

## THE CATHOLIC PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT: A THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

A so-called Pentecostal movement began among some Catholics at Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, early in 1967. In the two and one-half years that have elapsed since then, it has spread across the nation, over into Canada and other countries. Its participants certainly number over a thousand, and possibly run into several thousands. Included among them are priests, both diocesan and religious, and sisters of many different communities.

It is called Pentecostal, not after the non-Catholic denominations of that name, but because the power of the Holy Spirit which was so manifest in the apostles on the first Pentecost is being manifested in a similar way here also. No doubt there are important connections between the Catholic Pentecostal Movement and the Pentecostalism which has developed in the non-Catholic world; but this paper will be concerned with the Catholic movement exclusively.

It is sometimes called the charismatic renewal, because of the reappearance of the charisms known to us from the New Testament. The gifts of tongues, interpretation, and prophecy have actually become quite commonplace. Other charisms, such as the gift of healing, without being exactly commonplace, are appearing with a frequency that is quite amazing.

But more important than the charisms have been the instances of spiritual renewal that have come about through this movement: people being led into a deep life of prayer and love of Scripture, experiencing the power of Christ's Spirit and the reality of the mystery of the Christian community in a love, joy and peace that they had never known. Others have been delivered powerfully from habits of sin or from psychological bonds that inhibited their growth.

The question whether the Pentecostal movement is really a work of the Holy Spirit must be decided chiefly on the basis of such fruits as these. But I am not going to present the evidence for it here; that has been done elsewhere<sup>1</sup> and, in any case, *hearing about the*

<sup>1</sup> See K. and D. Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals*, New York: Deus Books,

evidence will not qualify a person to make this judgment. First-hand acquaintance is necessary.

What I want to do here is to pick out those features which may be said to characterize the movement from a theological point of view, and to assess each of them. This should at least help a person to orientate his thinking on the subject, and to know what questions he would want to ask of it.

As I see it, there are three points that characterize the Pentecostal movement; belief in the Holy Spirit, experience of His power, and the reappearance of His charisms. I will discuss each of these points in the light of Catholic theology.

#### I. BELIEF IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

By belief in the Holy Spirit, I mean belief that He is a real power, that needs to be taken into practical account in the life of a Christian; that He is not a figment or projection of human psychology, but a power coming to us from outside ourselves, and producing in us effects of which we ourselves are quite incapable; that He comes to us, not from any human source, such as the inspiring words of a fellow man (although these may at times mediate His coming), but from God; that He is in truth a divine person, God Himself communicated to us, to dwell in us personally, and to be the inspiration of our life by His cleansing, healing, sanctifying, teaching, guiding and strengthening presence.

Obviously, there is nothing new in this belief; it is purely and simply a reaffirmation of one of the most ancient and fundamental teachings of Christian faith. However, what needs to be observed here is that this article of faith is obscure and uncertain in the thinking of many Christians.

On the one hand, it is notorious that, since the close of the patristic era, in the Latin Church, the truth of the Holy Spirit's

1969. I have given a brief description of the movement in the article, "A Catholic Pentecostal Movement," *Ave Maria*, June 3, 1967, and a lengthier one in the paper, "Pentecost and Student Prayer Life," which is to appear in the 1969 *Proceedings of the College Theology Society*. I am also preparing a book on the subject, *In Fire and Water Baptized*, which I hope will appear in the Spring of 1970.

presence in the individual Christian has been somewhat neglected in the common consciousness of the faithful. Stress was laid on His special work in inspiring the prophets of the Old and New Testaments, and in guiding the hierarchy of the Church. Today, however, the Church is experiencing a powerful new awareness of the presence and action of the Spirit in all the faithful, as a truth it has always held, but never before appreciated so deeply. In this respect, we might speak of a pneumatic development throughout the entire Church, of which the "Pentecostal movement" is only a particular facet.

On the other hand, however, there is also in our age a contrary tendency to let go of the traditional faith in the Holy Spirit by reducing Him, in principle or in effect, to a function of human psychology. This is taking place in two different ways which, on the surface at least, appear quite opposite to one another. Some, whom we might call the *demythologizers*, have begun in a kind of Freudian mentality to suspect, or even frankly to believe, that *Holy Spirit* is only a mythical name given to the more sublime workings of the subconscious—that pregnant but unchartable source of so many of the impulses and so-called inspirations that emerge mysteriously into the world of consciousness. If they do not hold this in theory, and about the Holy Spirit as an object of doctrine, they do so at least in practice, with regard to any possible experience or manifestation of the Spirit's working. For there is a type of disbelief that is willing to admit the existence of the Holy Spirit as long as He never does anything that really has to be taken into account.

Others, whom we might call the *pan-mythologizers*, appeal to the Holy Spirit constantly. But they are only using this sacred name to sanctify what is nothing but the natural, spontaneous working of the human soul. This kind of counterfeiting is probably the greatest peril to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit today. By identifying the Spirit with everything, it reduces Him to nothing. While seeming to show great appreciation for Him, it annihilates his distinction and transcendence. Thus the pan-mythologizers turn the doctrine of the Holy Spirit into exactly what the demythologizers have always said that it is.

Furthermore, it is not rare to find the name of the Holy Spirit

used to cover what is little else than the disobedient willfulness of a human spirit that refuses to submit to authority. In this case, the Holy Spirit is identified with that power which, for St. Paul, was His very antithesis, the flesh or the "old man."

Such views represent a negation, an abandonment, or at least a diminution, of the New Testament doctrine. In response to them, the Pentecostal movement comes as a vigorous reaffirmation of faith in the "promise of the Father" which we have heard from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, who, having been glorified by the Father, and having received in His own flesh the fullness of the Spirit, has now poured forth this Spirit "upon all flesh" (Acts 2).<sup>2</sup>

## II. EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S INTERIOR ACTIVITY

The second point which characterizes the Pentecostal movement is experience of the Holy Spirit's activity. He is, as St. Peter said, "that which you have seen and heard." (Acts 2:33). There is no doubt that if the Pentecostals have such a lively and convinced faith in the Holy Spirit, this is due largely to their having had the experience of His activity. One of the Pittsburgh leaders remarked, "I no longer believe in the Pentecost, I have seen it."

The experience characteristic of the Pentecostal movement is properly an experience of the effects of the divine indwelling, not a direct experience of the divine person Himself. It is, for example, being filled with that peace and joy which God alone can give. Or it may consist in discovering that one is loved by God, in *knowing* that love, in the profound and moving realization that one is embraced by an everlasting love.

This knowledge is obscure, not only in the manner of all matters of faith, but still more because it is not transmitted via formulated ideas, it is acquired through experience. It has also the impact and

<sup>2</sup> By way of appendix to this first point, let me add that along with this lively new faith in the Holy Spirit, there comes also a reinforcement of belief in the evil spirit. It has been a frequent experience in the pentecostal movement that when the Holy Spirit begins to act in a more manifest way, the evil spirit does likewise. Even more than the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the evil spirit has been discarded by the sophisticated theology that has sprung from the Enlightenment and demythologization.

power of experience. The contrast is well expressed by people who say, for example, "Now at last I really know that God exists. I used to know *about* Him, but now I actually know Him." Or they will say, "I have always believed in Christ's Resurrection, but now I have come to know the *power* of the Resurrection." It is the difference between an idea and experience.

This stress on experience strikes many Catholics as alien to their own spirituality. Except for the younger generation of today, Catholics generally tend to mistrust the notion of religious experience. In part, this is due to good common sense, that has learned to beware of illusions. Religious imagination, especially when excited by emotion, has fantastic power to create convincing illusions, as the history of spirituality richly confirms. A priest engaged in the pastoral ministry seldom goes for many years without encountering some religious enthusiast who, under the pressure of his delusions, makes himself obnoxious, and sometimes seriously harmful, to those who must live with him, as well as to himself. This is, no doubt, one of the reasons why priests seem to be more skeptical about supernatural manifestations than almost any other class of believing Christians.

There is also a theological basis for this attitude, in that Christianity is based on faith, not on religious experience. The latter comes and goes and is deceptive; faith alone furnishes the solid basis on which a real spiritual life can be built. There are moments when a person must live by pure faith, without any sense of the presence of God to support him; if he has been depending too much on the latter, he will then collapse. Likewise, there is the danger that too eager a craving for religious experience may attach a person to the gift instead of the Giver.

But this caution which is right and due in such matters has been pathologically exaggerated by a degraded spiritual theology perpetuated more by flippant catch-words than by serious study of the great spiritual traditions of the Church. This has been brought about in part by an unbalanced focussing on a few maxims of St. John of the Cross, usually by people who have read only excerpts and not the complete works, and who themselves have had too little experience of the spiritual life to be able to put his teaching in perspective. There has also been excessive reaction against the exag-

gerated emphasis placed on religious experience by the Quietists and by certain Protestant traditions such as the Anabaptist, Pietist and Evangelical.<sup>3</sup> Finally, this one-sided cautiousness has been reinforced by a modern disbelief in the supernatural, which prefers that God keep out of sight and leave the affairs of this earth—even religious affairs—to the minds of men and the decisions of ecclesiastical administration.

The result has been to create a religion which has nothing by which to relieve the drabness and misery of this world except an affirmation of the existence of God and a promise of future happiness, with no contact with God or knowledge of this happiness other than that of faith. This imposes a religious ideal of indifference and impassivity that is more stoic than Christian. It turns some people away and discourages others, and has undoubtedly contributed to the hunger for religious experience in our young people today. Their clamor for meaningful and relevant religion, and their pursuit of mystical experience by means of exotic cults and drugs may be exaggerated and misguided, but it is at least in germ an inevitable and healthy reaction against a Christianity that is not only inhuman but inauthentic.

For Christ never summoned His followers to a walk in a spiritual desert unrelieved by any experiential contact with God. Rather, He promised them a peace which this world cannot give (John 14:27) and a joy no man could take from them (John 16:22). These are by their very nature of the experiential order. St. Paul obviously had personal knowledge of these gifts when he prayed, "May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7; cf. Col. 3:15). Paul also congratulates the Thessalonians for "receiving the word in great tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit" (I Thes. 1:6) and can advise the Phillipians to "rejoice in the Lord always" (4:4).

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that the same reaction against exaggeration has occurred even within some of these traditions. Hence, although on historical and ideological grounds one would expect to find the Methodists more sympathetic and open to Pentecostalism than almost any other denomination, they have so far been in fact one of the most closed to it. By contrast, the Presbyterians, despite their tradition of austere and unemotional rationality, have been far more receptive.

The experience of such joy is presupposed when Paul urges the Colossians to sing in their hearts to God by His grace (3:16). Song springs spontaneously only from joy that is *experienced* (the fact that it is so hard to get Catholic congregations to sing today is perhaps not unconnected with the fact that they have so little experience of God's presence and action!).

The rest and refreshment which Jesus gives to those who labor and are burdened (Mt. 11:28-30) are of their very nature experiential. Likewise, the rivers of living water which He promises, so that those who drink of them will never thirst again (John 7:37 ff.), and the spring of water welling up unto eternal life (John 4:14) are naturally to be understood of something experiential so long as there is no contrary indication in the text. The same applies to other Scriptural expressions, such as being born again (John 3:3), regenerated and renewed (Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:23), and changed into new creatures (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).<sup>4</sup> We are accustomed to reading these texts as referring to matters of faith about which one should normally expect to have no personal experience. But there is nothing in the texts themselves to authorize this hermeneutical principle; it is being imported from elsewhere. From where? Not from any other texts, nor from any authentic ecclesiastical tradition, but, I fear, from the simple fact that often, having had no personal experience of these things, we make a virtue out of our infirmity, and suppose that the way things are with us is the way they are meant to be.

The truth is, that the New Testament very plainly teaches the contrary. When Christ spoke of the divine indwelling, He put it in terms of manifesting Himself to His deciples: "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to Him" (John 14:21; note also 22). He associated this with the sending of the paraclete, "the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you shall know Him, because He will dwell with you and be in you" (John 14:17).

<sup>4</sup> So also both the language and the tone of Eph. 2:4-6: "God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ . . . , and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

That the early Christians did in fact enjoy a personal experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit is obvious in many texts. For example, St. Paul, in arguing with the Galatians who had begun to revert to Judaism, could appeal to their awareness of what they had received:

Did you receive the Spirit in virtue of the works of the Law, or in virtue of hearing and believing? . . . He therefore who gives the Spirit to you, and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the Law or by the message of faith? (Gal. 3:2-5)

Elsewhere St. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as the pledge of the inheritance we are to receive (Eph. 1:14; II Cor. 1:22, 5:5, cf. Rom 8:23 and Eph. 4:30). This would make no sense if our possession of the Spirit were not in some way experiential. A pledge, in the sense indicated by this text, is a kind of down payment, a first installment put into our hands as an assurance that the rest will follow. If the pledge itself is purely a matter of faith, just as much as that which is awaited, it ceases to fulfill the function of a pledge.

St. John, in his first Epistle, is even more explicit: "In this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (4:13; also 3:24). And the author of the Apocalypse tells us quite candidly, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Apoc. 1:10) when he received the revelations that gave rise to his book. Conversely when Paul met some Ephesian Christians who had not received the Holy Spirit, their lack was apparent to the Apostle (Acts 19:4).

Similarly, a manifest and experiential knowledge of Christ is what St. Paul seeks for his readers when he prays, that they "may be strengthened with power through his Spirit unto the progress of the inner man," and that they may have Christ "dwelling through faith" in their hearts:

. . . so that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge . . ." (Eph. 3:16-19; see also 1:17)

It was his own experiential knowledge that enabled Paul to say:

I count everything loss because of the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord. . . . For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:7-10).

That Paul had a deep appreciation of the value of religious "consolations" is evident in his glowing lines to the Corinthians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, that we also may be able to comfort those who are in any distress by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also through Christ does our comfort abound. For whether we are afflicted, it is for your instruction and salvation; or whether we are comforted, it is for your comfort (II Cor. 1:3-5. See also Phil 2:1).

There are numerous examples which show that the early Christians were consciously guided by the Holy Spirit. For example, Philip the deacon was told by the Spirit to catch up with the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29), Peter was told by the Spirit to go without hesitation to visit Cornelius (Acts 10:19), Paul was forbidden by the Spirit to preach in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6, 7), and compelled by the Spirit to make his journey to Jerusalem, while at the same time being warned of the persecutions in store for him (Acts 20:22).

The spiritual doctrine of the New Testament therefore takes religious experience for granted, and recommends it. This same attitude is perpetuated in the spiritual writings of the Middle Ages. They commonly conceived the summit of Christian perfection in this life in the form of a wisdom resulting from and characterized by personal experience of the things of God. Thus, in a famous text, the Pseudo-Dionysius (ca. 500) says that Hierotheus knew the things of God "not just from learning about them, but by experiencing them."<sup>5</sup> Hugh of St. Victor is typical of the monastic spiritual writers when he declares:

*Sapientia* (wisdom) gets its name from sapor (savor); for

<sup>5</sup> *De divinis nominibus* II, 9 (PG 3:648).

the mind that has tasted interior sweetness gathers itself together within by its desires, and is no longer dissipated externally in carnal delectation.<sup>6</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas adopted and synthesized the doctrines of Dionysius and Hugh (S.T. I, 1, 7 and 3; II-II, 45, 2). Furthermore, he added the original doctrine that the "Gifts of the Spirit," which are indispensable to salvation (I-II, 68, 2), have as their role to make a man docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit (I-II, 68, 1).

Even St. John of the Cross, who writes with greater emphasis and authority than anyone else against the danger of excessive attachment to consolations and delights in prayer, never speaks of religious experience as rare or useless or unimportant. On the contrary, he says, for example, of the "night of the senses":

Often in the midst of these times of aridity and hardship, God communicates to the soul, when it is least expecting it, the purest spiritual sweetness and love, together with a spiritual knowledge which is sometimes very delicate, each manifestation of which is of greater benefit and worth more than those which the soul enjoyed aforetime. . .<sup>7</sup>

Similar remarks are to be found elsewhere in his writings.<sup>8</sup> It should also be remembered that few mystics have been blessed so abundantly, or have described so specifically, as St. John the various types of experience liable to occur in the life of the Spirit. The true balance between esteem for religious experience and warning against excessive attachment is well expressed in one of his spiritual maxims:

Beware of seeking to walk in the way of spiritual delight, for thou shalt not be constant. But choose for thyself spiritual vigor, and have attachment to naught, and thou shalt find sweetness and peace in abundance.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *De quinque septenis* IV:7 (PL 175:405-414).

<sup>7</sup> *Dark night of the soul* I, 13, 10 (*The Complete works of St. John of the Cross*, E. A. Peers transl., Newman, 1953, vol. I, p. 369).

<sup>8</sup> E.g. *Ibid.* II, 7,4 (p. 390); II, 11, 7 (p. 409) II, 12, 4-6 (p. 411 f. II, 23, 11-12 (p. 452); *Spiritual Canticle*, st. 1, 9 (vol. II, p. 34), etc.

<sup>9</sup> *Spiritual sentences and maxims*, no. 39 (III, p. 223). Note also 38 *ibid.* It should not be overlooked that the problem with which St. John was dealing, that of excessive attachment to religious experience, does not even arise except for those for whom such experience is a fact of life.

To put this question in perspective, we must bear in mind that man's destiny and man's glory consist in nothing other than that incredibly full and immediate experience of God which is the beatific vision. While this is realized only in the next life, it would be false to think that the present life is meant to be lived in a stark night of faith unrelieved by any light of personal contact with God. On the contrary, God begins here below to communicate glimpses and touches of His presence as a foretaste of that which is to come. They are precious because of the very fact that they are a communication of the divine persons, and they serve useful and important functions in the growth of the life of grace.

They orientate men towards the goal to which he is called, which he would otherwise misconceive. They encourage and sustain the weak, who would succumb to the rigors of an arctic night of sheer faith. They are not contradictory to the regime of faith under which we must live; on the contrary, they are made necessary by the severity of this regime. Anyone who looks disdainfully on this need, or despises the weakness that creates it, has not even begun to know the exigencies of a life lived in faith. As the Transfiguration was manifested to the greatest of the apostles to prepare them for the Crucifixion, so a certain experience of the goodness and power of God gives men the strength and courage to endure great trials.

Finally, the experience of God's presence stimulates man's energies and awakens a new keenness in his pursuit of the divine goal. It is a kind of a visit from the Beloved that makes his love dilate and intensify. To serve God for a long time in an unrelieved darkness of faith develops fidelity and strength (and that is why this also is required of us); but there are qualities of confidence and expansiveness that can bloom only through a contact with the goodness and love of God.

Why is it then that many apparently faithful Christians seem to lead lives quite void of experiential contact with God? We cannot speak absolutely or universally on so mysterious a topic; but I would offer the following suggestions.

In the first place, religious experience is probably not nearly so rare as is commonly supposed. There are many instances of it that enter so gently and naturally into our psychic life that they go almost

unnoticed, or are dismissed as mere sentimentality by a harsh modern mentality that has an almost psychotic distrust of religious sentiment. Children educated in a climate of faith do not rarely have a familiar sense of the nearness and reality of Jesus or of the Blessed Mother. I see no grounds for dismissing this *a priori* as a mere effect of childish credulity. It seems far more plausible to suppose that in many cases it is an authentic religious experience proportioned to the psychology of the child. We need not be put off by the fact that it does not startle or overwhelm him. With the simple faith that is his privilege, he believes in God, and is not surprised at sensing the reality of that which he *knows* to be there. The fact that so many grow out of this simple life of faith and never recover it again is no argument against its genuineness, but only a confirmation of the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:3 ff., 36 ff.).

In adolescence there occurs a new type of religious experience in keeping with the psychology of that age: a sudden encounter with God in the depths of one's interior and in the secret, melodious harmony of the soul with the world of nature. It is usually accompanied by an outburst (often a quiet and gentle outburst) of religious feeling of great strength. It may disappear in a few hours, or it may for days, even weeks; but it opens new vistas. It may be the starting-point of a permanent religious orientation in a person's life, or it may exhaust itself in the writing of a poem or two, or in some short-lived practices of piety. Here, too, however, we should beware of the inclination to dismiss this experience as just another ebullition of adolescent emotion. It may be a genuine encounter with God, accommodated indeed to the emotional stirrings of adolescence, and complicated therefore by many factors other than the pure work of grace, but a work of the Spirit nevertheless.

Similarly, people who have recently made a great personal commitment to Christ, such as novices and seminarians, or people who have gone through a religious conversion, not rarely experience a loving encounter with God that enables them to "taste the sweetness of the Lord."

These experiences of childhood and youth are not meant to continue into old age. They fall away like booster rockets, after the satellite has—hopefully—been put into orbit. They are meant to be

succeeded in time by a deeper and purer sort of experience of God, as the soul, advancing in wisdom and grace as well as age, is more and more proximately acclimated by the Spirit to the life of the beatific vision. This does not mean that one should continue to experience dramatic, memorable encounters. Very often, the presence of God lingers in a person's life like the diffuse sunlight of an overcast day. It is so pervasive, and its source is so hidden, one does not advert consciously to the fact that the sun is shining. Only the horrible darkness that descends at moments when the light is suppressed make him aware how important and precious a factor the light has been.

But when due allowance has been made for religious experience of these unobtrusive sorts, the fact still remains that many people seem to know little of it. With the coming of adulthood, they settle into the routine of a life more or less governed by faith, and seem progressively to lose that close contact with God which perhaps at certain moments of their younger life had been warm and lively. (It may be this fact, as much as anything else, which leads many people to dismiss their previous experience as emotional illusions, and to conclude that religious experience is not meant to be a part of their life, and perhaps not even of the normal Christian life.)

How are we to account for this attitude which has come to be so usual today even among people who call themselves Christian? In some cases, perhaps, involvement in worldly concerns has taken the earnestness out of their search for God. Some may have faltered under the trials to which their faith was subjected. Even those who persevere in faith perhaps do so in a plodding, spiritless fashion that receives nothing more from God because it expects nothing more. The case of these last would seem to be the most tragic of all because, after having paid almost the entire price, they have defaulted on the last installment. God deals with us according to our faith, and the peace, joy and vitality which come from intimacy with Him are received only by those whose faith is lively enough really to expect Him to fulfill His promises.

The spiritual torpor that has descended upon so much of modern Christendom may be due to the fact that our faith is often dull and spiritless. It cannot energize our life because it has barely strength enough to maintain its own crawling existence. In any case, the re-

moteness from God of which so many people complain today, and to which so many more have uncomplainingly adjusted themselves—this is an even greater tragedy—cannot be taken as the normal regime of Christian existence. Christ promised us a life of familiar intimacy with Himself, and this promise can alone be taken as the norm of what our life should be. By this standard of measurement, the Pentecostal experience appears to represent authentic Christianity, while the lifeless patterns of observance to which we have grown accustomed may be the sign not of fidelity to authentic tradition, but of resignation to an uninspired mediocrity which needs the wind of a new Pentecost to stir it up.

### III. CHARISMATIC MANIFESTATIONS

The third, and undoubtedly the most striking, feature of the Pentecostal movement has been the reviviscence of charismatic manifestations like those of the primitive Church. The New Testament seems to indicate that preternatural charismatic activity was a familiar thing in the life of the Christian communities. In the church at Corinth so many people were endowed with the gifts of prophecy, tongues and interpretation, that there was a real practical problem about integrating the exercise of these gifts into the liturgical assemblies. The instructions which St. Paul gave on this point astound us, not by their contents, but because he had to give them at all. It is hard for us today to visualize a situation in which the bishop should need to decree that, at religious gatherings, those who receive revelations or prophecies of tongues should speak one at a time, and that there should be no more than two or three of them at any given service (cf. I Cor. 14).

The regime of manifest charisms apparently did not last very long after the apostolic age. During the second, or at the latest the third century, the Church passed into a regime in which miraculous and preternatural charisms, without disappearing altogether, became associated chiefly with persons of exceptional sanctity, or persons called to an exceptional mission.

During the past hundred years, however, a remarkable change of mind on this point has gradually taken place among theologians. More and more have tended to adopt the view, of which Karl Rahner

has become the foremost spokesman, that "the charismatic belongs to the essence of the Church just as necessarily and permanently as do hierarchical office and the sacraments."<sup>10</sup>

The biblical basis of this view is the fact that all the New Testament texts which speak of charisms treat them as a normal function of the Christian life, and nowhere give any indication that they were meant to be of limited duration.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in the canonical conclusion to St. Mark's Gospel, the risen Christ sends the apostles forth, saying:

These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover (Mk. 16:16-18).

Whatever you say about the origin and historical value of this text, at the very least it expresses a primitive Christian community's understanding of the charismatic mode of the life of Christ's disciples. Some might want to understand this text figuratively, but the fact that these things were in fact done by the primitive community excludes this reading.

This same conception can be documented much more elaborately in the writings of St. Paul, from whom we have received the word *charisma*. He represents prophets, along with apostles and teachers, as leaders of the Church.<sup>12</sup> In order that the Corinthians be not ignorant in matters of the spirit, he gives a long list of charisms (I Cor. 12:8-10), which he likens to organs in the body of Christ, collaborating for its welfare. With no apparent sense of incongruity, he sets miraculous and preternatural gifts, such as healing and tongues, side by side with the most ordinary and routine functions, such as administration, service and works of mercy (I Cor. 12:28 and Rom. 12:8). His principle is stated in Ephesians 4:4-12:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *LjTK* II (1958), 1027.

<sup>11</sup> I Cor. 13:8 ff. teaches that the charisms will cease when "that which is perfect has come." This means that they are limited to life in this world, but not that, within this world, they have any further limitation.

<sup>12</sup> I Cor. 12:28 f.; Eph. 2:20, 3:5, 4:11. Cf. also Apoc. 18:20.

<sup>13</sup> Whether the letter to the Ephesians was written by St. Paul is not a

There is one body and one Spirit . . . But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . He gave some as apostles, some prophets, others again as evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

That St. Paul took for granted the normalcy of the charisms is evident in other passages likewise. In setting down the rules of order for the Christian assembly, he declared quite matter-of-factly:

When you come together, everyone of you has a hymn, an instruction, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation (I Cor. 14:26).

Three times in the same passage he urges the brethren to be zealous for the higher spiritual gifts, especially that of prophecy (I Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39). Still other passages of the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 12:6, Heb. 2:4, and the entire book of Acts) corroborate this view that the charisms belong simply to the Christian life.

This is the view that Cardinal Suenens patronized before the Vatican Council in his famous speech, "On the charismatic dimension of the Church."<sup>14</sup> The Council itself endorsed this view, as can be seen in many of its texts, most notably the *Constitution on the Church*, n.12, and the Decree on the Lay Apostolate, n.3.<sup>15</sup>

There are two types of gifts which the Spirit bestows on the Church, it says: hierarchical and charismatic.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the various sacraments and ministries, the Holy Spirit confers special gifts upon the faithful of every rank, qualifying them for various works for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church.<sup>17</sup> Because these

question that concerns me here, because I am not trying to distinguish the various steps and contributions in the development of the New Testament doctrine, but simply surveying that doctrine as a whole, and taking the Pauline corpus as a convenient practical subdivision.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. Congar, Küng, and O'Hanlon, New York; Deus Books, 1964, pp. 18-21.

<sup>15</sup> See also *The Church in the Modern World*, #11, 15, 26, and 38; *Eccumenism* #2 (cf. #3 and 4), and *The Missions*, #4, etc. The doctrine of *Lumen Gentium* on the Holy Spirit has been summed up by Gonzales-Hernandez in *L'Eglise de Vatican II (Unam Sanctam 51B)*, Paris: cerf, 1966, pp. 192-94.

<sup>16</sup> *The Church*, #4.

<sup>17</sup> *The Church*. #12. Cf. *The Apostolate of the Laity*, #3: "peculiaria

charisms are useful and adapted to the needs of the Church (this is a point to be noted: the free breath of the Spirit has a versatility not possible to an institution as such), they are to be received with thanks and consolation.<sup>18</sup>

The Council even goes so far as to lay down practical directives for the exercise of the charisms. The reception of a charism, it says, brings with it the right and duty to use it in the liberty of the Spirit; however, it must also be exercised in communion with our brethren in the Church, and above all with our pastors.<sup>19</sup> It belongs to the office of the latter to pass judgment on the charisms, both as to whether they are genuine, and as to their orderly use. Both the *Constitution on the Church* and the *Decree on the Lay Apostolate* make this point, and go on at once to recall the warning of St. Paul, "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophecy, but test everything; hold fast what is good" (I Thes. 5:19-21).

It is true that the theologians who maintain that charisms belong to the ordinary life of the Church also tend to insist that the notion of charisms is not confined to the preternatural or miraculous, but includes the most commonplace gifts of grace whereby one is qualified to serve others, (Thus, for example, Karl Rahner and Cardinal Suenens). And it is the commonplace gifts that they obviously have foremost in mind when they say that the charismatic dimension belongs to the essential and permanent structure of the Church. Hence, one may question whether their statements have much real relevance to the Pentecostal movement, which is characterized by the reviviscence of preternatural charisms.

There are many things to be said on this topic; but here I can afford to make only one point. Regardless of what you hold about the meaning of the term *charisma* in St. Paul, and about the relative importance of the different types of charisms, there can be no doubt that the preternatural gifts such as prophecy or tongues or discernment of spirits, are genuine charisms, in both the Pauline and conventional theological senses of the word. And if you agree (in either

*dona.*" The Decree on Ecumenism (#2) also speaks of various spiritual gifts and ministries distributed by the Spirit to enrich the Church, and of a variety of functions energized (*operante*) by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>18</sup> *The Church*, #12; *The Apostolate of the Laity*, #3.

<sup>19</sup> *Apostolate of the Laity*, #3.

sense) that the charismatic pertains to the ordinary regime of Christianity, then you must at least leave the door open to the preternatural charisms; you certainly cannot exclude them on principle. And that is all that is necessary to justify (if such a term be appropriate) what is taking place in the Pentecostal movement.

The Vatican Council distinguishes between two types of charisms, which it calls spectacular (*clarissima*)<sup>20</sup> and simple (*simplicia*).<sup>21</sup> It seems to be avoiding the classical terms, *ordinary* and *extraordinary*, so as not to prejudice the question whether charisms belong to the ordinary life of the Church. However, there is also a text which speaks expressly of extraordinary gifts (*dona extraordinaria*), declaring that they are not rashly to be sought after, and that one must not presumptuously look to them for the fruits which come from apostolic labor.<sup>22</sup> In saying this, the Council tacitly acknowledges that even the so-called extraordinary gifts are matters of pastoral concern to it. This already implies that they are not altogether extraordinary. I would like to suggest the principle that while such gifts are extraordinary in the life of any given individual, they are not extraordinary in the life of the Church as a whole. One might even go so far as to hold that it is normal for a fully developed Christian community to have some preternatural charisms among its members.

Moreover, the moderation of the advice given is quite noteworthy. One might well have expected the Council to say that extraordinary gifts are *never* to be sought. That would be in accord with many commonplace spiritual maxims. But the Council warns us merely not to seek them rashly, thereby implying that there *can* be a situation in which it is right to seek them.

I believe it can be said that Vatican II promulgated precisely those doctrinal and pastoral norms that were needed to furnish hierarchical approbation of and guidance for the charismatic renewal that is occurring in the Pentecostal movement. And when you reflect that at the time of the Council there was not yet the faintest glimmer of such a movement,<sup>23</sup> and that this renewal began about a year after

<sup>20</sup> *The Church*, #12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, and *The Apostolate of the Laity*, #3.

<sup>22</sup> *The Church*, #12.

<sup>23</sup> Obviously, this applies only to the Catholic movement. In the non-Catholic world, the Pentecostal movement is already about eighty years old.

the close of the Council, the providential timing of these decrees is rather striking.<sup>24</sup>

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Obviously, there are many other points that would need to be discussed in order to give a complete picture of the Pentecostal Movement. But from a theological point of view, I believe that the three presented here define its essential configurations: a lively and convinced faith in the Holy Spirit, the experience of His powerful action, and the renewal of His charisms. I have tried to show that all three points are in fullest accord with the teaching and the spirit of the New Testament. As regards Catholic doctrine, the first point is nothing but the purest and most fundamental of dogmas. The second, concerning religious experience, is in accord with our best and most traditional spiritual theology, although it has been somewhat obscured in recent centuries. The third point, the reappearance of the charisms, corresponds to somewhat of an innovation in Catholic thought, but an innovation which had already taken place out of the inner dynamics of theological progress, quite independently of the Pentecostal movement.

Whether the Pentecostal movement is really all that is claimed for it is, of course, a distinct question, that can only be settled by an examination of the evidence. But from the point of view of doctrinal orthodoxy, its theological foundations and implications appear to me to be unassailable.

EDWARD D. O'CONNOR, C.S.C.  
*University of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana*

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the texts mentioned above, the following should also be noted as most providential for the Pentecostal movement in view of its ecumenical dimensions: The Council states that Christians of other denomination "are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power" (*The Church*, #15).