

ASIAN

HORIZONS

Vol. 5, No. 1, March 2011

BOOK REVIEW

Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2011). Pages: 184. ISBN: 978-81-88821-73-0

With regard to the charismatic renewal and the use of the charisms in the church, inadequate and unscientific data and reasoning were offered by many scholars over the years. This deficiency is solved by the publication of the work *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal* which gives proper answers to the issues in accordance with scripture, tradition and expertise. The book gives ample attention to the use of charisms, the extraordinary gifts of grace that equip people to do various services in the church. Léon Joseph Cardinal Suenens has written a foreword to this book in which he says that the book comes in the right time “to integrate a theology of the charisms into a total, sacramental vision of the church, and thus to give to the renewal its theological credentials.”

For the development of his ideas the author depends on Pauline letters, the primary source of our understanding of the charismatic gifts. He makes a thorough study of the charisms mentioned in the Pauline letters, especially in 1

Cor 12:8-10, Rom 12:6-8 and 1 Cor 13. In these passages Paul gives different lists of charisms which show that we cannot restrict the number of charisms exclusively to the list given in one place. The author makes an exegetical and theological study of each of these gifts. He clarifies the meaning of terms and distinguishes between charisms and spiritual gifts, truly spiritual men and charismatic people, charism and charismatic, *charismata* and the *pneumatika*, etc.

Under the title “Charismatic Movement and Church Renewal,” the author studies the role that charisms and charismatic movements played in the renewal of the church throughout its history. Any established institution needs the charismatic interventions of the Holy Spirit which will make it to undertake various services for its renewal and up building. The church too

underwent such interventions and over the years there emerged several renewal movements within the church which sometimes resulted in the alienation and separation of members and groups from her. Today the church recognizes the working of the spirit in these various denominations and churches. The neo-Pentecostal Catholics too benefited from classical Pentecostalism which was instrumental in profoundly renewing the inner life of the church over the centuries.

The author is of the opinion that the remarkable growth of the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church can be explained only in reference to the experience people had when they were being baptized in the Spirit. With the new outpouring of the Spirit people experienced a change in their life as they got a new power to live their Christian commitment and to witness their faith.

As they moved into a new state of grace by receiving the spirit many questions arose in the minds of the charismatic people as well as others about the charisms. The author with his incisive intellect, erudite scholarship and penetrating analysis takes up various issues in the charismatic field such as prophecy, speaking in tongues and charism of healing and provides convincing answers. He tries to examine and judge charismatic renewal in the light of Scripture and tradition and tries to shed light of scripture and traditions on the charismatic renewal. In a situation where even the word from the mind of the speaker is considered as a prophecy the author clarifies that a genuine prophecy will contribute to the spiritual growth and maturity of the person. It should be a word from the Lord and as such it cannot be one offered by a person to get attention and honour. Where some modern theologians maintain that glossolalia was the speaking of unlearned foreign language, the author clearly states that they were not real foreign languages and these words are not uttered in a state of prophecy. It is rather languagelike speech, unintelligible both to the speaker and the hearers. Charism of healing was another controversial issue in the charismatic field. Do all have the charism of healing? How is the healing of illness related to salvation? How should we pray for healing? These are some among the many questions addressed in a professional way by the author.

Sullivan's book provides clear and convincing answers to many questions and issues raised in the field of charismatic renewal. The author exhibits a historian's accuracy, an exegete's analysis, a theologian's insights, a pastor's care and a charismatic person's intuition in his biblical and theological investigation. He is balanced in his judgment, prudent in his evaluations,

constructive in his comments and optimistic in his expectations about the future of charismatic movement. The work has created in the reviewer an earnest desire for the charisms and gifts of the Holy Spirit. I am sure that the readers also will feel an ardent thirst for recognizing and receiving the extraordinary gifts of grace which will equip them to assume different roles and ministries in the church. I hope that the author will bless the readers by undertaking such profound and meticulous studies on charisms in future.

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