

# How Charismatic Churches Promote Old Covenant Religion

I have mentioned certain aspects of this phenomenon in a number of places, but here I want to draw these factors together and demonstrate that Charismatic churches (by which term I include all Pentecostal denominations) always lean upon and promote Old Covenant practices [henceforward OC]. All of them utterly fail to live in the good of the New Covenant [henceforward NC] brought to God's people through the death of the Lord Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This alone (apart from many heretical doctrines and aberrant practices) renders them apostate – they have fallen away from the path of true, apostolic Christianity. Old Covenant religion is faith in the flesh, in what is seen and felt, and always leads to spiritual debility; it will always have the condemnation of God. [It must also be admitted that many historic institutional churches come under this condemnation also.]

## Introduction

### **The general principle established**

The death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Jesus Christ comprise the turning point of history and the climax of God's purposes on Earth. All further expressions of salvation are the results of Christ's atonement, not new features. Thus our glorification, the Final Judgment, rewards and the new world are but repercussions of what Christ did at the cross. For this reason Christ came at the fulness of time [Gal 4:4] and instituted the Last Days [Heb 1:2]. The new creation began then [2 Cor 5:17]. This new age, based upon Christ's blood [Matt 26:28], institutes the New Covenant and the doctrine of it comprises the Gospel – the whole counsel of God regarding salvation.

Before Christ, godly religion was under the Old Covenant; John the Baptist being the last and greatest OC prophet since he prepared the way for the Messiah [Matt 11:11]. All the OC prophets looked forward to the manifestation of the Messiah who would bring in the kingdom of God and start a new order. Though they prophesied about aspects of the Messiah's ministry, they did not fully understand it, and realised that their message served us under the NC and not themselves under the OC [1 Pt 1:10-12].

The OC was dominated by the Law of Moses and was founded upon a worship system that was external, sensual and weak [Heb 7:12, 18, 19]. Despite this, true personal salvation was based upon exactly the same factors as today, viz.

- Divine faith given to the elect placed in God's redeemer/deliverer.
- The expectation of a redeeming sacrifice above that of bulls and goats (for them it was future, for us it is past).
- The hope of glory.
- Membership of God's kingdom.
- The hope of resurrection.

Thus personal salvation was a true heart yielded to God in submission according to his promise. This resulted in true worship and obedience to God's revealed law.

However, the conduct of formal worship in Israel (of which only a remnant was ever elect and true) was very different to that established by Jesus through his apostles, revealed in the New Testament. This was necessary for several reasons.

- Israel was established in a period of progressive revelation; the fulness of Gospel truth was not yet manifest.
- The calling of Israel was part of God's historic purposes amongst the nations as an object lesson for the church and an external testimony in the world to the true God.
- The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out. This could only happen when Jesus sent the Spirit after his exaltation and atonement [Jn 7:39]. Without the indwelling Spirit, the NC could not function in believers as a new creation [2 Cor 5:17]; without the baptism in the Spirit the elect could not be united with Christ as his body [1 Cor 12:13]. Without a changed heart and spirit in believers the NC could not function.

In short, until the cross, the NC could not be established.

The OC was a time of preparation for the revelation of the Messiah and the function of the Mosaic Law was to point towards Him. It was a temporary institution [Heb 9:10; Gal 3:19, 4-25] showing man that he could not obey God in the flesh and needed grace. Though there is grace in the Old Testament in God's mercy, the full outpouring of a dispensation of grace through the Gospel could only occur after the cross; the cross opens the spring of God's fulness mediated through Christ. The basis of the OC was law; the foundation of the NC is grace [Jn 1:17].

So the worship order in Israel was part of this OC dispensation; it was a temporary, weak, preparatory system to be ended at the cross and replaced by a new dispensation of the Spirit working in the regenerated hearts of the elect. In essence,

- The operational basis of the OC was external and fleshly; the basis of the NC is spiritual and heavenly.
- The external foundation of the OC was the temple and its functions; the objective foundation of the NC is Christ.
- The functional element of the OC was the Law of Moses; the subjective, functional principle of the NC is the Spirit.

Thus components of the OC scheme included:

- A physical temple building.
- The sacrifice of bulls, sheep and goats.
- A formally established, officiating priesthood acting as mediators between men and God. This had various ranks culminating in the High Priest.
- A clear demarcation between the people and the officiating clergy.
- A classified system of worship components attached to the sacrificial function – singers, musicians, feast days etc.
- A tithe that went to the priesthood.

The New Testament makes it clear that all these have been cancelled in Christ. What they stood for symbolically has been subsumed into Christ. The truths behind these features are explained by the apostles of Christ, and where necessary are translated into commands that form part of the Law of Christ [Gal 6:2]. For instance, though tithing is abolished as a functional command, the believer now considers God to be the owner of all that he has and gives according to the constraints of the Spirit. There is no limitation or demand of 10%.

### **The true regulative principle established**

A regulative principle is a means of interpreting scripture to confirm what is correct and what is incorrect in church worship. It selects those parts of scripture that form regulations for church affairs. The Reformation recognised the need for a regulative principle in worship and two forms emerged.

1. The Reformed teach that only what God commands in scripture under the NC is acceptable to be used in church worship.

2. Lutherans, Roman Catholics and later Arminians (plus most modern churches) teach that anything is acceptable so long as it is not forbidden in the Bible.

Clearly, the latter allows much more to be included in worship than the former. It is my contention that the Reformed principle is correct; common sense and scriptural investigation proves this.

The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan. *Westminster Confession, XXI*

**The correct regulative principle:**  
Only what God directs in his word is acceptable. The NT interprets the OT.

**The incorrect regulative principle:**  
Anything is acceptable unless God prohibits it.

For instance, consider something controversial like dancing. This is never allowed or encouraged by the apostles and is thus forbidden as a pagan intrusion. Under the loose Arminian principle it could be allowed since it is not expressly prohibited. Or consider something more fundamental; the New Testament knows nothing of church buildings, all churches met in private homes. There is also clear teaching that the idea of a temple is a thing of the past and God does not dwell in man-made buildings (*Acts 7:48*). Thus church buildings have no warrant either.

When considering what is acceptable in church matters and worship, we must have a regulative principle or chaos results. The worship of Mary by Romanists arises from their false regulative principle. There are things that have a Biblical base (such as animal sacrifices or priestly clergy) that are ruled out by a sound regulative principle since the apostolic teaching in the New Testament prohibits them. Only by using proper principles of interpretation can we arrive at the truth and conduct godly church meetings. Without a sound principle then any fleshly idea at all can be introduced. [We are not concerned here with items of modern technology, which may or may not be of use, clearly electric lights and doorbells are helpful. What are in view are the vital elements of a church meeting.]

It can be seen, therefore, that a regulative principle is absolutely necessary in order to maintain a Biblical testimony. Many practical church problems arise from the fact that most churches do not use such a principle and permit almost anything at all.

### **Recent UK Church History**

Most current Charismatic denominations originally arose in direct opposition to established churches, and Charismatic leaders condemned the denominational features of those historic bodies. The scandalised features included: the clergy/laity split, authoritarian multi-layered structures, a pope-like prime leader, the distraction of dedicated large buildings, the focus on money, organised choirs and formal worship. They rightly complained that such things were OC; thus Anglican, Roman Catholic and other formal church institutions were heavily criticised. The radical Charismatic leaders in the 70s and 80s also disparaged the work of the Renewal Movement of the time (the attempt to bring Charismatic gifts into these mainline churches) as being doomed to failure since new wine required new wineskins.

Yet the Charismatic churches gradually coalesced into denominations of their own. Within a decade or so the radical Charismatic churches developed the same structures, leadership patterns and front-led liturgy as the ones they criticised, though these features all had new names and a modern style. Charismatic churches simply replaced the previous OC features

with new or similar ones but with more worldliness. Such is the way of the flesh which always resorts to worldly principles. We will look at some of these OC features now.

## **Charismatic Churches are Old Covenant**

In this section we examine some of the many forms of OC religion that have been foisted upon folk who think that they are moving forward in the kingdom, when in fact they are moving backwards.

### **Old Covenant feature: The Temple**

What could be more OC than the Jewish temple? When God wanted to demonstrate the end of the OC soon after the cross, he destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem with the utmost vigour through a war with Rome. The writer to the Hebrews explains that the OC system has been abolished and adds that it is soon to vanish away [Heb 8:13]; it did with the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus.

The whole point of NC religion is that it is no longer external but depends upon an inward operation of the Spirit. Conversion begins with regeneration by the Spirit; the Christian life is a walk in the Spirit; opposition is a spiritual warfare and the conduct of church life is spiritual edification. Any church that centres its meeting and life upon a building has immediately shifted the goalposts and focused the church on externals. Thus any kind of church building is, at the very least, a distraction. While a local church building could perhaps be compared to a synagogue - a place for the gathering of the local body - a temple is more than this. It is a large building situated centrally and used for the gathering together of large numbers of people. In ancient Israel the whole population went up to the Jerusalem temple three times a year.

Charismatic denominations (and many Pentecostal ones too) now favour the purchase or erection of very large buildings and can be compared to building a temple. They seek a conveniently situated, large edifice to cater for as many people as possible from a wide area. Thus there has been a fashion to purchase warehouses, sometimes on retail estates, and convert them into venues at enormous costs. In one case known to me the cost of purchase of such a warehouse alone was £1 million many years ago. The refurbishment was another large sum and the maintenance is also considerable.

Why was this done? All the reasons are fleshly and worldly. Remember that the Biblical precedent is small meetings of the local church gathered in private homes. There is no need of a large building because there is no large gathering. All the dynamics of Biblical church life are ruined by such large meetings. Jesus said that the church would be scattered abroad on the earth like salt. Salt is hidden in food yet has a powerful but unseen effect. Salt is not poured in one big pile on a meal.

Large centralised meetings are used to indicate the authority of either a man or a system; they are a means of authentication – saying I am powerful I have this big work. If a person claims to be an ‘apostle’ with an international status, then he has to have a big work at home base or he will have no credibility abroad. The basis of big buildings is fleshly pride; they glorify a man and a denomination, not God who has no need of them in his purposes.

There are so many sins connected with a big building that it is hard to enumerate in brief. Apart from destroying all the Biblical dynamics of mutual edification (the manner of gathering), it makes it impossible to perform what the Biblical church gathers primarily to do – celebrate the Lord’s Supper (the focus of gathering). Most large Charismatic churches break bread rarely or not at all; but this is the primary reason given in the NT for why we

gather together. Such large meetings squash individual participation, which is the means of apostolic edification, and necessitates the formation of a host of unbiblical meetings and offices. These would include: infant crèche and helpers, children's meetings and leaders, teenager's meetings and leaders, administrators, building maintenance officers, cleaners, worship leaders, musicians etc. Finally, by drawing people from a very wide area they deny that churches are local; where there are sufficient numbers of believers in a locality, there the church should meet in a home.

By having a large building the whole system of Biblical gathering is thrown into the dustbin. In its place a sinful, fleshly, human administrated system is erected instead. All of this is OC.

### **Old Covenant features: The High Priest and the Prophet**

Strong characters dominated OC religion; these were used by God to bring correction, guidance and order to Jewish religion and ethics. Prophets were the pre-eminent individuals latterly used by God to bring correction and discipline to a wayward people. When things are going wrong the Lord's people need to hear someone speak God's word with authority; that was the prophetic task. However, under normal conditions the chief authority in OC religion was the High Priest.

The High Priest was chosen by God from one family, that of Aaron, and it was his job to be the mediator between God and the people; he represented the people to God. When he stood in the Tabernacle officiating the rituals of the Law, he was the representation of the people. It was through his office that the nation was corporately cleansed on the Day of Atonement. By the time of Jesus, the High Priest had virtually become the ruler of the people; the king was just an oppressive, foreign puppet of the Roman occupation. So it is fair to say that under the OC the High Priest was the top of the pyramid, the focal point of authority to religious people.

Charismatic denominations also have such central figures dominating the landscape; men who are top of the pyramid, the 'prime' minister of the churches they control. While they may not dress in formal robes, to all intents and purposes that have a role that is like the High Priest, being the chief authority over many people. Such 'apostles' have actually stated in public that God speaks to them and then they pass that strategy downwards to the people.

Like the High Priest they receive tithes from the people. Unlike the High Priest many of these leaders become wealthy, or at least very affluent. Some live in luxury and have extravagant lifestyles. All receive very large salaries, in addition to many perks: free travel, gifts, free grants to buy houses, a new car every year, help with domestic chores and so on. Some have openly defended this by stating that they are like the Managing Director of a corporation and they are only getting what they deserve. How shameful to defend an unbiblical situation by seeking the support of the corrupt secular world!

Again the sins connected to this are very numerous and we can simply point to a few.

There are no single, supreme leaders identified in the Bible of any kind; Biblical church leadership is in the hands of equal elders. Genuine apostles do not have authority in their home church, but are ministers sent out by a church to plant new works. They have authority in that new work until elders are appointed, then their temporary authority ceases. The office occupied by these Charismatic 'apostles' is much better likened to an archbishop or a pope, someone who holds unbiblical authority over many churches.

The notion that a man hears from God and then has authority to command people by that word is characteristic of OC prophetic ministry. By claiming this Charismatic apostles and prime leaders usurp the role of an OC prophet, a role that does not exist in that form today. NC prophecy is to encourage, establish and strengthen the flock [1 Cor 14:3] by bringing focus upon God's word manifest in the Bible. There is no prophetic activity under the NC that commands the Lord's people in religious and private matters; we are not under a theocracy like Israel. Even if a man brings a true prophetic word, it may be right to ignore it, as Paul did [Acts 21:10-14].

The prime Charismatic leaders are totally an OC institution.

### **Old Covenant feature: The Priesthood**

The High Priest is so called because he is the prime leader over a family of priests and temple servants. The Levites were called by God to serve him and deal with the practical affairs of the Tabernacle (the precursor of the Temple). From the Levites a certain number of priests (of the line of Aaron) were called to officiate the daily rituals in the Tabernacle, mostly centred on duties connected to the sacrificial offerings and maintenance of the Holy Place (the first compartment of the Tabernacle). In dealing with God a worshipper had to deal with the priests; there was a system of mediators between God and individuals. This is the OC model for many mediatorial church systems, whether Romanist, Anglican or Charismatic.

The NC has brought in an entirely new system of religion and worship that has no mediators of any kind, other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the elders of the local church have no mediatorial function of any kind since all believers are priests unto God [1 Pt 2:5, 9] and are considered equal in his sight [Gal 3:28; Col 3:11]. While believers have varying functions, none has mediatorial or despotic authority. Indeed the only time when the word 'despot' appears in the New Testament, it is used of the mother ruling the practical affairs of the home [*oikodespoteo* in 1 Tim 5:14].

The institutional idea of a clergy / laity split is utterly unbiblical and detrimental to the proper working of the body. Charismatic churches were originally formed to counteract this error and many emerged in the UK from house churches in the 1970s. By following fleshly methods, they developed their own version of the same clergy / laity split, but in many cases it is a more vehement form.

While Charismatic leaders would affirm that they believe in the priesthood of all believers in principle, in practice they do not. Authority is top-loaded and spills down to ordinary members via a stream of leaders, none of which have any Biblical sanction. Church strategy is determined by the apostle and filtered through his apostolic team, then down to senior church pastors, full-time elders, part-time elders, congregational leaders and house-group leaders to the average Joe. This is worse than Anglicanism, which at least has a synod where local leaders can dispute policy. All of this is thoroughly opposed to the member-based consensus that is modelled by the apostles in Acts 15.

Charismatic leadership is absolutely OC, or even worse a worldly management system.

### **Old Covenant feature: Orchestras**

The Temple was the permanent edifice that replaced the travelling Tabernacle in the wilderness. It took on the essential features of Tabernacle worship but added something additional – the service of musicians and singers. 4,000 men were chosen to praise God with instruments that David had made [1 Chron 23:5] and there were 24 courses of singers and

musicians. [1 Chron 25:1-31]. The precedent for this had been first established in the temporary tabernacle that David had established in Jerusalem for the Ark of the Covenant.

OC praise was a noisy affair; it involved blowing of loud trumpets and multitudes of instruments playing unison, accompanied by cymbals (though there is no mention of drums in scripture at all). The point, like the temple, was to impress the senses and impose a fleshly glory upon the proceedings.

Charismatic worship follows these lines exactly. It is inconceivable to modern Charismatics to have a worship time without loud music; indeed, many identify music and worship, as if the one necessitates the other. Praise is not merely accompanied by musicians, but is dominated by music; in most places this music is very loud.

The music is also contemporary rock or folk-rock in the main; often played in a very insensitive manner by people who are more concerned by their playing than the God they are supposed to be worshipping. Though there are exceptions to this, I am afraid that by far the majority falls into this category. The music idiom is worldly, and this varies in degree. In some places it is loud, harsh, aggressive rock that is more suited to a heavy-metal stadium concert, complete with screaming, distorted guitar solos. In other places it is more sensitive dominated by keyboards in a ballad or folk-rock style.

Worse still, the instrumental music is utilised in order to 'soften-up' the audience. Though this would be strenuously denied as being an objective, it is certainly what happens in practice. By encouraging sentimental or boisterous songs, repeated over and over, the congregation can be easily manipulated and made more amenable to directions from the platform or the preaching afterwards. What tends to happen is an initial set of boisterous songs that flow into one another to excite the people. There may be occasional prayers, directions or exhortations over interludes between songs. As time progresses, the songs become more sentimental and emotional and as they flow together they may erupt into instrumental breaks over repeated chord changes that allow for singing in the Spirit and leading people into complete submission, passivity and suggestibility.

None of this is NC and has no apostolic sanction, but it all has precedents in pagan religions. It was for this reason that instrumental music was condemned by the early church fathers for letting in pagan influences. Instrumental music was not universal in the western church until the 12<sup>th</sup> century and inroads only began to arise 100 years after the apostles died out. Heathen rituals require the encouragement of passivity and suggestibility through musical intervention, especially to stimulate the conditions for trances, whereby it was believed shamans could communicate with spirits. Resulting from this were numerous phenomena, such as falling down, screaming, crying, laughing, animal noises, shaking, dancing etc. Modern Charismatic aberrations have mimicked this situation exactly.

The point is what does NC teaching command? Well, there is absolutely no mention of musical instruments being used in church services; indeed, there is no mention of music at all in the New Testament. The OC use of instruments was a symbol of the vibrant harmony of worship found in NC believers praising God from their hearts as a sweet sound to the Lord.

The uses of external music is an OC feature now abolished in the NC. The use of drums is not even featured in the OC and is a totally pagan concept.

### **Old Covenant feature: The Chief Musician**

This character, often mentioned in the psalmist's musical directions [e.g. Ps 4:1] was a sort of music director or conductor for the temple singers and musicians. This was the relevant son of Asaph, Jeduthan and Heman responsible in their course of temple duty. The equivalent ministry in today's Charismatic church is the worship leader. Needless to say that if there is no music in church meetings then there is no need of a musical director. Neither is there a need of a worship leader in general. Any leadership in the Biblical church is placed in the hands of elders; they are the pilots who steer the ship. There is no leading role outside eldership ministry.

Worship leaders are OC.

### **Old Covenant feature: Choirs**

The sons of Asaph, Jeduthan and Heman were set apart for the service of music and song; 24 sons in all. Along with 'their brethren' who were trained up, there were 288 who were selected by lot to serve in 24 courses in the temple [1 Chron 25:8-31]. These symbolise the singing of the all the saints in the NC church meeting. There are no formal choirs in such a meeting. Indeed, since church meetings are small and only meet in houses, choirs are not only unnecessary, but impossible to arrange.

Choirs, whether large and formal, or just a few backing singers, are OC.

### **Old Covenant feature: Dancing**

Dancing is an OC form of expressing jubilation in praise. It is never mentioned by the apostles as being acceptable in NC worship; in fact the words 'dance(d)', 'dances', 'dancing', 'dancer(s)' do not appear in the apostolic letters or Revelation at all.

The Hebrew word [*hul* - Jud 21:21, 23; Ps 30:11, 149:3, 150:4; Jer 31:4,13] and the Greek word [*choros* - Lk 15:25] used indicate the circular or whirling motion of oriental dancing. Sometimes it indicates leaping up and down for joy [*rakad'* - Eccles 3:4; Job 21:11; Isa 13:21], which was a typical aspect of Ancient Near Eastern custom which was relevant to that society at that historic time. In most situations it was considered to be something only done by women [Ex 15:20; Jud 11:34 cf. Jud 5:1], hence the ridicule of David [Ex 15:20; Jud 11:34; 2 Sam 6:14]. If men danced at all they always did so alone, without women. Thus even the OC form is very different to modern western customs.

There is no place for such exuberant practice in a Biblical church. This is proved by:

- a) There is no mention of it in the New Testament.
- b) There is no apostolic command or precedent for it.
- c) It would be impossible in a house church, the only form of Biblical church.
- d) The Old Testament form is alien to our western culture.
- e) It would break the apostolic rule of decency and order in meetings.

Dancing is utterly OC and should be avoided.

### **Old Covenant features: Marching, flag waving**

Charismatic churches take their lead for the aberration of marching from the brief mention of it in the prophets [e.g. Joel 2:7] or an event such as Joshua's army marching round Jericho. Marching only has reference to warfare. There is no support for religious flag waving, which has a pagan or secular root. The words 'flag', 'flags' do not appear in the Bible at all (the appearance in the AV refers to a marsh reed by the sea). Banners were large ensigns used to identify the three tribes marching together [Num 1:52, 2:2, 3, 10, 18, 25; Song 2:4, 6:4, 10]; there were also smaller banners for each tribe. Other banners were stationary signal flags on hills

to prompt the war trumpets [Ps 60:4; Isa 5:26, 11:12, 13:2, 18:3, 30:17; Jer 4:6, 21:1; Ezek 27:7]. Banners are not used in scripture for religious purposes but national warfare.

Both marching and waving flags in meetings are forms of sacramentalism. Charismatics tend to fall for the heresy of sacramentalism in many ways. This is the error of presuming that a material item or a physical action has the power to impart grace. It is an error that besets many institutional churches, and is especially significant in Roman Catholic ministry. In the Roman system objects such as holy water have the power to impart spiritual power, praying over a rosary adds weight to prayer and certain formal actions of a priest impart grace simply because he is a priest.

In recent years Charismatics have become more and more focused on sacramentalism. There are multitudes of examples whereby submissive saints have been cajoled into such nonsense as the following:

- Gathering stones into a heap and praying over them to aid consecration.
- Using crystals to aid prayer for healing.
- Being knighted by a leader wielding a sword in order to have more authority in spiritual warfare.
- Blowing a ram's horn over an area to precipitate revival in that area.
- Making wooden crosses and praying over them to impart grace to the wearers.

The nonsense of getting all the congregation to march in military style around the auditorium is just another form of sacramentalism. The purpose is usually to defeat demonic forces. This is not just heresy and folly, but was a practice of heretical groups like the Shakers. Flag waving is another form of such sacramentalism. It matters nothing that the flags may have some imaginary imposed symbolic value due to the colours and images on them. The essential matter is that such actions are not condoned by apostolic teaching and are merely purile, fleshly, stupidity.

A sacrament is traditionally a holy rite that is a sign and visible means of grace; more properly it is a sacred action commanded by God in scripture that employs a material sign which seals to believers the grace promised in the Gospel. For the NC believer there are only two sacraments commanded by God: baptism and celebrating the Lord's Supper. All other rites are either twisted OC forms, worldly ideas or pagan intrusions.

### **Old Covenant feature: Vestments**

There are detailed instructions in the Pentateuch regarding the formal dress of priests and the High Priest. All these are worthy of study since they symbolise various aspects of the virtue and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. To give just one example, the High Priest carried the names of the tribes of Israel in two places on his vestments – on his shoulders and on his breastpiece. This is symbolic of the Lord Jesus in glory supporting the church on his shoulders - the place of strength and power - as well as above his heart.

The idea of formal religious clothing is utterly OC and has no place at all within NC worship. Thankfully, most UK Charismatic churches observe this principle, however there are many American Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that do not. Robes for clergy are common in black Pentecostal churches and some even impose white robes on the ordinary members.

However, occasionally some extreme aberrations occur. One example is something that happened in The Assembly of God church, Brownsville, Pensacola. At the April 96 'Minister Conference', a Messianic Jew who regularly ministered at Brownsville named Dick Reuben set up a replica of the Jewish golden incense altar and appeared fully dressed

in a copy of Jewish High priestly garments. On the altar was burned written prayer requests for problems from hundreds of leaders, including famous UK Charismatics. This is sacramentalism and serious heresy.

Any form of religious vestment intends to demonstrate authority and power and is utterly OC.

### **Old Covenant feature: Tithing**

Tithing was an ancient principle that was evidenced when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Under Mosaic Law, tithing was necessary in order to support the Levitical priesthood who had no claim to tribal land in Israel. Without tithes the priesthood could not continue; thus the best of crops, animals and general prosperity went to support the religious leadership and be used as offerings to God.

In the NC there is no mention whatsoever of a tithe. The New Testament does mention the importance of giving generously and considering that everything we have is at God's disposal since it was received from him without merit. It also concentrates giving upon the poor and needy; to ignore these and give to others is a sin. While there are no leadership salaries, there is mention of supporting certain ministry. Those who receive support are itinerant ministers (such as travelling evangelists and apostles) or those teachers who are thoroughly committed in time to the word and cannot maintain secular employment. While they do not have salaries and must rely upon faith for their needs, such men should be honoured by those who benefit from their gift.

Thus there is no regular, consistent requirement for a tithe.

In Charismatic circles there are many regular requirements for money: building maintenance, capital investments (such as new buildings) and the salaries of very many people. To finance these unbiblical requirements they have majored upon the need for all believers to give a tithe of their gross income to the church. This in itself has no Biblical sanction since New Testament collections were for famine relief of other churches or giving to genuine evangelistic endeavour.

The tithe is an unfair system. The stipulation of 10% as essential is no inconvenience to the rich but an extremely heavy burden for the very poor; but there is no discrimination in Charismatic circles, all are expected to pay this tithe. It is claimed that since Abraham tithed it is not an OC feature but eternal. If this is true, then so is circumcision, warfare and animal sacrifices – all practised by Abraham. All of these have been superseded by the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; only what the apostles command is to be continued.

Giving should be sacrificial, but it must be at the direction of the Lord to the individual; we are accountable to him and not some man for how we spend our money. As the Lord directs we give of our resources to those in need; primarily the poor and needy, but also to those ministries that truly deserve it.

The demand for a universal 10% tithe is OC.

## **Conclusion**

We could draw this study out much further with many more examples, but the point is made. Many of the idiosyncratic features of Charismatic ministry and church meetings are based either on Old Covenant Jewish religion, which is now abolished by Christ's New

Covenant, or they are rooted in paganism. Most of the truly aberrant practices are utterly occult-based and lead to occult symptoms (which is why the Toronto Experience resulted in many folk requiring medical treatment and help with depression).

Christians are commanded to abandon the works of the flesh, and Old Covenant religion is exactly that. It is curious that Charismatics may severely criticise the sacramentalism and legalistic errors of Roman Catholics, and yet practise exactly the same sort of Old Covenant follies themselves. Practising such forms will do considerable damage to those who indulge in them, to say nothing of offending the God whom they are disobeying. This is a serious matter that requires urgent attention by those deceived by their leaders.

## Summary

Old Covenant Symbol	Charismatic Form	New Covenant Situation
<b>Temple</b>	Large buildings.	The believer is a temple for the Spirit (1 Cor 6:19); believers in the local church are together God's temple (1 Cor 3:16, plural). Local churches meet in homes. No church buildings are demanded or evidenced.
<b>Priesthood</b>	Officiating clergy distinct from the ordinary people.	All believers are priests unto God and equal in God's eyes. (1 Pt 2:5, 9)
<b>High Priest</b>	Top leader, usually described as an 'apostle' (though not in the Biblical sense). Older denominations use various titles.	Only Christ is the High Priest (Heb 3:1, 5:5, 9:11). There is no senior leader in the NT. Elders of churches are equal in status.
<b>Sacrificial offerings</b>		The animal offerings only relate to features of the atonement of Christ.
<b>Tithe</b>	A literal tithe, usually with a demand that it goes to the church treasury and is mostly used for the upkeep of buildings and full-time workers.	There is no tithe, no restrictions to giving. What is given, both in amount and matter, are at God's direct command; however what is demanded is that the poor and needy are cared for first. There is no leadership salary and most elders are not full-time. Only itinerant workers, or those in the word full-time, require gifts to be received by faith.
<b>Orchestras</b>	Rock bands.	No music mentioned in the NT at all, and certainly not in connection with the church. Instrumental music was a feature of pagan religion to whip up emotionalism and withstood by the early church for centuries. Music in the OC symbolises the harmony of church worship.
<b>Choirs</b>	Choirs	No mention of organised choirs, just of individual singing to one another in church meetings.
<b>Chief musician</b>	Worship leaders	Worship is not led by an individual but arises as a normal part of the church meeting. Any leading that is necessary is the work of elders. There is no need of a chief musician since there is no music.
<b>Dancing</b>	Dancing	No mention or precedent by the apostles; impossible in a house church.
<b>Vestments</b>	Various forms of religious dress.	Mostly a Pentecostal aberration; this has no apostolic warrant at all and denies the priesthood of all believers,
<b>Marching, banners</b>	Marching and flag waving in meetings.	Totally unbiblical and follow pagan precedents.

## A table of comparisons

OC forms in historic institutional churches	Comparable OC forms in Charismatic churches
Prime leader (pope, archbishop, etc.)	Apostle
Executive ranks under the prime leader.	Apostolic team
Senior clergy (e.g. bishop, cardinal)	Travelling or stationary ministries accountable to the apostle, e.g. prophet, evangelist.
Local prime leader (e.g. priest, vicar)	Senior pastor, church leader.
Secondary local leaders (e.g. curate, priest in charge etc.)	Elders / Congregational leaders.
Lay helpers (lay readers etc.), cell group leaders.	House group leaders.
Dedicated building (usually historic structure).	Dedicated building (usually modern structure, e.g. a warehouse).
Ministry front led.	Ministry front led.
Ministry on raised platform (usually pulpit).	Ministry on raised platform (usually a stage).
Main latter part of the meeting given to a sermon.	Main latter part of the meeting given to a sermon.
Choirs and musical instruments.	Choirs (or at least backing singers) and musical instruments.
Money collection goes centrally to the upkeep of the building and ministry.	Money collection goes centrally to the upkeep of the building and ministry.
Clergy / laity split.	Clergy / laity split, though those terms are not used.
Laity silent.	Laity silent, in most cases.
Women ministers.	Women ministers present in many cases (but not all).
Vestments used by clergy.	Vestments sometimes used by Pentecostal leaders.
Worship leader (sometimes a vicar, sometimes a lay person).	Worship leader (sometimes a leader, sometimes a lay person).
Emotional service; based on environmental splendour and atmosphere.	Emotional service; based on music and impressions made by leaders.
Large congregations.	Large congregations.

New Covenant / Biblical Elements of the Gathered Church
Saints meet in a house.
Focus – The Lord’s Supper set in the background of a communal meal.
Small congregations of necessity. The church is like a family.
Leadership is by a team of equal elders who are usually employed in secular work. Salaries are rare.
Ministry (in the Sunday gathered church) is by mutual edification. [Teaching is more didactic on another night.]
Full participation encouraged. Apostolic doctrine and scripture reading are central.
Prayer is impromptu, relaxed and led by the Spirit.
No tithing; giving is voluntary and the chief focus is for the needy.
The church is unknown to the world, except by its acts of charity and Gospel preaching.

Note that the Biblical church is nothing like either the historic or Charismatic version of Old Covenant forms.

Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version*  
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