
Pp. xx, 188. $20.00

Paul Flaman, St. Joseph’s College University of Alberta

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 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
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 univer-
sal church, including in the areas of worship, holiness, eschatolog-
ical continuum (i.e., hope for the full realization of the kingdom of
God), vocations, ecumenism, evangelization, and social commit-
ment. He also treats the need for the continual evaluation of eccle-
sial 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 in-
volved with this movement, it can help to clarify the main as-
pects 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, Cur-
sillos, Neo-Catechumenate, Communion, and Liberation, etc.)
have also made significant contributions, this book can help all
appreciate the spirituality and contributions of the Catholic Char-
ismatic Renewal Movement.

and new. Alva describes the spirituality of the CCRM as Trinitar-
ian (the Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is cen-
tral 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” theo-
logical interpretations of this phenomenon. These involve some
different understandings of how Baptism in the Holy Spirit re-
lates 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 fea-
tures 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, ex-
periencing the power of the Holy Spirit, an inner urge for sanc-
tification, 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: