

The Charismatic

The term Charismatic is an expression used to refer to a movement within historic churches that began in the 1950s. In its earlier stages the movement was often termed "neo-Pentecostal"; in more recent years it has frequently been referred to as the "charismatic renewal" or the "charismatic renewal movement." Therefore, participants are usually described as "charismatic."

On the American scene it is possible to date significant charismatic beginnings to the year 1960 with the national publicity given to certain events connected with the ministry of Dennis Bennett, at that time Episcopal rector in Van Nuys, California. Since then there has been a continuing growth of the movement within many of the mainline churches: first, such Protestant as Episcopal, Lutheran, and Presbyterian (1960); Roman Catholic (1966); and third, the Greek Orthodox (about 1971)

The charismatic movement has affected almost every historic church and has spread to many churches and countries around the world. This continuing growth has resulted in a multiplicity of national, regional, and local conferences, the production of a wide range of literature, and increasing attention to doctrinal and theological questions both within and outside the movement but were often questionable leading to error.

The immediate background of the charismatic movement is "classical Pentecostalism" dating from the 1906, with its emphasis on baptism with (or in) the Holy Spirit as an endowment of power subsequent to conversion, speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of this baptism, and the continuing validity of the historical sign gifts. Today the charismatic movement, despite its "classical" parentage, exists almost totally outside official Pentecostal denominations.

There is common recognition of baptism with the Holy Spirit as a distinctive Christian experience. It is viewed as an event wherein the believer is "filled with" the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is understood to result from "the gift of the Holy Spirit," wherein the Spirit is freely "poured out," "falls upon," "comes on," "anoints," "endues" the believer with "power from on high."

Participants in the charismatic movement emphasize the centrality of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic generally hold that conversion and the gift of the Spirit, though both received by faith, may not happen at the same time. The book of Acts is viewed as exhibiting two patterns: a separation (however brief or long) between conversion and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Participants in the charismatic movement also frequently point to the pattern of Jesus' own life, which includes both his conception by the Holy Spirit and the later descent of the Holy Spirit upon him. Jesus was therefore both born of the Spirit as Savior and anointed with the Spirit as he began his ministry which they claimed must be followed.

So it is said that correspondingly there is a need for both a birth of the Spirit for salvation and an anointing of the Spirit for ministry in his name. This leads to the emphasis of charismatic on such matters as prayer, commitment, and expectancy as the context for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Prayer preceding the reception of the Holy Spirit particularly stands out in the accounts of the Samaritans, Saul of Tarsus, and the centurion household in Caesarea.

Seeing a similar pattern in the life of Jesus, the original disciples, and the early church, many charismatic affirm that in a spirit of prayer, commitment, and expectancy they were visited by the Holy Spirit. Such an event, it is claimed, did not occur by dint of human effort, not through some work beyond faith; rather it happened to those who in faith were open to receive what God had promised to give.

Whereas the basic purpose of Spirit baptism is power for ministry and service, charismatic speak of a number of effects. Since it is the Holy Spirit who is given (not something he gives), many speak primarily of a strong sense of the mystical presence of God. Many charismatic also testify to an abounding joy, a deeper assurance of salvation through experience, a new boldness to witness for Jesus Christ, and an enriched fellowship with other Christians.

On this last point, one of the most noticeable features of the charismatic movement is the sense of brotherly fellowship that binds together its members not only in a local fellowship but also across denominational barriers. Many claim that the charismatic movement is the true fulfillment of the Lord's prayer to the Father "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). There are hundreds of doctrinal distortions unnoticeable to the eyes of believers untrained in Bible doctrines.

In the charismatic movement speaking in tongues, occupies a significant place. Speaking in tongues is generally understood to be a communication with God in a language that is other than one known to the speaker. A person does the speaking, that is, he freely uses his vocal apparatus, but it is claimed that the Holy Spirit gives the utterance.

It is viewed as transcendent speech by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is considered to be the miraculous utterance of an unlearned heavenly language unknown to man. There is no clear distinction between a foreign language and ecstatic speech but both are utterance of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic who have embraced this understanding of "other tongues" believe that it best to harmonize the speaking of tongues by experience rather than by doctrines.

The charismatic claim that speaking of tongues is the vehicle of communication par excellence between man and God. It is the language of transcendent prayer and praise. In tongues there is speech to God which goes beyond the mental into the spiritual. Charismatic frequently state that in tongues there is a fulfillment of the intense desire to offer total praise to God not only with the mind but also with the heart and spirit.

Therein one goes beyond the most elevated of earthly expressions, even "hosannas" and "hallelujahs", into spiritual utterance: the praise of God in language given by the Holy Spirit. In the regular life of prayer tongues are said to occupy a primary place in the life of every Charismatic.

Such prayer is identified with praying in the spirit or with the spirit, which, since it is not mental, can be done at all times. This spiritual prayer does not intend to eliminate prayer with the understanding, and create background for all conceptual prayer.

The ideal is prayer with the spirit and with the mind (in that order). Where prayer passes into praise it may likewise be singing with the spirit and singing with the mind. For the charismatic movement at large singing in the spirit, singing in tongues, occupies an important place, particularly in situations of community worship.

Therein both words and melody are free expressions believed to be given spontaneously by the Holy Spirit. This, often is combined with more usual singing, is seen as the apex of worship: it is the worship of God in psalms and human and (climatically) spiritual songs.

Charismatic are not disturbed by linguists who claim that glossolalia has no observable language structure, for if such were the case, speaking in tongues would not be spiritual but rational speech. Further, speaking in tongues is not viewed as ecstatic utterance, in the sense of uncontrolled, highly emotional, perhaps frenzied activity. Most charismatic believe that there can be no speaking in tongues without prior Spirit baptism (this is the opposite of saying that there can be no Spirit baptism without speaking in tongues).

Thus charismatic generally conclude that speaking in tongues is not limited to some, but is the province of all. Also these very tongues may thereafter become an ongoing part of the life of prayer and worship. The Charismatic are inviting all religious organization to participate in their experience. Such tongues are sometimes called "devotional tongues," and are viewed as an important part of the prayer life of the Spirit-baptized believers.

The charismatic movement is concerned with charismata, the Greek term for "gifts of grace." Everywhere throughout the charismatic movement there is the claim that all the charismata, or charisma, mentioned in Scripture are, or should be, operational in the all Christian community. A profile on charismatic understanding of the spiritual gifts would include the following. All the gifts of the Spirit are viewed as extraordinary, supernatural, and permanent.

Many charismatic affirm that wherever the Spirit is baptism occurs, the gifts, which are already resident in the Christian community, become all the more freely and fully exercised but must be evoked and requested from God.

The Charismatic doctrines are mixtures of various teachings from several mainline churches. Unlike the rejection of the earlier Pentecostals, the charismatic renewal was generally allowed to remain within the mainline churches.

Favorable study reports by the Episcopalians (1963), Roman Catholics (1969, 1974), and the Presbyterians (1970), while pointing out possible excesses, generally were tolerant and open to the existence of a Pentecostal spirituality as a renewal movement within the traditional churches.

So, today we have Episcopalian Charismatic, Catholic Charismatic, Baptist Charismatic and so on. With the four doctrines of the Charismatic, they are no longer Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, etc. but ecumenical. Satan is preparing the religious sector for one world religion.

You are in sinking sand if your religion is involved in Charismatic movement and has become participant of Charismatic experiences.



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