Charismatics (neo-Pentecostalism)
By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1978, (Rev. 84,92,95,04)

Introduction: The word "charismatic" comes from the Greek word for the Holy Spirit's "gifts" (Gk. "charismata" in Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4,9,28,30; and "charisma" in 1 Pt. 4:10). It is rooted in the word for "grace" (Gk. "charis"). Two well known theologians Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck explain, "The Holy Spirit is a gift of Christ to His church. In turn, the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the church. We call these the 'charismata,' from 'charis,' which means 'grace.' The spiritual gifts are evidence of God's grace."¹

1. WHEN DID THE "CHARISMATIC" MOVEMENT START?
Four researchers give their insights as to how the "charismatic" movement started and progressed. Each adds a little more information on the "charismatic" movement.

A. Pastor John MacArthur writes, "Also known as 'neo-pentecostalism,' the charismatic movement is heir to Pentecostalism, which began around 1900. Until 1959 Pentecostalism was contained in denominations such as Assemblies of God, Foursquare Gospel Churches, and the United Pentecostal Church. But in 1959 Pentecostalism spilled over denominational lines when Dennis Bennett, rector at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, experienced what he believes was the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. The charismatic movement spread to the Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran denominations. From there it has swollen to encompass Catholics, theological liberals, and even several pseudo-Christian fringe groups."²

B. Historian H. V. Synan gives the following insights, "The first minister to make public issue of his Pentecostal experience was Dennis Bennett, pastor of St. Marks Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California. In 1960, Bennett spoke in tongues in a private prayer meeting. When he reported it to his congregation, the church divided. Bennett resigned his pastorate and moved to an inner city parish in Seattle, where he was permitted to promote Pentecostalism while remaining an Episcopal priest. In the wake of Bennett's experience, hundreds of ministers of various denominations gave public support to the movement. These new tongue-speakers were dubbed 'neo-Pentecostals' [or charismatics]."³

C. Theologian Millard Erickson remarks, "The Pentecostal movement, which arose and grew in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century, emphasized the return of certain of the more spectacular gifts of the Holy Spirit. Then at about the middle of the century, the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic movement began; it had many of the same emphases. These movements [neo-Pentecostal or the charismatic
movement] put greater stress on miracles of spiritual healing than does Christianity in general."  

D. Theologian Wayne Grudem helps us understand the "charismatic" movement. "Charismatic refers to any groups that... seek to practice all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament (including prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation, and distinguishing between spirits), and allow differing viewpoints on whether baptism in the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion and whether tongues is a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Charismatics will very often refrain from forming their own denomination, but will view themselves as a force for renewal within existing Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches."  

2. WHAT DO "CHARISMATICS" BELIEVE?  
Charismatics are second generation Pentecostals or the next stage in the religious evolution of Pentecostalism. From the four researchers under the previous point, we learn what the "charismatics" believe.  

A. They seek to practice "all" the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit.  
To quote Wayne Grudem showing the specific emphasis of charismatics he writes, they "...seek to practice all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament (including prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation, and distinguishing between spirits)."  

B. They tend to emphasize the gifts of "tongues" and "healing."  
H. V. Synan stated, "These new tongue-speakers were dubbed 'neo-Pentecostals' [or charismatics]."  
Millard Erickson stated, "These movements [neo-Pentecostal or the charismatic movement] put greater stress on miracles of spiritual healing than does Christianity in general."  

C. They are trans-denominational and do not form denominations or churches.  
Wayne Grudem stated, "Charismatics will very often refrain from forming their own denomination."  

D. They work inside existing denominations as source of renewal (or change).  
Wayne Grudem stated the, "... view themselves as a force for renewal within existing Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches."  

E. They are very ecumenical.  
John MacArthur stated, "The charismatic movement spread to the Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran denominations. From there it has
swallon to encompass Catholics, theological liberals, and even several pseudo-Christian fringe groups."11

3. HOW DID THE CHARISMATICS INFLUENCE ROMAN CATHOLICS?
There are a few things we can learn about how the charismatics influenced the Roman Catholic Church.

A. It Was Through Ecumenical Retreats And Prayer Services.
Theologian Paul Enns writes, "The charismatic movement has affected many different groups, and the Roman Catholic Church is no exception. Some trace the beginnings of the Catholic involvement in the charismatic movement to the 'cursillo,' an intense, emotional weekend of prayer practiced by Spanish-speaking people. At Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, two professors, who had been to Protestant Pentecostal meetings and the 'cursillo,' organized a weekend retreat in February 1967 when the group had Pentecostal experience. Similar experiences followed at Notre Dame and Michigan State in the Spring of the same year. In 1969 the Church gave cautious approval, and the movement swelled. In 1973 there were an estimated 50,000 Catholic Pentecostals in the United States and Canada; by 1984 there were some 5,700 prayer groups in the United States, with 250,000 people attending charismatic prayer meetings weekly and another 250,000 involved in other ways. There have been an estimated eight to ten million Catholics involved in the [charismatic] movement [in the world] since 1967. Although the Catholic charismatic movement has drawn priests into it, it is predominantly a layman's movement. It has separate headquarters in South Bend, Indiana, a magazine and publishing house, and annual conventions, usually at Notre Dame University."12

B. It Was A Desire To Cause Renewal Or Revival.
Researcher Vinson Synan writes, although the charismatic outbreak of "glossolalia" among many Roman Catholics was questioned by Roman Catholic Church officials, "...Most observers were in agreement that the movement was beneficial and caused the participants to be more loyal to the Catholic Church. Some saw in the movement hope for a spiritual renewal which would 'stir up afresh the grace of baptism and confirmation. Far from condemning the phenomenon, Catholic theologians and ecclesiastical authorities called for an investigation of the possible value of 'glossolalia' to the church."13

C. It Was An Utilization Of The Laity.
Earle Cairns noted that the charismatic movement within the Roman Catholic Church promoted and supported the laity within the church which kept them from leaving the church. He writes, "The importance of the laity was recognized by many references to them as the 'people of God' and assertions of their spiritual priesthood."14
D. It Was An Added Element Of Emotionalism.
Charles Jarvis writes, "The neo-Pentecostal movement in the Roman Catholic Church has been received with open arms on the part of the Roman Catholic Leadership. It is regarded as a helpful expression for the welfare of the Roman Catholic Church and its people. ... It served to add a certain amount of vitality to a rather reserved religious tradition. ...It should be pointed out that the Roman Catholic Pentecostalism movement thrives on experiences that are expressed by outward emotionalism. It is appealing because it serves to heighten the emotional and mental state of the people involved. People in general are hungry for anything that will satisfy and fill the voids of life."15

Footnotes
4 Christian Theology, by Millard J. Erickson, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985, p. 836
5 Systematic Theology, by Wayne Grudem, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997, p. 763
6 Grudem 7 Synan 8 Erickson 9 Grudem 10 Grudem 11 MacArthur
Centuries, by Earle Cairns, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981, p. 458; Let Rome Speak For