liberating, and spiritually fulfilling experience for the one that does it, one which manifests God’s power in his or her life.

Because of the nature of tongues, it is possible that they can result in disorder. This was a problem for the ancient Christians in Corinth, so Paul told them: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God” (I Cor. 14:27-28). It seems here that he was referring to people speaking in tongues loudly to the whole congregation, as opposed to speaking privately to oneself (or to God). Thus even today whenever a charismatic speaks in tongues to the rest of the group, it is expected that an interpretation be given.\(^98\) Regarding the regulation of tongues in general, it is perhaps more important to recall Paul’s other command, “[D]o not forbid speaking in tongues” (I Cor. 14:39).

The Interpretation of Tongues

The interpretation of tongues is itself a charism. It is not a literal translation of the meaning of the mysterious “words” spoken, but rather a general explanation of the “sense” of the

\(^{95}\) Ibid.; cf. Laurentin, 1977, p. 80
\(^{96}\) Laurentin, 1977, p. 81
\(^{97}\) Ranaghan, Dorothy, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” p. 14
\(^{98}\) Cf. Ibid.
message, as in the manner of a prophecy. When tongues are interpreted, what essentially happens is a more impressive form of prophecy. Sometimes multiple interpretations will be given that differ considerably in literal content, but whose messages are essentially the same. This serves as confirmation of the legitimacy of the interpretation.

Tongue Speaking in Catholic Tradition

There is also the question of tongue speaking in Catholic tradition. Although common in Paul’s day, it apparently did not last much beyond the end of the second century. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) was perplexed by Paul’s talk of tongues because “this no longer happens in our day.” His solution, and one which many later theologians adopted, was to say that the extraordinary charisms were only necessary for the Church in the beginning and now have been removed, like scaffolding during the construction of a building. Although a compelling analogy, it was a utilitarian answer with no biblical basis. Moreover, extraordinary charisms never truly vanished and there are isolated instances of tongue speaking occurring in the Middle Ages.

The Sociological and Psychological Perspective

When glossolalia first reappeared in the twentieth century, the reaction of many people was to say that glossolalists were mentally disturbed. Many people still think this. However, this opinion is not based on scientific studies but personal biases about what is sane and what is not. In reality, sociologists and psychologists have conducted studies of charismatics and their results have clearly not been, “These people are nuts.” Although I did not study this area in

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99 Ibid.
100 Bord and Faulkner, pp. 86-87
101 Laurentin, 1978, p. 5
102 Sueens, p. 27
103 Laurentin, 1977, p. 84

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depth, it being well outside my area of expertise, I will quote from Bord and Faulkner who summed up the problem by saying that “[t]he results of such studies are inconclusive at best.” 104

They go on to say, though, that two scientific studies have indicated that glossolalists may be more emotional and less thoughtful than the average person. 105 Another study, however, indicated that charismatics have less personality problems, like depression and hostility, than the average person. 106 Suffice it to say for this paper that sociologists and psychologists have divergent opinions about glossolalia and that it would be an uneducated and unfair to simply dismiss glossolalists as “crazy.”

Prophecy

According to Paul, the most important charismatic gift after apostle is prophet. The idea of “prophet” predates Christianity. The prophetic books in fact are a whole section of the Hebrew Bible.

In the Bible, a prophet is not a person that can see the future, as in contemporary usage. Rather, a prophet is someone that speaks God’s word, which sometimes contains information about the future. Likewise in the CCR a prophet is someone that speaks God’s word. In this case, however, the charismatic prophet is not adding anything to revelation, which is already complete. 107 If he did try to add something, that would be considered by Catholics to be the heresy of illuminism.

Charismatics document a lot of the prophecies that they receive, which are then passed on to others through the internet, magazines, etc. Here are a couple of examples of prophecies:

My people, I ask you to come and taste and see; come and taste and see the light I reveal; come and examine the fruits of the Holy Spirit. I ask

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104 Bord and Faulkner, p. 80
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., p. 81
107 Laurentin, 1997, p. 49
that you yield yourselves to me. I ask you to trust me, to open your hearts that I may enter your lives and change those lives. I ask that I might put into you the fullness of my Holy Spirit.108

Know that I, your God, brought Peter and Paul to Rome to witness to my glory. I have brought you also and have brought you to Rome to bear witness to my glory, confirmed now by your shepherd. Go forth to the healing of the nations. Knowing that I am with you; and though you may pass through tribulation and trial, I will be with you even to the end. I am preparing a place for you in glory. Look to me and I will deliver you from the power of the evil one. Behold I am with you now, all days, even till the end of time.109

Like with tongues, prophecy does not necessarily have to be thought of as supernatural as such, or as a miracle, since prophecy is simply the speaking of God’s word, and God’s word is already known by Catholics through the Bible and sacred tradition. One need not be divinely inspired to repeat Christian truth for the edification of others, and one that did so might rightly be regarded as a prophet for doing so, even if every word spoken was not directly given by God. Indeed, the Catholic Church teaches that all baptized Christians become prophets and prophetesses through sacramental baptism.

Prophecies come in the form of encouragement and admonition much more than they do prediction. They always expound upon accepted themes and ideas within Catholicism. Anything that runs contrary to established Catholic belief will be rejected as false prophecy. For instance, at one ecumenical gathering David Wilkerson predicted that the CCR would eventually have to break company with the Catholic Church. This caused quite the scandal, but was eventually officially denounced as false prophecy by the CCR’s leaders.110

108 Bord and Faulkner, p. 89
109 Ibid., p. 90
110 Ibid., p. 92
Discernment of Spirits

The biggest problem that prophecy causes is differentiating between false prophecy and true prophecy. Making this distinction itself requires a charism: the discernment of spirits. Just as God’s Spirit can speak words of life and truth to his people, so can the devil and other evil spirits speak lies to mislead and confuse them.

In Catholicism, the discernment of spirits is greatly helped by clear lines between orthodoxy and heresy. If an alleged prophecy teaches something contrary to the Catholic faith, which was itself inspired by God, then logically it must be false prophecy. This is the same criterion that the Church uses to evaluate claims of apparitions or private revelations, which can be considered to be prophecies on the order of miracle. If the Virgin Mary supposedly appeared to some people but they are speaking against the Catholic faith, then that apparition will be condemned by the Church as being of human, or perhaps even demonic, origin.

Since the expounding and teaching of the Catholic faith belongs principally to the magisterium, so does the discernment of spirits. In general, Catholic charismatics have shown themselves to be faithful to the magisterium, even when it has come down against them, as some bishops have at times. This obedience and fidelity in the face of persecution is a credit to the CCR in the eyes of other Catholics, for if it is truly of God, it will not promote rebellion and dissent. Even if it suppressed for a time, Catholics know that in the end God’s truth will be vindicated. The pious course of action is always obedience to the bishops.

These are not just pious words, but are in fact lived out by charismatics, or at least some of them. In one instance it was recorded that a bishop forbade anyone from speaking in tongues in his diocese. The charismatics submitted even though they firmly believed that their tongues were a gift of the Holy Spirit. As a result they gave renewed attention to prophecy, which was

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not forbidden, and found themselves greatly encouraged by some prophecies given, which would never have happened if the bishop had not forbade tongues. Later he rescinded his order and the charismatics were once again allowed to speak in tongues.

**Sociological Perspective on Prophecy**

From a sociological perspective, prophecies are a very effective way to run an organization because they reinforce the beliefs of the group and carry divine authority.\(^\text{111}\)

**Miracles**

Another important part of the CCR is miracles and healing. The biblical and traditional basis for miracles is certainly beyond question. Scripture is replete with them. Yet, in modern Catholicism, miracles seem to have fallen somewhat to the wayside. No doubt this is partially due to philosophical influences that deny the possibility of miracles, although such notions are totally alien to the Catholic faith. But the charismatic would also say that this is due to a lack of faith.

In the Bible, the working of miracles is often dependent on one’s faith. Jesus told the woman that he had cured, “Your faith has saved you” (Lk. 7:50) If modern people do not see many miracles, it is because they do not have much faith. Charismatics very much stress having faith in the God that works miracles even today. Indeed, they would like to see God perform a lot more than he is right now. “[W]e should expect to see the day when our popes and bishops perform miracles […] or when they are guided by prophecies and visions.”\(^\text{112}\)

Miracles come in a variety of forms. Some are big but most are small. The most common type is healing. Charismatics often pray and lay on hands for miraculous healing, whether it be physical or emotional. They draw support from Jesus’ words, “Ask, and it will be given to you;

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\(^\text{111}\) Bord and Faulkner naturally spend a significant amount of time talking about this aspect of the CCR.

\(^\text{112}\) Martin, George, p. 245
search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you” (*Mt. 7:7*) and “if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (*Mt. 17:20*).

There is not much that is controversial here for the Catholic. Miracles are part and parcel of the Catholic faith. Vatican I stressed their importance, along with prophecies, in rendering Catholicism credible. The lives of the saints are filled with them. For someone to be canonized a saint even today miracles need to be officially attributed to that person’s heavenly intercession. Likewise, healing is an essential component of the Catholic faith. The seventh sacrament, the anointing of the sick, is specifically oriented towards healing, as are penance and the eucharist in a certain way.

A common practice in the CCR is to hold healing masses, or other healing services, at which parishioners are prayed over to receive spiritual or physical healing.¹¹³

*Name It, Claim It: The Prosperity Gospel*

It is certainly possible to take the principle that God works miracles according to faith too far, as has happened especially among some Classical Pentecostals. Whatever one wants, even material wealth, as long as one asks for it in faith, God will grant. This tendency can also afflict Catholic charismatics, though it is assuredly unbiblical and heretical.

Jesus did in fact qualify his statement that he will grant prayers: “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (*John 15:7*). If one’s desires are not in Christ, or not in conformity with God’s will, they will not be granted. Moreover, the New Testament repeatedly tells Christians to expect suffering in this life, as Jesus

¹¹³ Laurentin, 1997, pp. 102-106 gives an account of two such services and the healings that reportedly accompanied them.
did. Thus it cannot always be God’s will to heal. In fact, he works through even pain and illness.\textsuperscript{114}

C. THE MAGISTERIUM’S INPUT\textsuperscript{115}

As was stated at the beginning of this paper, any decisions as to the legitimacy of the CCR ultimately fall under the purview of the Catholic Church’s magisterium. And indeed it has not been silent on the matter. As a matter of fact, a Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships was officially established and recognized by the Vatican on Nov 27, 1995.

Only a few years after the CCR first began, an “International Leaders’ Conference” was formed. At its first annual meeting on Oct 1, 1973, Pope Paul VI had some positive things to say to it:

Certain common notes appear in this renewal: the taste for deep prayer, personal and in groups, a return to contemplation and on emphasis on praise of God, the desire to devote oneself completely to Christ, a great availability for the calls of the Holy Spirit, more assiduous reading of the Scriptures, generous brotherly devotion, the will to make a contribution to the service of the church. In all that, we can recognize the mysteries and discreet work of the Spirit.

Pope John Paul II similarly said in 1981, “The Church has seen the fruits of your devotion to prayer in a deepened commitment to holiness of life and love for the word of God.” Then again in 1992, “Certainly one of the most important results of this spiritual reawakening has been that increased thirst for holiness.” And in 1996:

How can we fail to praise God for the abundant fruit which in recent decades the Renewal in the Spirit has brought about in the lives of individuals and in communities? Countless people have come to appreciate the importance of Sacred

\textsuperscript{114} Armstrong, “Biblical Refutation of ‘Hyperfaith’ / ‘Name-It-Claim-It’ Teaching,” gives an extensive list of biblical verses that refute this teaching.

\textsuperscript{115} Unless otherwise noted, quotations in this section come from Armstrong, “Recent Popes’ and Bishops’ Statements Concerning the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.”
Scripture for Christian living they have acquired a new sense of the value of prayer and a profound yearning for holiness, many have returned to the sacraments, and a great number of men and women have achieved a deeper understanding of their baptismal call, and have committed themselves to the Church's mission with admirable dedication.

The common theme in the popes' praises is obvious: the CCR has brought increased holiness, prayer, contemplation, praise, devotion, reading of the Bible, reception of the sacraments, and understanding of the Christian calling to the life of the Church. Indeed, how could they not praise such fruits? Yet, distinctly lacking is any reference to those elements of the CCR that differentiate it from other renewal-movements in the Church: baptism in the Spirit, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healings.

Regarding the peculiars of the CCR, the popes have given no explicit approval or disapproval. Likewise, the Second Vatican Council, though it spoke of charisms, never addressed the way in which those charisms have been playing out in the CCR. It would be absurd to claim that the specific theology of the CCR has been approved by the pope or Council, no matter how much some charismatics would like to.

The Magisterium on Baptism in the Holy Spirit

However, the bishops of the United States have had some more specific, positive things to say regarding baptism in the Holy Spirit. Besides re-echoing the popes' praises for the fruits of the CCR in general, in the 1997 statement of their Ad Hoc Committee for the CCR, they made a point of saying, "[W]e want not only to affirm the good fruit of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal but also the grace which is at the heart of this Renewal, namely, baptism in the Holy Spirit, or the fuller release of the Holy Spirit, as some would prefer." The last clause of this

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117 "Grace for the New Springtime"
statement clearly addresses the question of the appropriateness of the term “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” on which no decision is made.

Since baptism in the Holy Spirit is the CCR’s initiation rite, this is a huge sign of approval from the American hierarchy. However, the bishops go on to make an absolutely critical clarification by giving a specific definition to what they are approving of:

It is our conviction that baptism in the Holy Spirit, understood as the reawakening in Christian experience of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit given in Christian initiation, and manifested in a broad range of charisms, including those closely associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is part of the normal Christian life.118

As defined here by the American bishops, it is certain that baptism in the Holy Spirit cannot be restricted to include only that experience that is shared by those that call themselves charismatic or Pentecostal. Rather, it is “reawakening in Christian experience of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit [...] manifested in a broad range of charisms” Undoubtedly many Catholics outside the CCR have undergone such experiences.

By mentioning that there is a “broad range of charisms,” the bishops also appear to be indicating that baptism in the Holy Spirit, as they understand it as being “part of the normal Christian life,” need not be coupled with prophecy, tongues, or miracle working, though such things are included by virtue of the phrase “those closely associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.” Thus, taking this inclusive approach, the bishops were able to “encourage the whole Church to look into and embrace baptism in the Holy Spirit.”119

This inclusive approach to what constitutes the CCR is likewise shared by Pope John Paul II, who includes himself in the CCR by virtue of having recited a prayer to the Holy Spirit

\[118\] Ibid.
\[119\] Ibid.
daily for 50 years, though this clearly contradicts the CCR’s borders as understood in the
exclusive way.

*Magisterial Warnings*

Besides praising the CCR, however, the magisterium has been known to issue very
specific cautions to it. For instance, John Paul II said in 1987:

> [I]t is necessary to keep watch always so that an authentic doctrine inspires this
type of [exuberant] prayer, and the ecclesial character of the sacramental ministers
may be well respected, and that the tasks of charity and justice are not abandoned.
On the other hand, the dynamism and generosity of these groups should not
impede other initiatives animating the life of parish communities.

In other words, the traditional forms of Catholicism need to be maintained even in the midst of
charismatic activity. The CCR cannot be allowed to eclipse other legitimate parish communities.
This latter part especially warns the renewal away from exclusivism and trying to “take over” the
Church.

The pope also has said that the renewal must help to encourage devotion to “the richness
of [the Church’s] Tradition, and particularly [...] her celebration of the Sacraments. Frequent
reception of the Eucharist and regular use of the Sacrament of Penance are essential for a
genuine life in the Holy Spirit.” In other words, the CCR cannot replace the sacraments or
traditional forms of Catholic piety. Likewise, it cannot replace the hierarchy: “there can be no
conflict between the fidelity to the Spirit and fidelity to the Church and her Magisterium.”

The prefect for the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph
Ratzinger, has also praised the CCR for the good things that it has done. However, he also has
spoken of the necessity of avoiding a wrong overemphasis that “could lead to setting against the
hierarchically structured Church (which is based on Christ) a ‘charismatic’ Church based only on
the ‘freedom of the Spirit.’” He goes on to speak of the necessity of the CCR remaining faithful
to the Catholic Church at large, and also of a false ecumenism, again in the name of the “freedom of the Spirit.” He concludes his remarks by saying that the CCR, like all organizations, “is exposed to misunderstandings, misinterpretations and exaggeration. But it would be dangerous to see only the risks and not also the gift offered by God. The necessary caution does not alter my fundamentally positive judgment.”

Similarly the Quebecois bishops approved of the CCR but spoke of “dangers such as sensationalism, a false ecumenism, a false prophetism, ‘fundamentalism,’ or a too exclusively literal interpretation of the Holy Scripture, sectarian tendencies, divisions of all sorts, psychological abnormalities, illuminism, and the want of spiritual discernment.”

The Magisterium’s Overall Judgment of the CCR

Taking all these comments into account, it seems clear that the magisterium is very pleased with the good fruits that the CCR has produced, these fruits being not extraordinary charisms themselves, but very traditional ideas of Catholic piety, faith, and love. Likewise, the bishops think that the CCR needs to avoid any form of exclusivism or spiritual elitism, which would limit the Holy Spirit’s activity, as well as other potential dangers. Spiritual baptism comes in many forms, including the particular form found in the CCR as such, but also many others.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. POSSIBLE DANGERS

Ratzinger mentioned that the CCR has suffered from various problems, though he did not say what exactly those were. The Quebecois bishops were more explicit, although they did not explain their list. Some problems I have mentioned throughout this paper where it seemed

120 McDonnell, p. 583
appropriate. Here, though, I will go through all dangers to the CCR that I think could separate it from the larger body of Catholic faith and practice.

Exclusivism and Spiritual Elitism

In my opinion, the number one danger to the CCR is exclusivism or spiritual elitism. This danger is, of course, inherent in any religious organization that strives to be part of a greater whole, as the CCR does with Catholicism (or as Catholicism does with Christianity). In this case, one is in danger of accepting the attitude that those that have not been baptized in the Spirit are not fully Catholic. This seems especially foolish in light of the fact that Spiritual baptism in the New Testament is mentioned too infrequently to make broad generalizations.

Those that have received Spiritual baptism can be, and in fact are, tempted to look down on those that have not. This is no fanciful danger. In doing research I came across several blatant statements of spiritual elitism. For instance, Ralph Martin refers to charismatics as "full Gospel" Christians, thus implying that non-charismatics do not have the full gospel.

Although charismatics affirm that baptism in the Holy Spirit is not necessary for salvation, they nonetheless think that it is very important. In the sections on the mission of the CCR and baptism in the Holy Spirit, I showed that many charismatics consider Spiritual baptism to be necessary for leading a normal Christian life and that all Christians should be charismatic as those involved in the CCR are charismatic.

One possible solution to the problem of exclusivism would be to lessen the importance of baptism in the Holy Spirit, but that would seem to undermine the CCR completely, since it is basically founded on Spiritual baptism. Another solution, though, is to broaden the definition of Spiritual baptism to include a wide range of religious experiences of the power of the Spirit in

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121 Cf. Laurentin, 1977, p. 173
122 Martin, Ralph p. 154
one’s life which lead to the fruits of the Spirit, increased devotion to word and sacrament, and the utilization of charisms, including all those more ordinary ones like teaching. This is clearly the way in which the United States bishops understand Spiritual baptism, which they can then claim as a normal part of Christian life. Likewise, John Paul II takes such a broad understanding as he includes himself in the CCR, though he, as far as anyone knows, does not speak in tongues or prophesy, nor has he ever asked anyone to lay hands on him to receive Spiritual baptism.

To accept this inclusive view of the CCR, some charismatics are going to have to reevaluate their mission of making the entire Church charismatic. The truth is that the Church is already charismatic and already receives her life from the Spirit. Whatever work the CCR is doing must foster this and not presume to create something new from nothing. Likewise, the definition of “charismatic” cannot be so restrictive as to make every mass look like a charismatic prayer meeting. Nor can every Christian be expected to speak in tongues, prophesy, or heal or to have to ask to have someone lay hands on him or her to receive Spiritual baptism. To do so would be no more acceptable than for the Franciscans to try to eclipse Dominican, Benedictine, and Jesuit spirituality with their own, however good it is.

This is not to say, however, that the CCR as a specific group need be disbanded anymore than the Franciscans need to be disbanded. There is no reason that the particular ways of the CCR cannot continue to exist as a legitimate community or spirituality within the Catholic Church. The various charismatic communities that have been formed, such as those that belong to the Fraternity recognized by the Vatican, can continue to exist and contribute without trying to dominate. But the exclusive view of the CCR’s mission as being something to eventually encompass every Catholic needs to be abandoned.
Taking the inclusive view of the CCR does not require charismatics to renounce their conviction that Catholicism is fundamentally charismatic, for indeed it is. Catholicism is also fundamentally devoted to, and in solidarity with, the poor, but that does not mean that every Catholic should join the Franciscans. It is a matter of emphasis and calling.

**Anti-Institutionalism and Anti-Clericalism**

Another danger that Ratzinger specifically mentioned was that of anti-institutionalism and anti-clericalism, in which the Church’s traditional hierarchy and structure would be seen as counter to the Spirit of freedom. Likewise, many have feared that the CCR would eventually drive people away from the Catholic Church in search of greater “freedom,” just as happened with the original Pentecostals and their denominations. This is no idle worry, for such attitudes are indeed prevalent among charismatic writings in different degrees. For example, consider this passage:

In many manifestations of the charismatic renewal there exists what must simply be called a prejudice against human leadership. And understandably so. The outpouring of the Spirit is a breath of fresh air in a Church which has been closed in many ways to the here-and-now direct workings of the Spirit, a Church which has generated project after project, a Church which is properly seen as a work of the flesh or of the human will and mind rather than the Spirit of God. It is true, and it must be said, that what is of the flesh is flesh, and what is of the Spirit is Spirit. And only what is of the Spirit will give life.\(^{123}\)

In spite of such occasionally harsh criticisms of the traditional workings and structures of the Catholic Church, it has turned out that the CCR has not separated from the Church.

Many parts of the CCR are actually very pro-cleric and pro-institution, precisely because they are closely aligned with Catholic orthodoxy. While the post-Vatican II Church has seen a number of heterodox movements pop up that seek to abolish many traditional forms of Catholicism, the CCR has on the whole remained very faithful, something for which it has been

\(^{123}\) Ibid., p. 149; cf. pp. 157-8
praised by the magisterium. For instance, traditional notions of Catholic piety, like the praying of the Divine Office\textsuperscript{124} as well as frequent reception of the sacraments and devotion to Mary\textsuperscript{125}, are frequently encouraged by charismatic authors.

**Supernatural Obsession**

One of the reasons that the CCR came under fire at first was because of claims of being obsessed with the supernatural. It has long been maintained in Catholicism that one should not desire to see the supernatural for its own sake. Miracles and such are only useful insofar as they lead to faith, hope, and charity, which are usually achieved apart from extraordinary phenomena.

There is likewise the problem with obsessing over the demonic. Exorcisms are a noticeable part of the CCR, though not in the full-blown sense of exorcism as in the movie of that name. (Indeed, such exorcisms can only be performed by duly appointed priests with the express permission of the bishop.) Spending too much time thinking about Satan and demons is an invitation for them to come and wreck havoc in one’s life.

It is also possible for charismatics to fall into the trap of thinking that everything is either of divine or demonic origin, as if human beings themselves were not the cause of anything, which would contradict Catholic teaching on free will. This itself can lead to both obsession with superstitiously entreating God in prayer regarding every little event of one’s life, and also constantly praying against Satan. In its severest forms, it can lead to divorce from reality.

Overall this is a danger that charismatics are aware of. They do loudly point out that it is very possible to pay too much attention to the devil ("demon-hunting")\textsuperscript{126} and too much attention to extraordinary charisms, when the real focus of attention should be on the virtues and fruits of Christian life. Although charismatics are quick to put a stop to such abuses and reinforce

\textsuperscript{125} Both Suenens and Laurentin, 1977, conclude their books with chapters on Mary.
\textsuperscript{126} Cavnar, p. 77
traditional Catholic teaching about the supernatural, they also point out that part of the criticism lies in the fact that a lot of Catholic do not pay enough attention to the supernatural. It is well known that many modern Catholics do not believe in the devil or miracles, although the Church teaches that both literally exist. Thus it can be argued that the bigger danger today is disregarding the supernatural, not obsessing over it.

Naivety

Supernatural obsession is connected with another problem, that of naivety regarding the supernatural. When one focuses so much on the action of God in everyday life, itself a legitimate part of Catholicism, it becomes tempting to naively accept every report of the miraculous as being of divine origin, when it is obvious that human beings are prone to exaggeration and sometimes pure fabrication in such matters. Moreover, we are quite capable of convincing ourselves that what we want to be true, is, no matter how many reasons we have to believe that it is not. In the Catholic Church’s official practice of evaluating reports of revelations, apparitions, miracles, prophecies, etc., she approaches them with healthy skepticism. For something to be attributed to God or the devil, any obvious human causes need to first be eliminated. Alleged miracles also need to have meaning. God does not perform parlor tricks for our amusement.

Presumption

Likewise, there is the very serious danger of presumption, where the believer assumes that God will always intervene on his or her behalf according to his or her prayers and faith. This I have already covered in the section on miracles. The fruits of presumption are a spiritual elitism that looks down on those that are suffering or poor, a lack of appreciation for the meaning found in suffering, which is so essential to Catholicism with its “way of the cross,” disillusionment and despair among those that God does not heal, and, in the worst case, serious illness or death as the
result of disregard for traditional medicine, which the Catholic Church considers a natural gift from God.

Again, though, it is not as if charismatics are unaware of these dangers, and the so-called prosperity gospel is much more prevalent among Classical Pentecostals than Catholics. Moreover, as with obsession with the supernatural, the charismatic would point out that the opposite danger is true as well: a complete lack of faith in God’s ability to heal or his desire for our ultimate happiness, as well as an obstinate rejection of all miracles, even those that are well attested to and which no one is able to explain in human terms.

**Emotionalism**

Another problem often associated with the CCR by outsiders is an excessive regard for emotions. It is obviously true that charismatic prayer meetings are more emotional than the average Catholic mass, and I already mentioned that some sociological studies have indicated that charismatics put more emphasis on emotion than thinking.

It is possible to attribute purely human emotions of happiness and joy to the Holy Spirit, thus causing a massive crisis of faith when those feelings inevitably dissipate. For this reason, John Paul II wrote in a 1998 letter to the charismatic Catholic Fraternity entitled “Enthusiastic Faith Alone Is Not Enough”:

> The enthusiastic faith which enlivens your communities is a great enrichment, but it is not enough. It must be accompanied by a Christian formation which is solid, comprehensive and faithful to the Church’s Magisterium: a formation based upon a life of prayer, upon listening to the Word of God, and upon worthy reception of the sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist. To mature in faith, we have to grow in knowledge of its truths. If this does not happen, there is a danger of superficiality, extreme subjectivism and illusion.
Clearly he would not have said this if he did not think that emotionalism was a real danger for the CCR. Moreover, we can see that he connects this problem with the problem of anti-institutionalism by mentioning the importance of the sacraments and the magisterium.

The Catholic faith cannot rest purely on subjective feelings. For those whom it does, faith is a giant rollercoaster ride between fanaticism and unbelief, since human emotions are often wild and unpredictable. Ultimately, emotionalism would be self-defeating for the CCR since no one would stick with it in the long run. Thus it is not surprising that charismatic leaders warn of this problem. For example, Laurentin points out that the CCR’s “emotional element is only an epiphenomenon of a deeper change.”

However, again, the charismatic can turn around and warn Catholics of the opposite danger: a total lack of emotion. One charismatic described how at one mass one could pick out the charismatics from the non-charismatics because the charismatics were all smiling and everyone else looked gloomy and lifeless! Certainly the Holy Spirit brings joy, peace, and happiness, and Catholicism would reject the idea that God wants us to go through life miserable and depressed, or as emotionless robots. As the pope said in his letter, enthusiasm “is a great enrichment.”

Doctrinal Indifference

The charismatic movement among Catholics is very much an ecumenical movement. Non-Catholics are frequently involved in prayer meetings because their own communities do not have any available for them. This consequently leads to greater understanding and fellowship among Catholics and Protestants, something very much encouraged by the Second Vatican Council.

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127 Laurentin, 1977, p. 29
128 Cf. Vatican II, “Decree on Ecumenism”
However, there is a danger implicit here, which is a false ecumenism where religious differences are simply ignored or deemed insignificant, even when they are fundamental to the different Christian confessions. This runs contrary to the Catholic Church’s idea of true ecumenism, which must be built on all parties faithfully and plainly confessing what they believe.

Likewise, an emphasis on emotion and experience can obscure the importance of objective doctrinal truth as taught by the Catholic Church, which according to Catholic theology takes precedence over experience. Thus it was that the American bishops in their original report on the CCR acknowledged that “in our culture there is a tendency to substitute religious experience for religious doctrine.”\(^{129}\) Ratzinger also specifically pointed out this danger, since a grounding in the objective truths of Catholicism is necessary to ensure that one is not led astray by false experiences. “And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

Novelty and Illuminism

The last apparent objection to the CCR, one uttered often by opponents in the beginning, is that of novelty and illuminism: “The Catholic Church has never done this before. Why should she start now?” This is a true principle, for God’s revelation ended after the death of the last apostle and he already gave the world everything that it needed for salvation.

The problem of novelty reinforces my conclusion that the CCR as such cannot be considered to be an exclusive club that all Catholics should join, or as something vital to the Church’s life. If these things were true, the CCR would have always been a prominent part of the Church, for Jesus promised, “I will not leave you orphaned” (John 14:18). Those things that are

\(^{129}\) McDonnell, p. 210
truly essential to Catholicism, namely word and sacrament, have indeed always been readily available from the beginning.

I have used this principle of guarding against novelty and illuminism throughout this paper to evaluate the CCR, primarily by checking its faith and practice against the Church’s oldest memory as found in the New Testament. For the most part I have shown that this works to the charismatic’s advantage, since the essential elements of the CCR are all well founded in the Bible, certain exegetical problems notwithstanding. Though the idea of charisms fell by the wayside for a long time, it never completely left the Catholic faith. Even tongues and prophecies have always been there, even when they were rare and usually reserved for exceptional saints. Thus, properly understood, the CCR cannot possibly be considered a Protestant innovation that has infiltrated Catholicism. It is native to Catholicism.

Still, the question remains as to why charisms like tongues and prophecy have been so rare in the past. For some Catholics the answer will be to re-echo Chrysostom’s theory about spiritual “scaffolding” and say that the modern manifestations are not authentic, and certainly he or she would be free to think so. Even such lauded miracles as occurred at Fatima and Lourdes a Catholic can freely reject without in any way removing himself from communion with the Church.

Charismatics, of course, and non-charismatics sympathetic to the CCR, would not want to say that all, or even most, of the modern manifestations of extraordinary charisms are fake. Rather, the general answer that charismatics give is that if more extraordinary gifts are being given today, it is the result of people having the faith to believe that God could and would give such gifts, a faith that was lacking for a long time. Unfortunately, this can also lead to spiritual elitism. Past Catholics were not faithless. Ultimately, then, the charismatic must simply respond
by thanking God that, for whatever reason, he has chosen to bestow his extraordinary gifts so freely today. Indeed, all charismatics attribute the CCR to God’s will and not man’s. Rather than questioning why God is acting now more than before, we should simply accept his gifts in a spirit of thanksgiving. “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” (Rom. 11:34).

B. MY FINAL JUDGMENT

The question that I set out to answer in this paper was “Is the CCR Catholic?” To answer it, I looked at the writings of prominent charismatic Catholics to understand what they believe and practice, and then compared them to the fundamentals of Catholic theology: scripture, tradition, and the magisterium.

If my thesis-question were to be posed as a dubium to be answered by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I believe that Cardinal Ratzinger’s responsum would be, “In the affirmative.”

The CCR is firmly grounded in scripture regarding its unique aspects, including Spiritual baptism (even if that name is not to be preferred or understood in an exclusive way) and charismatic gifts, including extraordinary ones like tongues, prophecy, and miracles. Likewise, they can be supported by the Church’s living tradition, so long as Spiritual baptism is not understood in an exclusive way, and even if extraordinary charisms were more rare in the past than they are now. And lastly, the magisterium has given clear approval to the movement, even if not taking a definitive stance on various theological questions. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the CCR has proved itself by its fruits of Christian piety and love.
Of course, I also am firmly convinced that the CCR has serious problems to deal with, most especially exclusivism and spiritual elitism, concerns which the magisterium has also shown.

*The Future*

It is difficult to try to guess the future of any religious movement. It cannot even be assumed that if the CCR is of God that God will necessarily keep it going. Perhaps it is his will that the extraordinary charismatic gifts come and then leave again as they did early in Church history. Who can say for sure?

It seems certain enough to say that the CCR will stick around for at least another few decades, if not another few centuries. Or maybe it will remain a permanent force within Christianity just as Protestantism has since the Reformation.

*The Present*

In any case, though it is certainly not for everyone, for now the CCR remains a viable option for Catholics looking for a zealous community that shares their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, and who believe that God is intervening in extraordinary ways on behalf of his beloved people even today.
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