

Don't Criticize Charismatics

They are saying the charismatic movement is divisive. Whenever people get involved in the "new emphasis," there are disruptions in the status quo. Red flags go up. Lines are drawn.

I would ask: What else could be expected? Any force as great as this is bound to make some waves.

The charismatic movement is growing by leaps and bounds. There's scarcely a church of any denomination that hasn't been affected directly or indirectly.

What if it does have reverberations? It wouldn't be worth very much if it didn't.

Every time a minority segment within a religious community begins to emphasize the doctrine of the new birth, doesn't it rock the boat?

Whenever a small group within a body of believers begins to emphasize divine healing, doesn't it disrupt the status quo?

Anything new is bound to be criticized, so divisiveness is not the issue.

Some kinds of division are good. Our Lord said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

Traditions and customs that are not sustained by God's Word need to be pruned away, no matter how much the cutting hurts. The pure Word of God must be the foundation, or the doctrinal structure will not endure.

Another charge against the charismatic movement is, "It's emotional!" I will grant you this. The supernatural phenomena of the Holy Spirit excite people like nothing else. But wait a

minute. Since when did God become unemotional? Have you ever watched a thunderstorm?

The church of Jesus Christ was born in a tremendously emotional atmosphere. Fire, wind, noise! The scene is described in the Book of Acts, chapter 2. The heart is where the very seat of our emotional make-up is located.

And that's where the Spirit of God enters—into our hearts!

This world is the quietest place Christians will ever live. It's going to be noisy in heaven.

Of course, it would be deplorable indeed if a person had "nothing but emotion" in a so-called experience with God; but on the other hand, it's impossible to have God in our hearts without experiencing some emotion, whether it's demonstrated outwardly or not.

Just remember that on the Day of Pentecost when Peter and the other apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, the onlookers mockingly said, "Others mockingly said, 'These men are full of new wine'," (Acts 2:13).

Another misconception concerning the charismatic movement is that it's just a fad. "Let it alone; it will soon be gone." But it has been around for a long time. It was here in 1901 (in Topeka, Kansas). It was making headlines in 1906 (at Los Angeles, California). It grew in Toronto in 1994 and Brownsville one year later. It brought great church associations into being (such as the Assemblies of God, which was formed in 1914). It goes back three generations, at least, and millions of people are involved. Whether they're called "Pentecostals" or "charismatics," it's impossible to ignore them. They're here to stay!

One of the strangest criticisms leveled against the charismatic movement is, "It's ecumenical!" They say it's helping to form a world church. They accuse it of playing into

the hands of godless men who want all denominations to be merged into the spiritual Babylon that eventually will serve the Antichrist.

Not so. Charismatics are not working for any "merger of the churches." What they are doing is simply recognizing "the unity of the believers." Don't forget the prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You. May they also be one in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory which You gave Me, that they may be one even as We are one," (John 17:21-22).

It is necessary to wipe out church distinctions for Christian believers in all denominations to love one another! We can be one in spirit without being one in organization.

Finally, there's that oft-heard criticism that charismatics take a "holier-than-thou" attitude. It is utterly incongruous that anyone who has been filled with the Holy Spirit should feel superior, for it is the lowest places that are filled with the river of God. Anyone who seeks to be filled with the Spirit must humble himself and plead his insufficiency. God does not give the Spirit to those who are worthy, but to those who are needy and who admit their need.

Don't criticize the charismatics.

They have received something from God, and it is something every Christian believer should have. Criticism will not stop the flow of this mighty river of God's blessing. It will only keep the blessing from flowing to those places where God wants to send it.