Doctrine of the Similarities of Catholics and Charismatics

Reference Material: In the mid-70's, I subscribed to a magazine called the *Present Truth*, a magazine which originated from Australia and primarily focused upon the accuracy of the reformation movement and the confusion of both the charismatics and the Catholics. One of their more outstanding articles examined the Pentecostal movement and asked the reader are they closer in doctrine to Protestant or Catholic theology. The bulk of this doctrine came from that article, which was featured in the June 1972 issue of *Present Truth*. The article was a transcript of a forum on Pentecostalism held in Brisbane, Australia at the hall of the Canberra Hotel. There were a panel of speakers from the United States, New Zealand and Australia.

History: The Pentecostal movement began in 1900 when Charles Parham, a young Methodist minister in Kansas, along with forty others, decided to seek their concept of the *baptism of the Holy Spirit* as they read it in the books of Acts. There was several mentions of tongues and the historical recollections of that time seemed to be rather chaotic than orderly. They persisted for several days to receive this blessing until every one of them eventually felt this overwhelming experience which they then identified with the baptism of the Spirit. The chief characteristic of this, beyond the ecstatic experience, was the experience of speaking in tongues. There was another Pentecostal leader, W.J. Seymour in California and these characteristic manifestations seemed to suddenly break out simultaneously in many different religions communities.²

The Pentecostal's grew to 8 million by 1960, but were essentially ostracized by mainstream Christianity; however, in the following decade, the Pentecostal experience and the holiness movement began to infiltrate the various major denominations, including the Catholic church, producing schisms in the church, separating the members into those who had experienced their baptism and those who did not. With great enthusiasm the leading sponsors of the experience say that the Holy Spirit is breaking down the denominational barriers. Men of talent, money and influence are joining the ranks of those who have received the "baptism." Interdenominational groups, such as The Full Gospel business Men's Fellowship International, are very active in spreading what is being called today "the third force" or "the third arm" in Christendom. Religious commentators also are beginning to recognize the charismatic moment as the third great force in the Christian world.³

Obviously, this gives rise to many questions. Is this a great wave of revival which began as a ripple and is now finding its way to mainstream Christianity. Do we embrace these charismatics as our brothers? Do we pursue the experience which is the center of their movement and lay hold of their doctrine as the pure truth? Should we be skeptical, and step back and examine their doctrine. The Apostle John wrote, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but analyze the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not fro God; and this is the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (I John 4:1–6). I included the entire context of this verse because some people only look at vv. 2–3 as the test. The test is properly who listens to John and the other Apostles? How do we listen to them? By examining the doctrines of these various spirits and placing them next to our guide, what the Apostles wrote, the Bible (specifically the New Testament).

There are two streams of Christian thought—Catholic and Protestant. In which stream does Pentecostalism belong? What were the great issues of the Protestant Reformation? Does Pentecostalism affirm or deny the principles of Protestantism? ⁴

¹ Not to be confused with the *Plain Truth*.

² Much of this article is taken almost word-for-word, with some paraphrasing from *Present Truth;* June 1970; ©1972. Part of the reason for my almost quoting this word-for-word is that my copy of the issue has probably seen its last days and it was an article which I remembered for nearly thirty years.

³ John Slade, chairman of this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth*; June 1972; ©1972; p. 6.

⁴ John Slade, chairman of this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth;* June 1972; ©1972; p. 6.

Robert Brinsmead, the first speaker, indicated that one key issue was focus. The New Testament features the two key aspects of God's redemptive activity: (1) God's work on our behalf in Christ; and, (2) God's work in us wrought by the Holy Spirit.

The Corinthian church with very little focus, as well as having many distorting influences. Paul wrote to them: Now all things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and He gave to us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18–19). In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7). It is important to notice that the gospel is the record of what god has done. It is not the record of what God has done in us; neither is it the record of what God will do in us. The gospel is the record of what God has done outside of us. He did it in the Lord Jesus Christ. While we were yet sinners, when we were His enemies, while we were going from Him more and more, God did something for us in Christ.⁵ For while we were still helpless, at the proper time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will rarely die for a righteous man; indeed probably for the good man, some one would be brave enough to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ dies on behalf of us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we will be saved from the wrath through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be delivered by His life (Rom. 5:6–10).

In Romans 5, Paul presents the contrast between Adam and Christ. Through the disobedience of Adam, the whole human race was constituted sinful in the sight of God. When the devil conquered Adam, he conquered the whole human family. God redeemed the human race by giving us another Head, a new Father to stand at the head of the human race (Isa. 9:6). And in Christ, god redeemed the human family. He bought us with the precious blood of Christ. In Christ, He put our sins away on the cross. In Christ, He gave us a perfect righteousness (Rom. 5:18, 19). Thus the gospel is the record of what God has done, not in us but outside of us, even in His Son Jesus Christ while we were yet sinners

Now we turn our attention to the second aspect of God's activity—God's work in us by the Holy Spirit. The relation between Number 1 and Number 2 must be clearly understood. Number 1 is the gospel; Number 2 is the fruit of believing in the gospel. To confuse them is the very essence of Roman thought; to see no connection between them is the essence of antinomian thought. Faith in God's work for us (i.e., faith in Number 1) brings the Holy Spirit to us. The Scripture is clear that faith in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ brings the Holy Spirit to the believer in order that he may be filled and baptized in the Spirit. Brothers, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it (Gal. 3:15).

The relationship that exists between Number 1 and Number 2 is very important. True Christian experience finds its joy, its fulfillment and its satisfaction in Number 1. This is because Number 1 is an infinite work. God's work for us in Christ is a complete work. Our acceptance with God is grounded upon it. Our right standing with God is based upon what He has done for us in Jesus. It is Christ's experience that has merit rather than our own. Isaiah 53:11 declares: "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many." The word "knowledge" means experience. That is to say, "By His wounds, by His suffering, by His holy living, by His sacrificial dying and His triumphant resurrection, shall My righteous Servant justify many." True Christian experience finds its joy in something outside of itself—the experience of Jesus. God mercifully took our history and imputed that to His Son; but He takes the history of Jesus' infinite life and reckons that to us through faith.

The words of Jesus in Luke 10:17–20 are very significant. They record how the disciples returned to Christ with great satisfaction after a successful mission of healing, preaching and casting out devils. Jesus said to them, "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not,...but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." What wonderful instruction we find here! Jesus was telling His disciples not to find their joy,

⁵ Robert Brinsmead, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth;* June 1972; ©1972; p. 6.

⁶ Robert Brinsmead, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth;* June 1972; ©1972; p. 6.

fulfillment and satisfaction what God was accomplishing in them, but He said, Rejoice rather in what has been done for you. Through My merit your names have been written in heaven. We must not seek to find our fulfillment, our satisfaction and our joy in Number 2—the inward work. Love does not look inward, for love seeks not its own (I Cor. 13:5). Nor does love rejoice in its own. To look inward for our fulfillment and our satisfaction leads to the greatest pride—the price of grace. To make one's own experience the center of his concern is the very negation of the gospel. It is the worst form of spiritual perversion.

I want to use an illustration that may show the relationship between Christ's work for us and Christ's work inus. No doubt you have tried this simple balancing trick. [the speaker begins to balance a broom on his finge.] It is not hard to do if one simple principle is followed. What is the secret of balancing this broom on my finger? If my eye is focused on the top, I can balance it. My finger underneath is moving. It may be engaged in considerable movement, but I am scarcely conscious of it. Now, if I focus my attention on what my finger is doing, it is impossible to maintain the balance of the broom. So we must look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. It is by finding our satisfaction in Him, it is by beholding what He has done for us and what He is to us, that we maintain a successful Christian experience. But if His work in us become the center of our concern, we shall sink as quickly as Peter sank when he turned his eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great issue of the religious struggle in the sixteenth century was this: Is man justified in God's sight by what grace does in him, or by what grace did in Christ? On one side stood the medieval church; on the other side stood the Reformation. At least both lines of thought claimed something in common. The schoolmen taught that a man was justified, that is, accepted in the sight of God, by God's work of grace. The Reformers also taught that a man was justified, or accepted in God's sight, by God's work of grace. Thus far, both streams of thought were the same. But what was the essential difference between the medieval and Reformation thought? The medieval church laid down its premise that a man is justified, or accepted, in God's sight by God's work of grace in him, in his life. In contrast, the Reformers laid down the great apostolic principle that a man is justified by God's work of grace, not in his experience, but in Christ. One stream of thought is man-centered; the other is Christ-centered. One is subjective; the other is objective. One looks inward; the other looks outward. When we analyze all the religions of the world, we find that they have one thing in common—man's experience is the center of concern. The gospel of Christ alone is different. It looks outward and upward. In this light we ask these questions: In which stream of thought is Pentecostalism? In which stream of thought is the prevailing current of the Jesus Revolution? And what is the center of concern in your religious thinking?

Geoffrey Paxton was the next speaker: First of all, at the time of the sixteenth century the Church of Rome believed that a man was acceptable before God because of an inherent righteousness. That is to say, a man's acceptance before God was on the basis of a righteousness within man—an inherent, intrinsic righteousness within the believer. This is the first difference. In contrast to this, the Reformers taught that a man is accepted before God, not on the basis of an inherent intrinsic righteousness in the believer, but rather on the basis of a righteousness which is outside the believer and alien to the believer—namely the righteousness which is in heaven in Jesus Christ, before god's throne. I repeat, this is the first great difference—acceptance by virtue of a righteousness outside of the believer in Christ.⁸

The 16th century Council of Trent listed five causes why a man receives acceptance by God. The instrumental cause is water baptism. Baptism was seen as the instrument by which man becomes acceptable to God. Is Baptism necessary to be saved? According to the Baltimore Catechism: *Baptism is necessary for the salvation of all men because Christ has said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5). The death of Christ on our behalf was seen as merely one of these five causes, referred to as the meritorious cause of salvation. One of the other teachings of the Catholic faith is: *All are obliged to belong to the Catholic Church in order to be saved...No one can be saved without sanctifying grace, and the*

⁷ Robert Brinsmead, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth;* June 1972; ©1972;p p. 6–7.

⁸ Geoffrey Paxton, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth;* June 1972; ©1972; p. 8.

⁹ This We Believe; By This We Live; revised edition of the Baltimore Catechism No. 3; ©1957 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, p. 261.

Catholic Church alone is the divinely established means by which grace is brought to the world and the full fruits of Our Lord's redemption are applied to men.¹⁰

Geoffrey Paxton: [Thirdly] The Roman church taught that baptism was that even in which and through which a righteousness was infused into, or poured into, the believer. And this was able to take place because Jesus opened the door, so to speak, with His death. But from baptism on, it was the responsibility of the believer to ensure that he maintained his acceptance with God. If he fell through a moral error, or even through an intellectual error, he had to make good use of the means of grace which God had provided in order to come back into God's favor. In other words, the third great difference is this: The Roman Catholic Church preuspposes the inherent ability of man to maintain his own salvation and, indeed, to do good works which merit God's acceptance. The Reformers said, Not so! God has granted to us an ability, said the Reformers, but this ability is always to work and to live as an object of the divine grace. It is never an ability which enables us to perform good works which will make God happy with us and therefore continue to give us salvation or give us salvation afresh. No, man is not inwardly able to perform good works which make God happy...he good work has been performed for us, and any work God does in us and through us is the result of that good work done for use. Whatever man does, he always does as an object of divine favor, and never a subject to bring about God's favor. The fourth and final difference [that Mr. Paxton touched on] is ...the Roman Catholic teaching [of] the doctrine of perfectionism. If a man is able to go on because of the good start God has given him, if he is able to maintain his salvation and to do things which will make God happy, this must presuppose that while he is doing that and making God happy, there is nothing in man which makes God unhappy, i.e., he is perfect. And this is implicit in Roman teaching. On the other hand, the Reformers said, The Christian man is not perfect. He is still a sinner by nature. He was a sinner at Holy Spirit conversion, and he will retain that corrupt nature until he dies...[now, ask] Does Pentecostalism draw attention to the work outside of us, or does it place its main emphasis on the work in us? The second question I want ask is this: How does Pentecostalism view the death of Jesus? Is it a death which makes possible the ultimate baptism of the Spirit? Is it the death which has brought about the fundamental fulness of the believer in Christ? Or does completion or the fulness have to be brought about by man on the basis of what Christ has done? The third question I want to ask its this: Does Pentecostalism presuppose that the believer is able to do meritorious good works which will make God respond with the fulness of the Sprit or with any other blessing? And the fourth question...is this: can Pentecostalism speak about the fulness and total surrender and total abandonment without implying perfectionism? 11

John Brinsmead goes on to point out that the focus of the Holy Spirit and the focus of the Catholics and Pentecostal's. The Pentecostal experience often points to the man or to the experience. Who is not being glorified is Jesus Christ. For many smart unbelievers, if anything, what occurs in these churches is an embarrassment to Jesus Christ. The Catholic, when infused with grace, it is his life which continues to hold his salvation together, along with constant corrections (confession, penance, etc.). However, Jesus said, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come...He will glorify Me." (John 16:13a, 14). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us Christ-conscious and not Spirit-conscious. He does not come to testify of Himself, Jesus said, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come...He shall not speak of Himself." (John 16:13)...Another office of the Holy Spirit is to teach the believer the Word of God. The Word reveals Jesus—His infinite merits and righteousness. The Word alone is the supreme judge of all experience and all doctrine. In Protestantism the Word of God is the only infallible rule of conduct and religious doctrine. But in the other stream of thought we have the dependence on miracles, visions, sacraments—on something apart from, or outside, the Word. The modern charismatic movement also looks to audio-visual evidence of the Spirit's work...There are basically only two streams of religious thought—Protestant and Catholic. All humanity is divided here. It does not matter what creed we claim. Are we pointing to, glorying in and rejoicing in what God has done through His divine Spirit in the one Man, Jesus? Is that our vital testimony to the world? Or are we down in the realm of the subjective, glorying in and testifying to what we imagine the Holy Spirit is doing in us? 12

¹⁰ This We Believe; By This We Live; revised edition of the Baltimore Catechism No. 3; ©1957 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, p. 129.

¹¹ Geoffrey Paxton, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth*; June 1972; ©1972; pp. 8–9.

¹² John Brinsmead, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth*; June 1972; ©1972; pp. 9–10.

Dr. Jack Zwemer made three points: Reformation thought declares that man's acceptance with God depends on the absolute and infinite righteousness of man's Substitute, his Representative—the man, Christ Jesus, who stands in the presence of God for us. That is the Protestant ground of acceptance. For that Man only is pleasing to the Father. The other system of religious thought declares that God is pleased and satisfied with an inherent. an acquired righteousness, a borrowed goodness in man. Thus the Reformers looked outside themselves for righteousness that inheres in their Substitute before God's throne, while the other system looks downward upon man and within man to find an exhibition of something that might be pleasing to God...The second point...[is] the Protestant man always regards himself as a sinner—"Wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." As the Apostle Paul came to the end of his life and said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," so the Christian man in Reformation thought regards himself as a sinner. He freely admits it. As he progresses in the Christian pathway, he become increasingly conscious of the fact that he is a sinner in himself. This, of course, impels him to look out of himself and upward to where his Righteousness is. On the other hand, the medieval schoolman looks within himself and regards himself, not as a sinner, but as a saint. This he freely admits; and he becomes increasingly unconscious of any sinfulness inherent in him...The third point concerns the Spirit and His work. Reformation thought declares that the Holy Spirit is freely given that men might see their own utter moral and spiritual bankruptcy and then flee out of themselves to Jesus Christ, in whom inheres righteousness and infinite goodness...They are unconscious of what they have done. They are conscious only of their utter sinfulness and the infinite righteousness of their Substitute. On the other hand, the medieval system of thought sees in the gift of the Spirit a benefit derived by super-human effort, which conveys an experiential and ecstatic thing and a confidence within oneself. It is Spirit-consciousness and self-consciousness as opposed to Christ-consciousness.13

Several Catholics have recognized that Pentecostal's are their brothers. Although they derive from Protestant backgrounds, the Pentecostal churches are not typically Protestant in their beliefs, attitudes or practices...From the point of view of the Catholic Church, it cannot be assumed that the Pentecostal movement represents an incursion of Protestant influence...Catholics who have accepted Pentecostal spirituality have found it to be fully in harmony with their traditional faith and life. They experience it, not as a borrowing from an alien religion, but as a connatural development of their own...the spiritual experience of those who have been touched by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal movement is in profound harmony with the classical spiritual theology of the church.¹⁴

Noted Roman Catholic author Louis Bouyer made the following observations: The Protestant [read, Pentecostal] Revival...recalls the best and most authentic elements of the Catholic tradition...We see in every Protestant country, Christians who owed their religion to the movment we have called, in general, Revivalism, attain a more or less complete rediscovery of Catholicism...The contemporary reveivals most valuable and lasting in their results all present a striking analogy with this process of rediscovery of Catholicism...the instinctive orientation of the revivals toward the Catholic...would bring in that way a reconciliation between the Protestant Movement and the [Roman Catholic] Church.¹⁵

An article which also stuck with me for a long time from the magazine *Present Truth* was a simple ten question questionnaire which Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostal's were invited to take, to determine where they stood with regards to the great issues of the Reformation. I am reprinted the questionnaire word-for-word below:

- (a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by mercifully accounting him innocent and virtuous.
- (b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by actually making him into an innocent and virtuous person.

1.

¹³ Dr. Jack Zwemer, speaker in this forum on Pentecostalism; *Present Truth;* June 1972; ©1972; pp. 10–11.

¹⁴ Edward D. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church;* Ave Maria Press, 1971; NotreDame, Ind.; pp. 23, 32, 28, 183.

¹⁵ Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism;* World Publishing Co., 1964; Cleveland, OH; pp. 186, 188, 189, 197.

- (a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by placing Christ's goodness and virtue to his credit.
- 2. (b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by putting Christ's goodness and virtue into his heart.
- (a) God accepts the believer because of the moral excellence found in Jesus Christ.
- 3. (b) God makes the believer acceptable by infusing Christ's moral excellence into his life.
 - (a) If a Christian becomes "born again" (regenerate, transformed in character), he will achieve right standing with God.
- 4. (b) If the sinner accepts right standing with God by faith, he will then experience transformation in character.
- (a) We receive right standing with god by faith alone. 5.
 - (b) We receive right standing with God by faith which has become active by love.
- (a) We achieve right standing with God by having Christ live out his life of obedience in us. 6. (b) We achieve right standing with God by accepting the fact that He obeyed the law perfectly for us.
- (a) We Achieve right standing with godby following Christ's example by the help of His 7. enabling grace.
 - (b) We follow Christ's example because His life has given us right standing with God.
- (a) God first pronounces that we are good in His sight, then gives us His Spirit to make us 8. good.
 - (b) God sends His Spirit to make us good, and then he will pronounce that we are good.
- (a) Christ's intercession at god's right hand gives us favor in the sight of God 9. (b) It is the indwelling Christ that gives us favor in God's sight.
- (a) Only by faith in the doing and dying of Christ can we fully satisfy the claims of the Ten 10 Commandments.
 - (b) By the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, we can fully satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments.

Both Catholics and Protestants have the same rhetoric—both teach that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, there would be some writings by Catholics and some sermons that believers in Jesus Christ would not be able to discern as being different from true doctrine. The key difference between the two systems of thought is justification and grace. In Catholicism, we are justified by a discernable work within us. Christ enters into us and He lives out His life in us. The result is that not only do we desire to be good, but that others around us can see that we have been made better. God is able to look on the man in whom He has placed and worked His justification, and God is able to see the difference that it has made in our lives. We are saved in this manner. This does not mean that all Catholics are saved by Catholic doctrine; not even all Catholics who begin in this manner. Some fall into sin, they fall away from the faith; for some reason or another, the justification which God began in them goes awry, so they are lost, if not to hell, to purgatory, a semi-hell. Some people who consider them Protestants have a similar view. Charlie Brown gets saved; he goes forward, he weeps great big tears; he is on fire for the Lord; and then he falls away. This is often explained that he had a head belief and not a heart belief—and that somehow explains it (they would rather use this to explain why a person less demonstrative about his faith falls away). Some believe that person actually lost his salvation—that is, he really and truly got saved; God really and truly began a work in him; however, he, through sin, fell away from the faith and now is no better off, with regards to temporal and eternal things, than an unbeliever. In fact, he is worse off that an unbeliever. And so you understand, there are those who believe that he was saved and then he did something to lose his salvation. This view is common to almost all charismatics. In fact, I don't believe that I ever met a charismatic

who did not think that he could lose his salvation. I did know one who told me, after all of our theological disagreements, that he would admit that it would be more difficult to lose one's salvation than he previously thought. This same person, coincidentally enough, as I write this, is *trying* to lose his salvation. The correct view is that the justification which occurs within us is a legal pronouncement. Call calls us justified not because of anything which we have done or will do, but because we are standing upon the completed work of His Son. Our faith is in His Son, Who died on our behalf, Who took the penalty for our sins, and the basis for our justification lies solely in the saving work of Christ Jesus. No matter what we do from that point on, we are saved and God keeps us saved.

The next key difference theologically between Catholics and Protestants is the meaning of the word *grace*. Catholics believe in *infused* grace. God does something within us which affects our behavior and our actions. God's goodness is infused to our souls and the Holy Spirit then goes to work on us. The result is that salvation is a process, not a completed action. Our salvation is continued and upheld by this grace within us. If we exert enough negative volition and we act bad enough, we can cancel out this infused grace and lose our salvation. Protestants believe in an imputed grace; it is a legal call. We believe in Jesus Christ, an action without any merit, an action which any person can choose to do, and God calls us justified by means of His grace (the short definition is *unmerited favor*). This is apart from any sin which we have done or will do.

What we should look at next is the **Doctrine of Eternal Security—not finished yet!?!?**

The answers to the questions above: 1. (a) 2. (a) 3. (a) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (b) 7. (b) 8. (a) 9. (a) 10. (a)