

Reginald Alva, *The Spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement*.
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This book provides an excellent overview of the development of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement (CCRM), its spirituality, and its theological foundations. It provides a balanced treatment that, on the one hand, points out how this ecclesial movement has been a blessing for millions of individuals around the world and for the church as a whole and, on the other, does not shy away from a number of weaknesses that at times have been associated with some members of this movement.

The author, Reginald Alva, is a Catholic priest of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). He completed a doctorate in spiritual theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. His doctoral thesis “studied the theological foundation of

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the Charismatic Renewal” (ix), which helped him to develop this book. At the time of its publication, Alva was teaching at Nanzan University in Seto, Japan, as well as undertaking pastoral and renewal work in the Catholic Church of Japan.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement began two years after the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1967 with a handful of professors and students at Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, USA). Members of this movement understand it as one of the many fruits of Vatican II and part of the fulfillment of the hopes of Pope John XXIII. The latter had called the Council hoping for renewal and reform in the church. Among other things, the Council acknowledged the presence of both ordinary and extraordinary charisms within the church (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 12). Although the CCRM was initially highly influenced by Protestant Pentecostalism and has some features in common with it, there are also some significant differences. The CCRM is rooted in Catholic tradition and has developed under the guidance of popes (Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis) and many bishops. It is thus a movement that attempts to be faithful to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The movement experienced phenomenal growth in the 1970s in the United States and in the 1980s around the world, touching millions of people. A survey conducted by David Barrett in 2000 estimated that around 11.3 percent of Catholics were involved with the Charismatic Movement (3).

This book focuses on the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. Alva understands spirituality as dealing “with the very life of a person. . . . It concerns itself with all that a person believes and practices. . . . Christian spirituality refers to the lived Christian experience. . . . There are many schools of . . . [spirituality] in the Christian tradition” (27–28), both old

and new. Alva describes the spirituality of the CCRM as Trinitarian (the Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is central to Christian faith and all Christian spirituality) and related to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (chap. 2). Concerning the latter, Alva first explains New Testament perspectives on “Baptism in the Holy Spirit.” He then looks at three different “Catholic” theological interpretations of this phenomenon. These involve some different understandings of how Baptism in the Holy Spirit relates to the sacraments of initiation, including Baptism, since for the Catholic Church there is only one Baptism. These theological interpretations differ from the understanding of Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Protestant Pentecostalism, which generally sees no connection between the sacrament of Baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit (43).

The third chapter in Alva’s book explains some common features of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is experienced in much the same way by Catholic and Protestant Christians. In terms of what happens to a person who receives Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Alva addresses the renewal of one’s relationship with God, the conversion of one’s heart, the personal encounter with Jesus, experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit, an inner urge for sanctification, a deeper love for the Word of God, a renewed interest for prayer, a strong commitment to the church, fellowship, and reaching out to others.

Related to the spirituality of the CCRM, Alva explains how it connects with the nine charisms listed in 1 Cor 12:8–10: utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, charism of faith, charisms of healing, charism of working miracles, charism of prophecy, charism of discernment of spirits, charism of tongues (*glossolalia*:

about this, he includes some relevant scientific research), and charism of interpretation of tongues (chap. 4).

Alva also dedicates a short chapter (5) to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who was present at the birth of the church at Pentecost, and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. His last chapter (6) describes several ways that the Charismatic Renewal has served the universal church, including in the areas of worship, holiness, eschatological continuum (i.e., hope for the full realization of the kingdom of God), vocations, ecumenism, evangelization, and social commitment. He also treats the need for the continual evaluation of ecclesial movements. In the case of the CCRM, this includes avoiding the dangers of elitism, fundamentalism, isolation, emotionalism, and the misuse of the charisms in self-serving ways rather than to glorify God and serve the people.

I recommend this book to a wide audience. For those who do not know the CCRM, it can serve as an excellent introduction. For those well-acquainted with the CCRM, including those involved with this movement, it can help to clarify the main aspects of this spirituality and its theological foundations. Although the CCRM is certainly not the only movement of renewal in the church today, and other ecclesial movements (e.g., Focolare, Curtillos, Neo-Catechumenate, Communion, and Liberation, etc.) have also made significant contributions, this book can help all appreciate the spirituality and contributions of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement.