July 16, John Rademaker

**CHARISMATIC STREAM TEACHING**

INTRODUCTION

The Charismatic Stream of church flavour has emerged as a significant alternative to fundamental and mainline churches in the last 150 years.

The tradition centres on the "power to do". The empowering charismata, gifts of the spirit, and nurturing of the fruits of the spirit addresses the deep yearning for the immediacy of God's presence (thru the Holy Spirit) amongst believers. The intimacy of worship, prayer, and the revelation of the supernatural all bring attention to God's power and response to our approaches toward him. The personal dimension of the reality of experiencing the trinity more intimately is an attractive draw towards the charismatic stream.

The following is an overview of the CHARISMATIC STREAM and specifically as it pertains to WCV.

1. GENRE

- charisma = compelling attractiveness that can inspire devotion

- Jesus was charismatic and he inspired devotion in his being and teaching

- in Greek, charisma means GIFT, as in the power or gift bestowed on an individual for the good of the church

- this gifting parallels Jesus’ power and encompasses the full manifesting of power as a historical continuum. It does not ascribe to a "cessation of gift" theology, but a full gospel engagement

- full gospel theology thrived in pockets, but in early 1900's manifested into Pentecostalism and Four Square with Azusa Street Revival the most visible.

- John 14:12 Jesus stated that his followers would do what He did, and EVEN MORE. This seemed to validate the engagement, empowering and experiencing of Acts 2 type of events.

- The Vineyard as a movement was birthed from this foundational theology but chose to remain in the RADICAL MIDDLE rather at the extremities. A clear history is given in the book "Quest for the Radical Middle" by Bill Jackson.

2. ANCIENT MODELS

- Apostle Paul is considered the father of charismatic stream from his experiences (eg. conversion) to his writings and encouragement to engage the fullness of Jesus (Eph 1:23)

- he was overcome by the POTHS (power of the Holy Spirit) from the beginning of his faith and continued to grow in his teaching and all his writings.

- "Be filled with the Holy Spirit", Eph 5:18. Exorcising the demonic girl "and it came out that very hour" Acts 16:18. "The Holy Spirit came upon them" Acts 19:6.

- the POTHS that Paul expounded resulted in extraordinary and supernatural results that proved the presence of the gifts was a valid operating paradigm for all believers

- Francis of Assisi was a model that later incorporated his love for the poor into charismatic living. The miraculous followed him and his ministry. Blind saw, sick healed, the young wolf lay down at his feet. The teaching that spiritual growth must accompany spiritual power to nurture the fruits of the spirit was a tradition he followed together with a deeper love for God, greater holiness of life, fuller freedom in the spirit. The spirit brings ever more purity of heart. Many were "inebriated with the love of God and converted to heavenly longings".

- Mother Teresa is the modern day apostle of charisma, healing and compassion. Her miraculous journey with the sick and dying propelled her to Sainthood in the Catholic Church, but showed the world that all can participate in compassion. Her missionary home in the North End on Pritchard Ave, here in Winnipeg is evidence of the commitment to the world.

3. The ATTRACTION of the CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY, specifically VINEYARD

- Throughout the ages, there has been a continuum of disenchantment with various theological movements (Protestant over Catholic / Pietism over Lutheran/ Pentecostal over Fundamentalism)

- In the early 1900s, William Seymour's leadership led to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa St. revival  every day for 3 years. The start of the Pentecostal movement, glossolalia (tongues, Acts 2) that crossed all denominational and cultural and colour lines soon expanded to Four Square (Aimee Semple McPherson), Katherine Kulhman/ Oral Roberts/ Paul Yonggi Cho/ and a host of TV evangelists.

- today the mixed bag of  Charismatic flavours provides a choice for spiritual consumers of all ilks.

4. The VINEYARD RISE AND JOURNEY

- throughout the late 20th century, there was a discontent with the mainstream evangelical theology as being too restrictive, narrow and cessationalist in its interpretation of scripture.

- John Wimber and his followers in Southern California searched for the manifestation of the full gospel interpretation of Jesus’ life and model.

- the Quest for the Radical Middle book documents the Vineyard journey

- by 1985, Wimber had enough success and experience in engaging the fullness of the Jesus model that the Vineyard had attracted worldwide attention to its theology.

- the discontentment of leading church theologians globally (Anglican/ Catholic/ Evangelical) with their status quo and the revelatory manifestation of POTHS on them led to a rapid development of the Vineyard in U.K./ Europe/ New Zealand/ USA/ Canada/ South Africa and mid 1990's, there was a firmly established network of Vineyards globally.

- Essentially, all Christians are charismatic thru the life in and thru the POTHS.

- the three fold functions of the "HS charisms" are leadership/ ecstatic empowerment/ community building. The temptation of churches to restrict comes from historical interests and prejudices. The freedom of the HS is paramount for the charismatic stream to flourish. Unity in diversity while esteeming others in their freedoms is the challenge (1 Cor. 12).

- the TORONTO BLESSING coming out of a Vineyard Church propelled global awareness and participation on the outpouring of the HS for years . The manifestation of the ecstatic gifts, intimacy with Jesus, personal worship that connects to the Trinity, and sign and wonders that bring healing and lasting impact on the participants, all became, for many, a new experience beyond their stodgy church history.

- the Global Vineyard churches are independent but united in the common theological focus of the characteristics developed in the 45 years since inception. Each church is free to operate in its own flavour and focus as long as it is compliant to and supports the national associations in each region.

- there have been many churches that have come and gone over the years given their choice of flavour, that morphed into not obviously Vineyard .

5. STRENGTHS of the CHARISMATIC TRADITION

- ongoing correction to our impulse to domesticate and control God, John 3:8 “spirit blows where he wills”

- rebuke to our anemic and lethargic spiritual practices, 1 Cor. 4:20 “the KOG depends on power not talk”

- continuing challenge toward spiritual growth, Gal. 5:19 “fruits of the spirit”

- signs and wonders offers a life of gifting and empowerment for all, Eph 4:15 “whole body dynamics knit together”

6. The PERILS of the new charismatic experience needed careful leadership management. They include:

- trivialization of the practical and relying on the titillation phenomenon. Gifts are not an end in themselves but for the greater good

- danger of rejecting the rational and the intellectual altogether

- divorcing the gifts from the fruits of the spirit

- linking our walk in the spirit with speculative unorthodox end times theology

7. Why is WCV church in the CHARISMATIC stream?

Together with the Social Justice theme, WCV finds itself, by choice, in the forefront of these two highly controversial and dramatic environments. Our location and our vision statement clearly focus on the needs of the core area and the people that come.

- miracles have abounded in our 22 years.

- social justice has been a primary motivator for our actions. Even today we advocate for injustices in our society as they affect our people.

- the call to mercy is founded on Isaiah 58, Gal 2:10, Matt 25:35-45.

- the POTHS is manifested and revealed every day in some way because we are obedient to the "Jesus call" on our lives . We are not just turned to our inward needs, but open to all needs and are willing to pursue them.

- the provision of God for our needs is a historical record. He is pleased with our heart and blesses the community for the vision and action.

- personally, WCV fulfills all the biblical mandates and models for a church that God is pleased with. We simply need to continue with a humble and obedient heart to please Him.

8. My personal journey into the CHARISMATIC stream

I have given the last 25 years of my life to this church genre, and specifically the Vineyard. This is a result of a lifelong journey seeking a fuller spiritual experience in a church community that is meaningful and fulfilling. It has definitely been that. I have not been disappointed in comparison to my earlier experiences. Here are the reasons I chose this track:

- Vineyard answered my theological questions pertaining to cessation of gifts, personal encounters with the supernatural and healing experiences.

-  Being available in 1995 to choose a seemingly providential opportunity here in Winnipeg to help found the Vineyard Church

- the values of mercy, justice, compassion, worship, and community satisfied my quest for a vehicle to express and live out my new discoveries of a Christian lifestyle

- gave me the satisfaction that knowing Jesus sees me walk out these new values and that He recognizes my choices and actions, and in fact is pleased with that

-being able to share my journey in a community with likeminded folks to walk out the vision and build the Kingdom

- in all these years, the journey has rewarded me with a pleasure of service and a satisfaction of experience that my quest desired.

9. CONCLUSIONS
Everyone is challenged to work out their Salvation along the life journey. It is a unique and private experience. The myriad of church flavours and genre allow us choices.
Our challenge is to find the one that we can experience spiritual satisfaction along the way. The answer for each has to be organic to our needs.
Answering to the great commission and the issues of mercy and justice that our life will be judged on, constrains us to discipline and determination towards a life of intimacy and honesty with the Trinity as to our choices.