

# CONVERSION: THE CHALLENGE OF CONTEMPORARY CHARISMATIC PIETY

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**F**EW MOVEMENTS have shaped popular religious attitudes in the United States more profoundly than revivalism. Between 1739 and 1742 new-light evangelical preachers crisscrossed the thirteen English colonies summoning their citizens to a shared experience of religious conversion and renewal that they described as a Great Awakening. The revival stirred millenarian hopes in the twice-born that through the very experience of religious renewal a predestining God was preparing America for an era of unparalleled peace and prosperity. The revival appealed to members of all the established churches and ignored colonial boundaries as well. It left the citizens of thirteen independent colonies not only with a new ecumenical awareness of Christian solidarity but also with a nascent sense of national identity.<sup>1</sup>

In 1801 the Second Great Awakening erupted at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, but soon swept the coastal cities as well. It was followed by wave upon wave of revivalistic fervor. Always a source of controversy, evangelical revivalism forced Christians of all denominations to grapple with the role and function of religion in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Revivalistic cultivation of affective fervor also fed the American romantic impulse by helping to inspire the transcendental search for an intuitive experience of God.<sup>3</sup>

EDITOR'S NOTE.—With this essay *TS* initiates a series of articles in philosophical theology by the John Courtney Murray Group. The central theme of the series is the development of an inculturated theology for the U.S. through the retrieval, in a theological context, of classical North American philosophy. Later essays will focus on religious affectivity, discernment, the community called to conversion, and divine reverence. Insights will be developed from Bernard Meland and H. Richard Niebuhr, from Jonathan Edwards and Josiah Royce, from Alfred North Whitehead and William Ernest Hocking.

<sup>1</sup> Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, eds., *The Great Awakening* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1967); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1966); C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," *Church History* 28 (1959) 25–40.

<sup>2</sup> Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> In 1831 Charles Grandison Finney brought the Second Great Awakening to Boston. Shortly before resigning his Unitarian pulpit, Ralph Waldo Emerson preached to his staid Unitarian congregation on revivalism, eulogizing the principles on which the movement rests. He found fault only with the irrational character of the emotionalism it generated. His reflections can be found in his unpublished manuscripts in the Houghton Library at Harvard: "Sermons," H (111 A) 7–10, H (111 B) 1–11. When Emerson abandoned his pulpit to become a circuit lecturer, he seems to have ambioned a genteel religious revival that

Both spiritualism and Mormonism emerged from upstate New York, a region so frequently evangelized it was dubbed the "burnt-over district." And indeed both movements could scarcely be conceived apart from a society suffused with revivalistic fervor.<sup>4</sup> Nor could that distinctly American blend of faith healing and rational enlightenment known as Christian Science.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as the nation lurched toward civil conflict, the moral soul-searching inculcated by evangelical piety seems in the case of many to have lent popular religious sanction to the abolitionist crusade.

Immigrant American Catholicism in its embattled confrontation with waspish nativism and Know-Nothingism held itself aloof from evangelical revivalism during the nineteenth century. But the Catholic community practiced its own form of revivalistic piety. Itinerant clerical evangelists preached parish missions and measured their success by the Catholic equivalent of an altar call: the lines of penitents that crowded to the confessional testified to the power of the missionary's evangelizing rhetoric.<sup>6</sup>

Led by saints like Francis of Assisi, Dominic, Ignatius Loyola, and others, Catholics have known repeated "revivals" of piety. But in the latter half of the twentieth century the American Catholic Church paradoxically found itself in the forefront of a religious revival in the evangelical mode that quickly spread to the other mainline churches in America and then expanded to international proportions. Because the revival fused elements of traditional Roman Catholic and Pentecostal piety, its leaders first described themselves as "Catholic Pentecostals."<sup>7</sup> But at the behest of the American episcopacy, who felt chary about the denominational connotations of the term "pentecostals," the revival was renamed "the Catholic charismatic renewal." When the new name was initially suggested, it seemed innocent enough; but it has, as we shall see, bred a certain amount of pastoral and theological confusion.

Like any popular devotion, the charismatic renewal boasts its glories even while it labors under a certain number of miseries.<sup>8</sup> A predominantly

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avoided the limitations of the Second Great Awakening by inspiring a religiously motivated cultural revival.

<sup>4</sup> Slater Brown, *The Heyday of Spiritualism* (New York: Pocketbook, 1972); Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Knopf, 1945).

<sup>5</sup> Julius Silberger, Jr., "Mary Baker Eddy," *American Heritage* 32 (Dec. 1980) 56-64.

<sup>6</sup> Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (New York: Paulist, 1969); Edward D. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1971).

<sup>8</sup> For a description of the charismatic movement, see Richard Quebedaux, *The New Charismatics* (New York: Doubleday, 1976).

lay-led movement, it has brought thousands of Christians to an experience of personal conversion and giftedness. It has not only restored the Bible to participating Catholics but transformed it into a living word. A potentially powerful form of grass-roots ecumenism, the charismatic renewal has instilled in the hearts of many otherwise ecumenically apathetic Christians of different denominations a longing for sacramental communion with one another. By inspiring practical faith in the Spirit's anointing, shared charismatic prayer has transformed abstract Catholic belief that the Holy Spirit animates the Church into a lived experience of the Spirit's presence. Charismatic Christians who bring to liturgical worship the habit of active participation in shared, spontaneous, charismatic prayer suffuse traditional sacramental cult with fervent personal and communal piety. And from their reading of Scripture, they have spontaneously reappropriated the theologically correct habit of ascribing all graced enlightenment to the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

One might easily expand this list of charismatic virtues. But popular charismatic piety also suffers all too often from a certain amount of human frailty and folly. Its miseries reflect the limitations of the two Christian traditions the movement blends. Charismatic Christians learned from Protestant Pentecostals to love the Bible as a living word, but too often they also learned to read Scripture fundamentalistically. And in their efforts to shore up Christian family life or to order large, unwieldy prayer groups or covenant communities, Catholic charismatics

<sup>9</sup> Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *Charism and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Conversion* (New York: Paulist, 1976). The term "spirit" has been all but co-opted by philosophy. As a philosophical term, "spirit" signifies "immaterial." In transcendental philosophy it connotes the horizon of the spiritual powers of intellect and will. But in both the Old and New Testaments "the Holy Spirit" signifies the divine "breathing," a divine, gracious, life-giving principle of empowering illumination. In the present article we use the terms "Spirit" and "Holy Spirit" in their biblical sense. Contemporary Trinitarian theologians stand divided on the advisability of speaking of Father, Son, and Spirit as divine persons. Karl Rahner, following Karl Barth, advocates calling them "modes" rather than persons. Heribert Mühlen and Jürgen Moltmann defend the term "person." The debate remains unresolved because, as far as I can judge, none of these theologians offers a clear principle of verification which would allow us to judge between the truth or adequacy of conflicting Trinitarian constructs. The missions of the divine persons provide such a principle. Apart from the historical missions of the Son and of the Spirit, we have no information about how the divine persons relate to one another. Jesus' "Abba experience" is now conceded as historical by all questers for the historical Jesus. It can only be described as interpersonal. It was inspired in Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's distinction from the Son is historically revealed in the distinction of Their missions. As a distinct source of interpersonal consciousness within the Godhead, the Spirit cannot be less than a divine person, even though the term "person" can be applied only analogously to humans and to the members of the divine triad. I will attempt to discuss these and other related questions in more detail in my forthcoming work *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit*.

have sometimes involved the authoritarianism and sexism that mar the Roman tradition.<sup>10</sup>

In so speaking, I no way wish to stereotype all the participants in the charismatic renewal as fundamentalistic, authoritarian, and sexist. Nor do I suggest that they have cornered the market on these three neurotic religious aberrations. All three flourish in the right wing of the Catholic Church.

Moreover, some of the blame for the aberrations in charismatic communities must be laid at the doorstep of the institutional Church. The Catholic episcopacy's early concern to provide pastoral guidelines for the charismatic renewal has matured into a general acceptance of the movement as a legitimate expression of contemporary Catholic piety. Most dioceses in this country now boast a director or official liaison for charismatic Catholics, and these diocesan directors meet annually in a national convention to give sound pastoral guidelines to the renewal. Nonetheless, significant numbers of the diocesan clergy still greet the charismatic movement with coolness or benign neglect. Such negative attitudes have helped preserve the predominantly lay character of the movement's leadership, but they have also marginalized more than one charismatic group or foolishly and needlessly forced it into an adversary stance with respect to ecclesiastical structures.

Nor can the Catholic theological community avoid shouldering some of the responsibility for aberrations within the charismatic renewal. Although a handful of theologians have associated themselves with the movement and have attempted to provide it with sound catechesis, most of the American Catholic theological community have for a variety of reasons failed to respond in any visible way to the pastoral needs of charismatic Christians or to reflect on the revelatory and ecumenical significance of this spontaneous, grass-roots transformation of lay Catholic spirituality.

In point of fact, the Roman Catholic tradition offers many neglected theological resources for reflecting on a charismatic Christian experience. Since the early part of the nineteenth century, the Catholic theological community, troubled by the fact that in the Roman Catholic Church the Holy Spirit had been transformed into "the forgotten God," began a plodding academic retrieval of biblical and systematic pneumatology. Early efforts bore fruit in Leo XIII's encyclical *Divinum illud munus* (1897). The Pope's letter summarized and systematized the salient points of a medieval theology of the Spirit, but its abstract scholastic language

<sup>10</sup> Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., *The Catholic Cult of the Paraclete* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1975) 39-57; Josephine Ford, *Which Way for Catholic Pentecostals?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

sparked little living devotion in most of the faithful. The document, however, called attention to the Spirit's charismatic activity, and a second wave of pneumatological research bore fruit in Pope Pius XII's *Mystici corporis* (1943). The new encyclical proclaimed that the Holy Spirit animates the body of Christ as its living soul and described the charisms of the Spirit as a perennial endowment of the Church. By the time the Second Vatican Council was convoked, theologians had reached a solid consensus that the charisms of the Spirit provide a correct theological rubric for understanding lay spirituality. In the course of the debates at Vatican II, the bishops scrapped the authoritarian, hierarchical schema on the Church originally prepared by conservative Vatican theologians and voted initial approval to a revised schema that underscored heavily the charismatic character of lay spirituality. Having affirmed a charismatic laity, the bishops decided, somewhat tardily, that they also needed to assert the charismatic character of ordained ministry as well. As a consequence, one finds in the documents of Vatican II a somewhat artificial distinction between hierarchical charisms and charismatic charisms.<sup>11</sup> Subsequent to Vatican II, some theologians have suggested that the charismatic action of the Spirit supplies the ultimate principle of order within the Church, a principle more fundamental than laws, traditions, rules, and regulations.<sup>12</sup>

But besides fostering a lively interest in the charisms of the Spirit, popular charismatic piety often adopts religious attitudes and practices traditionally inculcated by evangelical revivalism: a conversion experience that establishes an affective relationship with the person of Jesus; public personal testimony to the action of the Spirit in one's own life; an evangelizing rhetoric that addresses the heart; a piety focused on feeling; faith healing; shared spontaneous prayer.

Evangelical revivalism has shaped popular religious attitudes in this country so profoundly that the participation of the American Catholic Church in a revival in the evangelical mode stands as an important landmark in the indigenization of American Catholicism. Through the charismatic renewal, the American Catholic community has in effect joined the revivalistic mainstream of popular evangelical religion. Moreover, in a land in which revivalism offers a fairly permanent way of life, the Catholic Church can anticipate the very real possibility of waves of revivalistic fervor among its members. We Catholics would do well, then, to come to theological and pastoral terms with the implications of

<sup>11</sup> *Lumen gentium* 4.

<sup>12</sup> Gotthold Hasenbüttl, *Charisma: Ordnungsprinzip der Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967); Gabriel Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1965); Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Herder, 1967) 150-202.

movements like the charismatic renewal more systematically than we have done heretofore.

In the present article I will attempt to probe some of the theological and pastoral implications of popular charismatic piety. Charismatic piety, like revivalistic, summons one to conversion. In section 1 I will explore some important dynamics of Christian conversion. In section 2 I will reflect on some of the ways in which the construct of conversion elaborated in section 1 allows us to come to terms with some of the inauthenticities present in both Catholic and evangelical piety. I will also begin to reflect on the ways in which the authentic elements in both these traditions can mutually reinforce one another, especially through the charismatic transformation of sacramental worship. In section 3 I will begin to probe the experience of charismatically transformed sacramental worship for the light it throws on an authentic Christian conversion. Section 4 continues reflection on the theological implications of the blending of charismatic and sacramental forms of prayer. In it I argue for the charismatic unity of the sacramental system and for the charismatic nature of sacramental experience. In section 5 I will reflect briefly on the ecumenical dimensions of shared charismatic prayer and on its potential to effect social change.

## I

Classical Protestant Pentecostalism emerged from a revivalistic impulse in the Methodist church called the Holiness Movement. It resulted more immediately from the ministry of Charles Fox Parham and William J. Seymour. Parham began his career as a lay preacher in the Congregational Church. But after experiencing a temporary loss of faith and then a reconversion to God, Parham was ordained a Methodist minister. He believed church membership helpful but did not require it of those to whom he preached. He sought rather to evoke from them a radical break with sin that resulted from a violent internal struggle. He believed that sanctification could begin only after sin had been eradicated from the heart. He preached the healing power of faith and that the Holy Spirit visibly transforms the sanctified.

In 1898 he founded the Bethel Healing Home in Topeka, Kansas, later to become the Bethel Bible College. Study of Acts 2 convinced some of Parham's parishioners that the gift of tongues provides conclusive evidence of Spirit baptism. When Parham prayed over one of them, a Miss Ozman, she began suddenly and disconcertingly speaking in tongues. Soon thereafter other members of the congregation also received the gift. One of Parham's disciples, William Seymour, carried the Pentecostal message to the west coast. He preached the Azuza Street revival in Los

Angeles. He proclaimed his message by and large to the poor and to the uneducated and brought them to an experience of conversion and Spirit baptism.<sup>13</sup>

The experience of the first Pentecostals gave rise to a theoretical construct for understanding the process of conversion. Prior to receiving the gift of tongues, the first Pentecostals had been practicing Christians. They had in effect experienced a religious conversion. But until they had received the gift of tongues, they did not regard themselves as Spirit-baptized. Moreover, they found that Spirit baptism only inaugurated a process of ongoing transformation in faith. They conceived of graced transformation, therefore, as a three-stage process: conversion, then Spirit baptism whose visible sign was glossolalia, finally sanctification.<sup>14</sup>

From the standpoint of a traditional Roman Catholic theology of grace, such a construct of conversion leaves something to be desired. Catholic sacramental theology associates Spirit baptism with the rite of initiation, although, as Vatican II teaches, that rite only inaugurates a process of lifelong transformation in the Spirit. Traditional Catholic theology also looks upon the infusion of the theological virtues and of the gifts (*dona*) of the Holy Spirit as sanctifying, and it refuses to point to any single charism (*gratia gratis data*) like tongues as certification of Spirit baptism, although, as we shall see, a sound Roman Catholic theology of conversion ought to make room for a pentecostal moment within the process of ongoing conversion.<sup>15</sup>

But anyone who criticizes a particular theological position as inadequate ought by all rights to suggest a more viable alternative. The work of Bernard Lonergan points the way toward a subtler and more adequate construct of conversion than that proposed by classical Pentecostalism.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> John A. Hardon, *The Protestant Churches of America* (New York: Image, 1969) 169–83.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972); Frederick Dale Brunner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971); James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Naperville: Allenson, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* passim.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972). See also William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, 1907); E. T. Clark, *The Psychology of Religious Awakening* (New York: Macmillan, 1929); J. Geweiss, "Metanoia in Neuen Testament," *Die Kirche in der Welt* 1 (1948) 2, 149 ff.; Gordon W. Allport, *The Individual and His Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (New York: Oxford, 1952); Romano Guardini, *The Conversion of St. Augustine* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1960); Bernard Haring, *The Law of Christ* 1 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1961) 387–481; Walter E. Conn, *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation* (New York: Alba, 1978); Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament*; idem, *Experiencing God: A Theology of Human Emergence* (New York: Paulist, 1981).

In his original construct of conversion, Lonergan distinguished three moments in the conversion process: religious, intellectual, and moral. He has since conceded the need to add a fourth: psychic or affective conversion.<sup>17</sup>

Lonergan himself describes conversion as a decision that creates a horizon.<sup>18</sup> I myself prefer, for a variety of reasons, to avoid the language of horizon.<sup>19</sup> Let us, then, define a conversion in a preliminary fashion as a decision that creates a strictly normative frame of reference.

Frames of reference provide contexts for responding evaluatively to oneself or one's world. We should distinguish strictly normative frames of reference from explanatory ones. An explanatory frame of reference provides a context for understanding things other than one's own personally responsible choices. It enjoys a normative character to this extent: in explanatory frames of reference one seeks to predict the way in which persons or things in one's total environment ought to be expected to behave. But in a strictly normative frame of reference one measures the motives and consequences of one's own personal decisions against ideals personally acknowledged as emotionally, intellectually, morally, and religiously binding. Conversion, then, creates a strictly normative frame of reference, because in conversion one decides to take personal responsibility for one's subsequent development in some area of one's experience. Such a decision constitutes a conversion from irresponsible to responsible behavior, i.e., to behavior which incarnates in concrete situations the ideals to which the convert stands personally committed.

The laws that govern human affectivity differ from the laws of speculative thought. Both differ from the laws that govern moral deliberation. And all three can function independently of religious faith. One may, then, distinguish four different realms of experience for whose subsequent

<sup>17</sup> Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977); Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* and *Experiencing God*; Bernard Lonergan, S.J., "Reality, Myth, Symbol," in Alan M. Olsen, ed., *Myth, Symbol, and Reality* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1980) 31-37.

<sup>18</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 131-32.

<sup>19</sup> The term "horizon" is commonly used in existential circles, where the horizon of cognition is contrasted with the individual persons and things that lie within the horizon. The horizon of the mind cannot be grasped as such, since it is often supposed to enjoy virtual infinity. But things within the horizon of cognition can be known as such, for they remain both finite and intelligible. Existential theologians commonly equate the virtually infinite horizon of the mind with God. Paul Tillich has grasped quite clearly the implications of such an equation. If God is the horizon of human aspiration, the divine reality cannot be grasped as such, cannot be revealed as such within space and time. The incarnation of a divine person then becomes inconceivable, as does a tripersonal God. These conclusions suggest that the philosophical term "horizon" can, in its implications, lead to conclusions irreconcilable with divine revelation. Cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1967).



development one may independently assume converted, personal responsibility: affective, speculative, moral, and religious. The realm of affectivity includes sensory images (which enjoy emotional coloring); imageless feelings like sympathy, love, anger, fear, or guilt; remembered images; and the rich polymorphic life of the intuitive imagination. The realm of speculation encompasses every human attempt to provide a controlled, rationally consistent, inferential account of reality. Experience takes on a moral character when it is judged in the light of realities and values that make absolute and ultimate ethical claims. We affirm the moral ultimacy of a reality or value when we are willing not only to live but to die for it; we affirm its moral absoluteness when we uphold its ultimacy in every circumstance. Finally, experience takes on a religious character when we assent in faith to some historical, revelatory self-communication of God.

Besides identifying frames of reference within conversion, one may also speak of three important dynamics within the total process of Christian conversion: (1) religious conversion mediates between affective and moral conversion; (2) intellectual conversion seeks to inform affective, religious, and moral conversion; (3) religious conversion transvalues in faith affective, intellectual, and moral conversion. Let us reflect on each of these dynamics in turn.

In his *Treatise concerning Religious Affections* Jonathan Edwards identified the first dynamic. He conceived the process of conversion as a repentant confrontation with one's own sinfulness that frees the heart to consent to the divine beauty incarnate in Jesus and in Jesus-like people. Christian practice, or the willingness to live by the moral demands of the gospel, tests the authenticity of that consent of faith.<sup>20</sup> William James and C. S. Peirce offer secularized though convergent accounts of this dynamic within the conversion process. Religious repentance causes us to face the repressed anger, fear, and guilt that separate us from God and other persons. As those negative feelings are healed, the heart's capacity to respond to the divine beauty incarnate in Jesus and Jesus-like people expands. That same divine beauty motivates assent to Jesus as the definitive historical self-revelation of God. Consent to that divine act of self-revelation demands that the convert live a life which incarnates the values and ideals Jesus himself lived and proclaimed. In other words, in an integral experience of Christian conversion religious conversion mediates between affective and moral conversion.

The philosophy of C. S. Peirce suggests a second dynamic within

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New York: Yale, 1959); *The Nature of True Virtue*, ed. William K. Frankena (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1969); Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1968).

conversion: intellectual conversion ought to inform the other three kinds. Peirce, like Edwards, believed that the spontaneous attractiveness of divine beauty motivates initial religious assent. He also believed that every human being ought in addition to seek to understand how to cultivate habits of emotional growth that foster and sustain such consent. He called the quest for such insights esthetics. He also held that one should learn how to subordinate one's choices to supremely beautiful ideals. He called such knowledge ethics. And he taught that one should also reach an insight into how to think clearly about making wise choices. He called the study of sound thinking logic. The operational procedures which Peirce assigns to the three normative sciences of esthetics, ethics, and logic coincide with those which structure affective, moral, and intellectual conversion.<sup>21</sup> The affectively converted individual needs to understand the laws of healthy emotional development. The morally converted individual needs to know how to incarnate moral values in complex human situations. And the intellectually converted individual needs to understand the laws of sound thinking. Logic informs the other two normative sciences by providing them with the logical and methodological principles they need to advance. Thus Peirce's theory of normative sciences suggests a second dynamic within an integral conversion experience. Intellectual conversion ought to inform the other three moments in the conversion process by enabling one to think clearly about responsible emotional, moral, and religious development and about thinking itself.<sup>21</sup>

A third dynamic structures the conversion process: religious conversion transvalues the other forms of conversion by providing a novel faith context for interpreting their significance. Affective, intellectual, and moral conversion can occur in abstraction from the realities and ideals disclosed in God's self-revelation in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In the normal course of adult development a particular individual may legitimately decide to cultivate healthy emotional attitudes, sound beliefs, and morally responsible patterns of behavior independently of the word of God spoken to us in the historical missions of Jesus and his Spirit. John Dewey's esthetics, ethics, and logic all illustrate the kind of natural conversion of which I speak. *Art as Experience* offers sound insights into the role of feeling in human creativity. *Human Nature and Conduct* together with Dewey's other moral and political writings illumine the way responsible moral choices are reached. *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* yields many normative insights into the laws of sound thinking. None of

<sup>21</sup> Vincent G. Potter, S.J., *Charles S. Peirce on Norms and Ideals* (Worcester: Univ. of Massachusetts, 1967); C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1934) 6.452-93.

these works invokes gospel values or faith in a self-revealing God, but all three give evidence of having been written by a man who had experienced affective, moral, and intellectual conversion.

When conversion occurs in abstraction from divine revelation, it needs to be transformed and transvalued by religious conversion. Religious conversion effects the transvaluation of the other three forms of conversion by providing a context of faith which modifies the way in which they transpire and develop. Of itself, moral conversion demands the practical incarnation of sound ethical values in concrete decisions. Christian conversion demands that moral choices also be informed by gospel values. Of itself, affective conversion demands a confrontation with one's disordered affections and the cultivation of healthy ones. Christian conversion transforms affective conversion into repentance before God and into cultivation of Christian hope in the dark night of the senses. Christian conversion demands in addition that one go about the process of fixing one's beliefs in prayerful openness to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. For the Christian convert, therefore, a third dynamic structures the conversion process: the ongoing transvaluation of affective, intellectual, and moral conversion, especially when these have transpired in abstraction from divine revelation.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, we must distinguish initial from ongoing conversion. Initial conversion effects the transition from irresponsible to responsible behavior in emotional, speculative, moral, and religious matters. Ongoing conversion demands that one continue to confront responsibly the lived consequences of that initial conversion.

## II

This construct of conversion allows one to begin to come to terms with some of the inadequacies and inauthenticities that mar both revivalistic and popular Roman Catholic piety. Revivalistic piety has traditionally suffered from both fundamentalism and rigorism. Popular Roman Catholic piety has suffered from legalism and ritual formalism. All four aberrations bespeak the absence of conversion at some level. Fundamentalism and rigorism suggest an absence of affective, intellectual, and moral conversion. They occur commonly enough when religious piety roots itself too exclusively in feeling; for when judgments of feeling succumb to neurosis, they ossify into arbitrary, authoritarian pronouncements. In speculative matters this sad process breeds suspicion of speculative criticism and fundamentalistic oversimplifications of religious faith. In moral matters it breeds the doctrinaire rigidity of the Moral Majority. Religious legalism also bespeaks an absence of both moral and religious conversion; for if the theories of Lawrence Kohlberg hold water,

<sup>22</sup> For a fuller discussion of these questions, see Gelpi, *Experiencing God* 174 ff.

the law-and-order conscience has yet to advance beyond conventional morality to autonomous (i.e., converted) moral behavior.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the legalistic moralist has yet to discover the moral freedom in faith to which the Pauline epistles summon us. And empty formalistic ritual worship can conceal an absence of conversion at every level.

In its worst expressions, the Catholic charismatic renewal illustrates how the inauthenticities present in popular expressions of revivalism and Roman Catholicism can mutually reinforce one another. Certainly, charismatic Catholics of authoritarian bent have found the transition from a rigidly conservative Roman Catholic dogmatism to biblical fundamentalism all too easy. In charismatic circles the sexism that sometimes mars Roman church discipline finds a ready rationalization in fundamentalistic interpretations of a Pauline theology of headship. And both conservative charismatics and rigorists of revivalistic bent too often indulge in the same ethical oversimplifications as the Moral Majority.<sup>24</sup>

In its best expressions, however, the charismatic renewal also illustrates how authentic elements present in both the Roman Catholic and revivalistic traditions can mutually enrich one another. My own involvement in charismatic prayer dates from 1968, when I received the gift of tongues alone in a chapel on the campus of Fordham University. I attended my first charismatic prayer meeting almost a year later, at a national conference for the charismatic renewal held on the Notre Dame campus. I subsequently participated for three years in a prayer group that met on the campus of Loyola University in New Orleans, where I had been assigned to teach philosophy. I have since been active in prayer communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

When I was in New Orleans, every Friday night several hundred traditional Catholics, the majority of them students, gathered for worship in a charismatic prayer group. From the beginning the pastoral leaders of the group were concerned to integrate charismatic with sacramental worship.

At the time theologians were debating the legitimacy of replacing the term "transubstantiation" with two other equally obscure theologies: "transignification" and "transfinalization." Liturgical planning committees were experimenting with gimmicks to make the Eucharist interesting and relevant to apparently apathetic congregations. Catholic traditionalists were complaining that the new liturgical reforms had succeeded only in dissipating the feeling of mystery they had experienced at the old Latin Mass.

In our prayer group we knew the presence of Christ in our Eucharists,

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* 1-24.

because we experienced it in the spontaneous prayer, personal witness, and visible giftedness of the members of our community. That experience made me begin to wonder whether the transignification debate amounted to anything more than a squabble over words.<sup>25</sup> I personally favor the intelligent pastoral adaptation of the liturgy, but in our prayer group we felt no need for liturgical gimmickry, because we knew from experience that liturgy comes alive when Christians rend their hearts in repentance and open them together in community to the action of the gift-giving Spirit. Nor did the absence of Latin deprive our Eucharists of mystery. We encountered a profound mystery in charismatically transformed Eucharistic worship: not the mystification that results from linguistic unintelligibility but the paschal mystery of a community consciously and visibly transformed in the Spirit of the risen Christ.

The other sacraments also acquired more vitality and meaning when understood in the light of a shared charismatic experience and celebrated in a living charismatic community of faith. Charismatic Christians frequently pray for the "healing of memories," i.e., for the healing in faith of old psychic scars. The prayer for the healing of memories demands repentance for two reasons. If the psychic scars in need of healing have resulted from wounds inflicted by others, healing usually demands that one forgive, either for the first time or with a new kind of heartfelt sincerity, those who have caused one to suffer unjustly. If the psychic scars result from personal sinfulness, healing demands repentant acceptance of a divine forgiveness that frees one to forgive oneself for what one has done. Charismatic Christians bring both such experiences of personal faith healing to the sacrament of reconciliation. In a charismatically transformed experience of sacramental healing they understand without the need for extensive theological explanation why Jesus linked the proclamation of divine forgiveness to his own ministry of healing. Nor do they need prolonged instruction on the correct use of the revised rite. In approaching the sacrament of reconciliation charismatic Catholics are already accustomed to praying with others for healing in an atmosphere of expectant and repentant faith informed by a living biblical piety.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> A more fruitful approach to the problem of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist would (1) recognize that Trent used the term "substance" in the nontechnical sense of "reality," (2) acknowledge that Trent in its Eucharistic teaching opposes the reality of the consecrated bread and wine to its appearances, (3) distinguish three senses of the terms "reality" and "appearance," and (4) show how all three terms function in the understanding of Christ's Eucharistic presence and endow that doctrine with experiential significance. For a more detailed discussion of these points, see Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* 239-51.

<sup>26</sup> Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1974); Dennis Linn and Matthew Linn, *Healing Life's Hurts: Healing of Memories through the Five Stages of Forgiveness* (New York: Paulist, 1978), and *Deliverance Prayer* (New York: Paulist, 1980); Donald L. Gelpi, "The Ministry of Healing," in *Pentecostal Piety* (New York: Paulist, 1972) 1-58;

Similarly, the charismatic experience of physical healing through faith, prayer, and the laying on of hands spontaneously transforms the way in which charismatic Christians approach the sacrament of anointing. When I first became involved in charismatic prayer, my theological stance, being fairly liberal, was tinged by demythologizing skepticism. The presence in our prayer community of physical, sometimes miraculous healing made me realize that demythologization has its limits. Moreover, when the members of our prayer group brought to the rite of anointing the same expectant faith that they brought to spontaneous prayers for physical healing, the sacrament of the sick ceased to be the ritual *coup de grâce* that it had become in traditional Catholic piety. Instead the rite took on the healing significance that theologians were beginning anew to ascribe to it.

Charismatic prayer also transforms spontaneously the way in which its practitioners approach the vocational sacraments of matrimony and orders. As I ministered to young charismatics in New Orleans, I noticed that they tended to take for granted that Christian marriage can be legitimately undertaken only in response to the anointing and call of the Spirit of Jesus. They spontaneously prayed their way toward a matrimonial commitment in a wider discerning community whose confirmation of their call to marriage they both valued and sought. Having experienced the joy of sharing the gifts of the Spirit in community, they looked forward to creating a life together animated by the same kind of shared prayer. They committed themselves to one another in a rite of marriage out of a conscious sense that their mutual love had been sanctioned both by the Spirit of Jesus and by the community of faith to which they belonged. Seminarians who have participated in and ministered to charismatic communities while preparing for ordination know what it means to be nurtured into ordained ministry by a community of faith that actively sanctions one's call to public leadership in the Church. Many priests have testified that they have rediscovered the meaning of priesthood by ministering to charismatic Christians; for they have experienced that the priesthood of the ordained finds its fulfilment in summoning the Christian community to claim their own priesthood by ministering charismatically to one another and to their ordained leaders.

Finally, from their experience of shared, Spirit-filled prayer, charismatic Christians know a truth that academic theologians are beginning to appropriate through a more painstaking and laborious scholarship: the rite of Christian initiation is a prayer for Spirit baptism.<sup>27</sup>

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*Charism and Sacrament*, 81-91, 187-201, 207-12; Philippe Rouillard, O.S.B., "Le ministre du sacrement de l'onction des malades," *NRT* 101 (1979) 395-402.

<sup>27</sup> Raymond Schwager, S.J., "Wassertaufe, ein Gebet um die Geisttaufe," *ZKT* 100 (1978) 36-68.

I here use the term "Spirit baptism" in the sense in which it was originally used in the Synoptics rather than in the impoverished, fundamentalistic interpretation placed upon it in classical Protestant Pentecostalism. The Synoptic Evangelists, including Luke, intended by the term a much richer and more complex experience of religious transformation in faith than just the reception of the gift of tongues. In all three Synoptic Gospels Spirit baptism reveals the purpose of ritual baptism by strengthening Jesus' disciples to bear witness to him even under persecution and by conforming their lives to his teaching. Properly understood, Spirit baptism encompasses the entire process of gracious transformation in God from initial faith to final resurrection. It includes repentance, hope, faith, love, ongoing sanctification, and mutual service in response to the charismatic anointing of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic Catholics who have discovered such experiences through shared charismatic prayer have correctly identified them as the graces promised in the rites of Christian initiation.

Indeed, much contemporary theological embarrassment over the purpose of the rite of confirmation results from the fact that many sacramental theorists are attempting to redefine the ritual's purpose in abstraction from the experiences that give it meaning and significance.<sup>28</sup> Judged in the light of its history, confirmation is best understood not as a separate sacrament but as a second moment in the process of Christian initiation. Baptism focuses on the death and resurrection of Jesus and invokes the Spirit to teach the neophyte to live as a child of God in the image of His Son. Baptism, therefore, ritualizes an experience of initial and ongoing repentance and conversion which bears fruit in a heart transformed by Christian hope, a mind transformed by Christian faith, and a will transformed by Christian love. Because the graces of baptism span a lifetime, the sacrament also summons the initiated Christian to lifelong docility to the Spirit in putting on the mind of Jesus by prayerfully responding to the gifts (*dona*) of the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation focuses attention on the experience of Pentecost when the Spirit began to effect the visible, prophetic transformation of the Christian community through an outpouring of gifts of prayer and of service. As a consequence, the rite of confirmation summons the initiated Christian to live in lifelong openness to whatever charisms of prayer and of service the Spirit may choose to give. The religious commitment demanded by confirmation differs from baptism in its specificity. All Christians are summoned to conversion, faith, hope, love, and ongoing

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred* (New York: Doubleday, 1981) 205-30; Murphy Center for Liturgical Research, *Made Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1976).

sanctification in the image of Jesus and the power of his Spirit; and all are called to lifelong receptivity to some gift of service in the Christian community. But not every Christian receives the same service gift; for since the ordinary charisms of the Spirit effect the gracious transformation of the human ego, we may count as many different gifts of service as there are different graced human personalities. Because the commitment to respond to a particular gift of service differs in its specificity from the commitment common to all Christians to respond to the sanctifying Spirit in repentant faith, hope, and love, the two commitments legitimately constitute two different ritual moments in the process of Christian initiation and can be appropriately symbolized in two different ritual acts.<sup>29</sup>

### III

All Christians are, then, called through the rites of initiation to live in lifelong, charismatic openness to the Spirit. Inevitably, therefore, the designation of a particular movement in the Church as "charismatic" breeds a host of potentially serious confusions and misunderstandings. It falsely suggests that only those Christians who attend prayer meetings deserve the name "charismatic." In point of fact, all Christians are called to live charismatically, and those who fail to respond to the Spirit's charisms of sanctification and of service introduce serious inauthenticity into their religious commitment.

Similarly, if one designates only those who attend prayer meetings as "charismatic," one also fallaciously implies that only those acts which transpire within the context of a "charismatic" prayer meeting merit being called "charismatic." The charismatic renewal is certainly restoring gifts of feeling, of healing, of prophecy, and of prayer to the Catholic community as a whole, gifts that have been popularly neglected for centuries. But charismatic prayer groups often reflect both the limitations and the strengths of classical Pentecostal piety. Classical Pentecostal spirituality tends to turn inward rather than to deal with political and economic issues of faith and justice; and when fundamentalistic it misprizes speculative theology. In point of fact, many charisms of service like helping, administration, practical care of the poor, community leadership, etc. cannot be exercised in the context of shared charismatic prayer. When, therefore, one limits the term "charismatic" to what goes on in prayer groups, one fallaciously absolves Christians from serving others in prayerful docility to the Spirit's charismatic anointing. When Christians fail to recognize their charismatic status, they tend all too often to obey natural or sinful ego drives rather than the graced leading

<sup>29</sup> Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* 1-156; *Unitatis redintegratio* 22: *Lumen gentium* 12.



of the Spirit. They fail to name the charismatic movements of the Spirit in their lives as gracious inspirations. Through their consequent failure to testify publicly and explicitly to the Spirit's anointing, they diminish the shared faith consciousness of the Christian community not through action but through ignorance, apathy, and omission.

Several other popular misunderstandings of the term "charism" stand in the way of a systematic theological reappropriation of the charismatic basis of authentic sacramental worship. Among them the following should be named. Max Weber has popularized the misleading notion that the charismatic and the institutional stand irreconcilably opposed in principle. Charismatic impulses are often stereotyped as enthusiastic and mindlessly emotional. The charismatic is slandered as a marginal, esoteric, optional strain in Christian piety, tolerable perhaps for those who can tolerate it but a nonessential appendage to solid Christian devotion. The charismatic is also fallaciously equated with the unusual, the extraordinary, or the miraculous. Let us reflect on each of these misunderstandings in turn.

In Pauline theology a "charism" (*charisma*) signifies a particular manifestation of the grace (*charis*) bestowed upon us by God through Jesus Christ and in his Spirit.<sup>30</sup> Far from being opposed to institutional ministry, the charisms underpin and authenticate administration and official church leadership. When, therefore, personal charism and institutional structures seem to conflict, the conflict results not from the charismatic anointing of the Spirit but from human egotism and from unconverted, vested institutional interests.

While some charisms, like prophecy and gifts of prayer, address the heart, others, like evangelization and instruction, address the mind as well. Others still, like gifts of discernment, helping, and practical leadership, seek to inspire decisions that foster the community's growth in faith. Not every charism, therefore, speaks primarily to the human emotions. A sound charismatic piety preserves a healthy balance among feeling, thought, and action.<sup>31</sup>

Nor should the charismatic action of the Spirit be caricatured as marginal, esoteric, or optional. As we have seen, Christian conversion begins with a repentant confrontation with one's own sinfulness and culminates in the decision to live as a child of God in the image of Jesus. Authentic Christian conversion inaugurates a life lived in conformity with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus, however, summons his followers to a

<sup>30</sup> John Koenig, *Charismata: God's Gifts for God's People* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); George Montague, S.M., *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist, 1976) 127-228; B. N. Wanbacam, O.Praem., "Le mot 'charisme,'" *NRT* 97 (1975) 345-55.

<sup>31</sup> Gelpi, *Experiencing God* 205-58.

faith in the providence of God that frees them to share their bread with others. He calls them to practical concern for the neediest and for the marginal and outcast members of society. He demands that mutual forgiveness in love attest the authenticity of his disciples' prayer. Moreover, all this the followers of Jesus must do in response to the sanctifying Spirit with whom he baptizes them. In other words, those who profess to follow Jesus commit themselves to life in a community of faith sharing and mutual forgiveness. Moreover, the Spirit who bonds us to one another in community also calls each Christian to some form of practical service of others in the name and image of Jesus. Any service undertaken in response to the Spirit's anointing deserves to be called a *charisma* no matter how ordinary or quotidian; for it manifests the gracing activity of the Spirit of Christ. Lifelong openness to the gifts of sanctification and of service follows, therefore, as an unavoidable consequence of authentic conversion to Christ. Far from being marginal, esoteric, or optional, the charisms specify every Christian call to service; for every converted Christian is called to a pentecostal moment when growth in sanctity matures into a clear sense of the way one is called to serve others practically in Jesus' name.<sup>32</sup>

Nor need such service be confined to the unusual or the extraordinary. An extraordinary gift like the gift of miracles lacks any clear foundation in the talents and abilities of those who exercise it. Most charisms transform the way in which we exercise our natural gifts by endowing that exercise with prayerful receptivity to the anointing and illumination of the Spirit. Failure to value the ordinary gifts of the Spirit can breed charismania, or obsessive preoccupation with the preternatural and the miraculous. But charismania neurotically distorts a sound charismatic piety into an aberration. Authentic charismatic piety can find God in all things, even in the ordinary.

#### IV

Once one concedes that visible charismatic transformation in the Spirit ought to be a result of any authentic Christian conversion, one can also use C. S. Peirce's pragmatic maxim in order to clarify not only the dynamics of Christian conversion but also the inseparability of charismatic prayer from authentic sacramental worship. Peirce's maxim states in labored prose: "The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol."<sup>33</sup> Inadequate as a definition of meaning, the pragmatic maxim, when systematically applied to a theology

<sup>32</sup> Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* 1-156; *Experiencing God* 259-321.

<sup>33</sup> C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers* 5.438.

of conversion, nevertheless produces clarifying results. For example, when we invoke the maxim to explore the charismatic consequences of Christian initiation, we begin to understand why the seven sacramental rites of the Church can legitimately be called a system. They are dynamically ordered to one another through the charismatic activity of the Spirit of Jesus. Let us draw on the preceding reflections in order to understand how this occurs.

As we have just seen, among the practical consequences of Christian conversion we must number the willingness to live in lifelong responsiveness to the Spirit's charismatic call to faith sharing and to mutual service in community. One enters the Christian community through the rites of initiation. In the case of adults, sacramental initiation seals an experience of initial conversion and introduces one to ongoing conversion. In the case of infants, it introduces the baptized child into a community that seeks to lead it to just such an adult conversion experience. In either case, the Spirit's sanctifying gifts and charismatic call to service number among the fundamental graces of the rites of initiation. The sanctifying action of the Spirit flows especially from the baptismal moment in sacramental initiation; for baptism conforms us to Jesus by summoning us to incarnate in our moral decisions the religious values he lived and proclaimed. The call to mutual service in community flows in a special way from confirmation, which recalls the beginning of the Spirit's visible, charismatic transformation of the Church on Pentecost day. Confirmation summons the confirmed Christian to lifelong openness to whatever call to service the Spirit might summon.

Two of the Spirit's calls to service in community demand sacramental confirmation: marriage and orders. Indeed, one can argue that the sacramental character of both rituals derives in part from the fact that both lend official public sanction to a particular charism of service within the Christian community.

Reconciliation and anointing under present sacramental discipline ritualize the healing ministry of the ordained; for in proclaiming the word of God to the Christian community, the ordained summon believers to ongoing repentance and conversion. Every efficacious proclamation of the word ought to be accompanied by efficacious signs of healing. That healing assumes different forms: initial and ongoing conversion itself, the transformation of suffering into grace, or the complete, sometimes miraculous removal of suffering. As we have seen, the sacrament of reconciliation ritualizes the ongoing conversion of the baptized. The sacrament of anointing effects either the transformation of suffering into grace or the complete removal of some physical or psychic illness. Both rites, therefore, engage gifts, or charisms, of healing.

Finally, Eucharistic worship ritualizes the ongoing reaffirmation of one's covenant of initiation. Since, however, the initiated Christian stands committed to respond to the Spirit's sanctifying gifts and charismatic call to service, the extent to which any given Christian community lives in practical openness to the Spirit's charisms measures the authenticity of its Eucharistic worship.

Clearly, the application of Peirce's practical logic of consequences to sacramental worship casts light on the dynamic, charismatic unity of the sacramental system. It also clarifies the practical meaning of the term "primordial sacramentality" (*Ursakrament*). The term emerged from an attempt to apply existential phenomenology to sacramental theology. Having rejected an Aristotelian causal analysis of the sacraments as "ontic," existential sacramentalists tried through descriptive methods to discover deeper ontological structures of meaning within sacramental worship. The Incarnation was described as the primordial sacrament of existential encounter with a self-revealing God, and the Church as a primordial sacrament that mysteriously prolongs that original act of divine self-revelation in space and time. The seven sacraments were seen as ritual explicitations of this more fundamental primordial sacramentality.<sup>34</sup>

But when these theological abstractions were used to interpret a contemporary experience of sacramental worship, they sometimes rang hollow. Worshipping Christians did not always experience their local parish as a primordial sacrament. Complaints surfaced in more than one place about the tedium, sterility, and superficiality of sacramental worship. These expressions of dissatisfaction effectively dramatized the fact that sacramental theology needs more than phenomenology to discover the primordial sacramentality of the Christian community. Phenomenology can only describe what appears. But the saving presence of God will appear in a community of worship only if its members are actively responding to the Spirit's charismatic call to sanctification and to service by putting on the mind of Jesus and by serving one another in the ways the Spirit prompts; for one can describe the primordial sacramentality of a Christian community only if it has been evoked from the community by an efficacious word of proclamation that summons its members to repentance, living faith, ongoing sanctification, and mutual charismatic service. In other words, sacramental theology will fail to offer an adequate account of primordial sacramentality if it uses descriptive methods only. Sacramentalists also need to engage in normative thinking about the kinds of behavior which endow the shared faith experience of any given

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* 97-110.

community with primordial sacramentality. The application of pragmatic logic to a theology of conversion offers the kind of normative thinking sacramental theology needs.

Theological reflection on the religious experience of charismatic Catholics suggests, therefore, that a sound and balanced charismatic piety has the capacity to effect the renewal of sacramental worship from within. Even more, it suggests that sacramental worship which fails to celebrate the charismatic action of the Spirit of Jesus in the Christian community suffers from serious inauthenticity. This conclusion should give many Catholics, both clerical and lay, pause; for Spirit-consciousness and a conscious cultivation of the charisms has not dominated Roman Catholic piety for centuries. The fact remains, however, that living faith in the Holy Spirit (as opposed to the bare doctrinal affirmation that the Spirit exists as a member of the Trinity) demands conscious and practical openness to the Spirit's call of sanctification and to all the charisms of prayer and of service from tongues to ordained leadership.

## V

Contemporary charismatic piety offers other pastoral challenges and opportunities as well. The charismatic renewal, like other revivals before it, fosters grass-roots ecumenism; and history teaches that without grass-roots support the ecumenical labors of theologians and of church leaders are foredoomed to frustration. Two councils—Lyons II and Florence—labored to reunite Eastern and Western Christians. Both failed for lack of grass-roots preparation and support. Contemporary ecumenical dialogue will founder on the same rock unless the pastoral leaders of the churches find ways to shatter denominational complacency and inspire a desire for union among ordinary Christians.

The charismatic renewal provides a variety of opportunities for Christians of different denominations to share their faith and their experience of Jesus and of the Spirit. Shared charismatic prayer shatters denominational stereotypes by fostering a spontaneous, personal witness to God that dramatizes a shared faith bonding Christians despite denominational differences. Charismatic Christians of different churches have collaborated in sponsoring Jesus rallies and similar ecumenical equivalents of the old Eucharistic Congresses. They have participated in workshops on Christian prayer and spirituality. But the most potent motive which shared charismatic prayer provides for fostering grass-roots ecumenism is the experience of shared prayer itself. Spirit-inspired prayer breeds love. Only when Christians of different denominations learn to love one another will they begin to feel separation as painful.

Divisions in any community of faith betoken an absence of conversion at some level: affective, intellectual, moral, or religious. Blind prejudice,

mutual misunderstanding, apathy in the face of the social, economic, and political challenges of contemporary society, rote or compartmentalized religion—these and similar attitudes divide the churches. The charismatic renewal cannot claim to be the only effective way of fostering grass-roots ecumenism; but it does demand conversion, openness to the Spirit, and shared prayer as the preconditions for ecumenical contact. As a consequence, it creates a climate in which the divisions which separate Christians can be dealt with prayerfully, lovingly, and in obedience to the Spirit.<sup>35</sup>

The need for conversion poses a second challenge to charismatic Christians and to the churches. Any Christian who claims to be Spirit-baptized must accept the moral consequences of commitment to Jesus as the normative historical revelation of who God is and what we humans are called to become. Those who claim Jesus as Lord must submit to the constraints of discipleship; and discipleship, as all four Gospels insist, exacts a high cost. Jesus summons his followers to a trust in the Father's providential care that frees them to share whatever they have with others on the basis not of merit but of need. He demands mutual forgiveness as the most fundamental test of the authenticity of worship.

We Americans live in a country that consumes an enormous and disproportionate amount of the world's resources. We live under an administration that subordinates human rights abroad to American economic interests. We waste billions of dollars creating weapons of nuclear destruction while millions of humans starve. For the contemporary Christian, one crucial test of moral and religious conversion must remain the ability to name these forces as antichrist; for the Christian convert who refuses to confront the principalities and powers of this world and summon them to repentance and to the obedience of faith succumbs to hypocrisy and inauthenticity.

The history of revivalism in this country suggests that soon or late it becomes politicized. Although some might be inclined to regard the Moral Majority and other similar groups as ethically inauthentic offshoots of contemporary American revivalism, unlike previous revivals the charismatic renewal has yet to undergo systematic politicization. But the potential exists. Nuclear disarmament and world hunger confront the American Church as moral issues of such enormous consequence that those who choose to ignore them sin by omission. Pastoral leaders of charismatic communities need to join their voices to the growing number of bishops and other Christians who seek to transform the Catholic community into a church of peace advocacy committed to the elimination

<sup>35</sup> Kilian McDonnell, *The Charismatic Renewal and Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist, 1978); Paul Lebeau, S.J., "The Charismatic Renewal and Ecumenism," *Lumen vitae* 31 (1976) 171-85; Gelpi, *Pentecostal Piety* 61-80.

of world hunger. Active participation in Christian lobbies like Bread for the World or Pax Christi offers one concrete way of bringing political pressure to bear to shape national policy in ways that lead to peace and to justice. Only time will tell whether the religious enthusiasm generated by this latest American revival will attempt to suffuse the political search for both peace and justice with authentic religious fervor. If it does, it will have advanced the inculturation of the gospel in this country in a significant way.