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Pedlar, James E. *Division, Diversity, and Unity: A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms*. (American University studies VII. Theology and Religion; Vol. 351) New York: Peter Lang, 2015.

# AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDIES

SERIES VII  
THEOLOGY AND RELIGION  
VOL. 351

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JAMES E. PEDLAR

# **Division, Diversity, and Unity**

A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms



PETER LANG

New York • Bern • Frankfurt • Berlin  
Brussels • Vienna • Oxford • Warsaw

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pedlar, James E.

Division, diversity, and unity: a theology of ecclesial charisms / James E. Pedlar.  
pages cm. — (American University studies VII. Theology and religion; Vol. 351)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Gifts, Spiritual. 2. Church. I. Title.

BT767.3.P43 234'.13—dc23 2015000940

ISBN 978-1-4331-3005-2 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-4539-1544-8 (e-book)

ISSN 0740-0446

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the “Deutsche  
Nationalbibliografie”; detailed bibliographic data are available  
on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de/>.

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible,  
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Portions of chapter 3 were previously published as  
“Ecclesial Institutions as Means of Grace:  
A Wesleyan View of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Church”  
in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 49/1 (Spring 2014), pages 108–121.

Cover photo by James E. Pedlar of the interior of the chapel  
at Tyndale University College and Seminary

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of the Council of Library Resources.



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29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006  
[www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

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Printed in Germany

*For Samantha*

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## Introduction

*It is difficult for us to imagine what a shock must have been given to the tender frame of second-century Christianity by the lapse of Tertullian into Montanism. It was as if Newman had joined the Salvation Army.<sup>1</sup>*

Ronald Knox's comparison of Montanism to the Salvation Army is amusing (especially for those of us with Salvationist heritage), but also indicative of the ways in which "enthusiastic" Christianity has been viewed by many scholars standing in the established Christian churches: as a country cousin, slightly embarrassing at best, and heretical at worst. The history of the Church bears witness to the perennial presence of conflict between such "movements" and the mainstream tradition. Such conflict has even, at times, marked the history of those Catholic movements which received the Church's official approbation, such as the Franciscans. This book is, in part, an effort to provide a theological framework through which this conflicted history might be interpreted and understood.

"Charism" is a concept drawn originally from Pauline literature, and refers to a gift given by the Spirit to persons in the Church for the upbuilding of the body of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Since the mid-twentieth century, Christians from a broad spectrum of theological positions have applied this term, in varying ways, to groups within the Church.<sup>3</sup> My argument specifies the particular ways in which we can legitimately speak of "group charisms." I begin with a constructive theology of ecclesial charisms and demonstrate the implications of this concept for the question of the limits of legitimate diversity in the church. I then continue to develop my position by an application of the theology of ecclesial charisms to two nineteenth century case studies: the Salvation Army and the Paulist Fathers. The specific question I am seeking to answer is, "how is the concept of 'ecclesial charisms' helpful for addressing the limits of legitimate diversity in the Church?" In other words, what *kind* of diversity is supported by a theology of ecclesial charisms?

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Similar definitions of "charism" can be found in a variety of sources. To cite five representative examples: Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 156ff; John M. Lozano, *Foundresses, Founders and their Religious Families* (Chicago: Claret Centre for Resources in Spirituality, 1983), 30–33; Gabriel Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1965), 13–17; Léon Joseph Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 32; René Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 51.

<sup>3</sup> The three primary ways in which the idea of a "group charism" has been used are a) Catholic theologies of the religious life, in which various institutes of religious life are said to each possess a particular charism; b) Protestant discussions of the place of "renewal movements," which tend to focus on the need for charismatic movements to enliven the institutional church; c) general discussions of "diversity" in the church, in which separated churches are said to have a particular charism which enriches the whole. My work will call type c) into question, and bring critical focus to the proper use of types a) and b).

I argue that ecclesial charisms must be understood as vocationally-directed in order to be consistent with Pauline theology. Charisms are gifts that bring an obligation to some specific service on behalf of the larger body of Christ. Strictly speaking, though I will speak of movements which are formed around an ecclesial charism, those movements themselves do not “possess” their charisms, but exist as means of grace that serve to facilitate and cultivate various charisms. The structures, traditions, and spirituality of the movement serve to further the exercise of their charism. The charisms themselves are given to persons, and those persons may be called to become part of a particular movement in order to fulfil their vocation. All of this leads to my central thesis: *the theology of ecclesial charisms can account for legitimately diverse, specialized vocational movements in the Church, but it cannot account for a legitimate diversity of separated churches*. In other words, a claim to an ecclesial charism cannot be used as a justification for continued separation among ecclesial bodies because charisms are, in part, constituted by their unity-building character.

In making this claim, I am situating the question of ecclesial charisms within the debate regarding the limits of legitimate diversity in the Church. My investigation focuses specifically on the question of structural diversity (the existence of distinct ecclesial bodies), and touches on issues of diversity in matters of doctrine, morality, liturgy, and spirituality only insofar as they intersect with the question at hand. In other words, I am asking what *kind* of diverse bodies (denominations? renewal movements? confessions? religious orders?) can be embraced as legitimate within the one Church? I argue from an ecclesiological position which takes visible, historic unity as its norm, along the lines of the definition given by the 1961 World Council of Churches Assembly at New Delhi. Christian unity in its fullest sense, therefore, includes common faith, preaching, sacraments, prayer, corporate life, and witness, expressed locally in a fully committed fellowship, but also universally, in terms of shared ministry and membership.<sup>4</sup> A break in any of these aspects of unity constitutes “separation,” and, as I will argue, separation implies the inhibition of a movement’s particular charism, as well as the impoverishment of the Church as a whole. The specific extent of this inhibition and impoverishment is one of the pressing questions which this project takes up, particularly in relation to the case studies. Though I begin with visible unity as a presupposition, I will also argue that adopting the language of charisms in discussing various ecclesial bodies leads inevitably to a vision of unity that is visible and historically continuous.

While I define the unity of the Church in catholic and organic terms, I maintain that a “separation” as outlined above does not necessarily lead to a de-churching of the movement in question. This assertion is grounded in an understanding of the Church that builds upon the work of George Lindbeck. Lindbeck argues that we should conceive of the Church primarily as the concrete, historical, visible people of God, identified by objective marks of God’s election (scripture, sacraments, confession of Christ, etc.).<sup>5</sup> Rather than establishing a set of “minimum requirements” for ecclesiality, a group which possesses any of these objective marks is considered part of the Church, though a given ecclesial community’s embodiment of the

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<sup>4</sup> W. A. Visser’t Hooft, ed., *New Delhi Speaks about Christian Witness, Service, Unity: A Report from the World Council of Churches Third Assembly* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 92–93.

<sup>5</sup> George A. Lindbeck, “The Church,” in *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, ed. James Joseph Buckley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 145–165.

Church's calling and election might not be uniformly faithful.<sup>6</sup> In continuity with Israel, the Church bears the marks of her election as either a blessing or a curse, witnessing to God in both her faithfulness and her unfaithfulness, as God's mercy and judgment are displayed in the Church's historical life.<sup>7</sup> With regard to the question of ecclesial charisms, this perspective provides a means by which to affirm the specific ways in which movements are faithful (to their particular charism) without turning this affirmation into a triumphalistic celebration of all aspects of the movement's history (because the affirmation of a charism does not imply that they are uniformly faithful). From this perspective, we can see the emergence of charismatic movements in the Church's history as a witness to both God's mercy and God's judgment. The charisms may emerge in response to a particular lack in established churches in a particular context, but they also bring extravagances, tensions and strife. Separation necessarily brings judgment, which will be borne out in the history of both movement and Church (the above-mentioned inhibition and impoverishment), but it does not mean that the charismatic movement ceases to be part of the Church.

With these presuppositions identified, I can clarify the meaning of some key ecclesiological terminology as I will be using it in this book. "Church" when capitalized refers to the universal body of Christ, which, as I have noted, is a visible and historical body of persons known by objective marks of Christian faith: confession of faith in Christ, baptism, observance of the Lord's Supper, regard for the authority of Christian scripture, and so on. I will use "church" in the lower case to refer to an identifiable body of Christians within the Church, whose common life is shaped by a plurality of personal charisms, and ordered by some form of historically continuous ministry of Word and sacrament. This would include those Christian bodies colloquially referred to as "denominations." "Ecclesial movements," for my purposes, are identifiable bodies within the Church that are formed for the pursuit of a particular purpose or agenda, and do not identify themselves as churches or as the Church itself. I specifically employ the term "ecclesial bodies" to speak of identifiable groups within the Church, without being specific about their form of self-identification, or the ecclesiological evaluations which other churches may make of the communities in question. Ecclesial bodies could be separated churches, religious orders, renewal movements, world communions, and so on. Thus I am employing this term as a descriptive umbrella concept for various types of "groups" within the Church, without implying any kind of judgment about the status of such bodies. However, the distinction between "churches" and "ecclesial movements" within this broad category is central to my argument, as will become clear in chapter 4.

In grounding the existence of ecclesial movements in the Spirit's charismatic activity, I am granting significance to charismatic movements as an aspect of the Spirit's guidance of the Church in history. However, much of my argument will be an attempt to set limits to such claims concerning the Spirit's work, and these will have broad ecumenical applicability. One of my central concerns in taking on this project is to guard against the use of the theology of ecclesial

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<sup>6</sup> I was intrigued by Lindbeck's suggestion that even a Quaker's confession of Christ can be a mark of ecclesiality. *Ibid.*, 157. This perspective obviously has implications for The Salvation Army, given that Salvationists do not practice the sacraments. Thus reactionary movements in the Church may call to attention a particular aspect of the Church's calling, but be sectarian and thus unfaithful to a scriptural vision of the Church in many other ways. *Ibid.*, 154. Such groups can be included within the boundaries of the Church without reducing the question of ecclesiality to the lowest common denominator.

<sup>7</sup> Lindbeck, "The Church," 155–157.

charisms as a triumphalistic justification of the present state of the divided Church. Among divided communities, claims to the Spirit's work have often been used as a way of providing pneumatic sanction for a given movement's history, including (if applicable) its separation from other ecclesial bodies. The theology of ecclesial charisms outlined in this thesis will not allow for this kind of charismatic justification of division. Rather, a movement which is autonomous from the rest of the Church, yet claims to guard a particular ecclesial charism, must continue to acknowledge the sin of division and work to overcome its isolation if the movement's charism is to serve its proper purpose. This allows for the movement to continue to lay claim to "divine origin," in a sense, and to identify a "special gift" and "calling" without using the charism as a way of justifying all aspects of its history, especially those which resulted in division.<sup>8</sup>

The question as it is thus formulated has not received sustained attention, though it is common in ecumenical circles to speak of the different churches as possessing a variety of gifts.<sup>9</sup> I will be bringing together literature from a variety of sources, including biblical theology, ecclesiology, theologies of renewal, and ecumenical theology, not to mention the historical literature on the Salvation Army and the Paulists, which will be taken up in chapters 6 through 9. While this somewhat eclectic mix of literature will be integrated into a sustained argument concerning ecclesial charisms, it does not fall neatly into a standard scholarly discussion. Rather, I am pressing these various bodies of literature into a critical and focused investigation of the concept of ecclesial charisms, with attention to the question of structural diversity in the Church. In a general sense, as noted above, this project is situated within the question of the limits of legitimate diversity in the Church, and specifically, the enduring place of separated ecclesial bodies within the larger Church. However, I do not continuously engage the literature on that specific question, but rather examine the particular way in which a theology of ecclesial charisms can contribute to this broader discussion of unity and diversity.

The question which forms the background for my examination of ecclesial charisms concerns the status of enduring confessional or denominational boundaries: are they a gift to be treasured, or a stumbling block to be overcome? As I will demonstrate in chapter 5, particular ecclesial identities were viewed as problematic early in the ecumenical movement, but a move towards affirming diversity beginning in the late 1960s pushed back against this position. In 1984, fears of the possible effects of an ecclesial "merger" caused Oscar Cullman to publish his book *Unity Through Diversity*, in which he argued that each confession has its own particular charism, which must be preserved through the continued autonomy of the confessions.<sup>10</sup> Cullmann's argument provided the initial inspiration for this book, and in a sense it has provided

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<sup>8</sup> Again, Lindbeck's concept of non-uniform faithfulness will be useful as a way of interpreting various movements as being particularly faithful in one aspect of Christian witness, without devolving into all-or-nothing debates regarding the ecclesiality of such movements.

<sup>9</sup> See, as a paradigmatic example, Margaret O'Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998). I will not argue that separated churches do not have "gifts" to share with one another, in a general sense. However, use of the term "charism" evokes, at least implicitly (and sometimes explicitly), the Pauline analogy of the body and its parts, thereby implying a divinely ordained diversity-in-unity which ought to be celebrated and preserved. I will argue that the "gifts" which separated churches bring to the whole Church are not necessarily charisms in this particular Pauline sense. In chapter 5 I will address this distinction between ecumenical "gifts" in a general sense and ecclesial charisms in the sense that I use the term in my argument, with reference to reports from international ecumenical dialogues.

<sup>10</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Unity Through Diversity: Its Foundation, and a Contribution to the Discussion Concerning the Possibilities of Its Actualization* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

a kind of “foil” for my argument as I have constructed it. I will argue that a theology of ecclesial charisms cannot properly be used to support the continued separation of ecclesial bodies, but can be used to support the presence of specialized vocational movements within the Church. In other words, the type of diversity envisioned and supported by a theology of ecclesial charisms is *vocational* diversity. “Charism” ought not to be used as a cipher for “diversity-in-general,” lest significant conflicts and disagreements between divided ecclesial bodies be simplistically construed as complementary gifts of the Spirit.

## Method and Procedure

My method in this project is rooted in the above-mentioned definition of the Church as the visible, historical people of God. With the Church thus defined, ecclesiology is a discipline which must engage the Church's concrete historical life. The doctrine of the Church must address and elucidate this visible, historical people, and not project an “ideal” Church existing behind or above history. And if the Church *is* this historical body of people, then the history of the Church and the history of seemingly obscure movements within the Church has something to tell us about God and his actions in history through his chosen witnesses. In this book I propose a theology of ecclesial charisms as a way of interpreting the conflicted history of movements in the Church, and this charism-based interpretation will involve both systematic theological reflection and historical description. Therefore I will begin with constructive work on the theology of ecclesial charisms, and follow this with critical reflection on the concrete life of two movements, the Paulist Fathers and the Salvation Army, interpreted through the lens of my constructive proposal.

I begin by investigating the scriptural roots of the concept of charisms, paying particular attention to the way that the Pauline literature has been used in recent theological work on this topic (chapter 2). Through a reading of the Pauline literature in conversation with post-Vatican II ecumenical literature, I demonstrate that Paul applies the term to persons, not to churches (though these gifts cannot be properly discerned or exercised by isolated individuals). The interdependent charisms are freely given by the Spirit for the building up of the body through particular kinds of service. Thus, they always carry a vocational obligation. The theology of ecclesial charisms must remain consistent with this scriptural foundation, though it will go beyond strict adherence to the Pauline concept. I argue that the Pauline theology of charisms must be interpreted in relation to the story of the people of God as it is found in the broader scriptural canon, drawing on Lindbeck's “messianic pilgrim people of God” framework. This means relating Paul's teaching on charisms to the significance of the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, interpreted through the canonical shape of Pentecost as a first fruits festival. First fruits offerings have a provisional character, in that they anticipate a further harvest which is to come. Thus, charisms as pneumatic gifts also have a provisional character, and this guards against any person or group laying claim to a charism in a triumphalistic manner. First fruits are also sacrificial offerings, which point toward the figure of Christ, and therefore ought to be exercised in a self-denying manner, in accordance with the Spirit's ongoing work of conforming human persons to Christ.

The relationship between charism and institution is of central importance to my argument, and is taken up in chapter 3. I propose a five-fold typology of perspectives on this question, with reference to significant work by Adolf von Harnack, Leonardo Boff, Karl Rahner,

Joseph Ratzinger, and Oscar Cullmann. My own position emphasizes the interdependence of institution and charism in the Church, preserving the distinction between the two without construing them as opposites or strictly separated phenomena. There can be no strict separation between institution and charism as all ecclesial institutions are charismatic, and all ecclesial charisms are cultivated and preserved by institutional means of grace. Therefore, there are no “mere” institutions in the Church, nor are there “pure” charisms existing independently of ecclesial institutions. The tensions that exist between movements and established churches are not explained on the basis of a conflict-in-principle between “charism” and “institution.” Rather these tensions arise out of conflict between different types of ecclesial institutions, both of which are charismatic.

The specific relation between “movement,” “church,” and “charism” is addressed in chapter 4, where I argue that ecclesial charisms are properly embodied in specialized vocational movements, rather than separated churches. At this point, drawing on post-Vatican II Catholic literature on the religious life, I define specialized vocational movements as ecclesial bodies which are formed to cultivate and facilitate a particular charism in the Church – that is, a particular function or service for the upbuilding of the Church. I then argue that the Catholic theology of charisms could be applied ecumenically, with particular reference to Protestant theologies of renewal that affirm the importance of specialized movements in the Church. Such movements should not function as churches, nor should they see themselves as churches. Rather, they should exercise a particular ministry in a way which is integrated into the life of the Church at large. These can be contrasted with local churches, which I define as characterized by a plurality of charismata and historically continuous forms of ministry, including ministries of Word and sacrament.<sup>11</sup> Recognizing that, in the concrete historical life of the Church, this normative distinction between church and movement is often blurred, I propose a fourfold typology of ecclesial bodies, including two hybrid forms: churches, movements, separated movements, and movement-churches.

In light of what has been said thus far, I articulate the implications of this theology of ecclesial charisms for Christian unity, diversity, and division (chapter 5). The theology of ecclesial charisms supports visible, historic, and organic unity as the ultimate norm for the Church’s life. Within this unity, a diversity of specialized vocational movements can be viewed as a legitimate expression of the Spirit’s gifts to the Church, but these specialized movements ought not to exist as autonomous churches. In short, the theology of ecclesial charisms does not support the idea of diverse churches maintaining their autonomy for the purpose of protecting their charism. Indeed, if separation does occur, the exercise of the charism will be hampered, as the specialized movement begins to take on the many and various vocations and ministries of a church. This hampering is a manifestation of God’s judgment and mercy, which ought to evoke repentance. Likewise, if a movement does not separate but its charism is not recognized, the movement will suffer for taking on vocational tasks which lie outside its charismatic founding.

This constructive theology of charisms then becomes the basis upon which the primary and secondary literature on the Salvation Army and the Paulist Fathers is interpreted. Since

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<sup>11</sup> The extent of historical continuity may vary greatly in different cases, but even second generation Pentecostal churches have embraced historical continuity in their own way. In any case, my argument will not dwell on these criteria, but will be focused instead on the differences between movements and churches from the perspective of charisms, with movements being formed around a particular charism, and churches characterized by a plurality of charisms.

charisms are given to persons, an examination of a movement's charism must begin with the charism of the founder. Thus, in chapter 6 I examine the particular gifting and vocation of William Booth<sup>12</sup> and Isaac Hecker. I include biographical background material here, as it is relevant to the question of the charism of each founder. Booth's charism is identified as the gift of evangelism among the neglected. Hecker's charism is also evangelism, with a particular focus on the people of America. I also examine the conflicts that arose for both men as they sought to exercise their particular charism among the Methodist New Connexion and the Redemptorists, respectively.

In chapter 7 I examine how, in each case, the founder organized the movement around the movement's particular calling. I review foundational documents (constitutions, rules, regulations) which were intended to shape each movement, and discuss the early institutionalization of each movement. Both movements were characterized by a degree of ambiguity regarding their charism, and both faced questions concerning the modification of their charism within the first three decades. For the Paulists, the ambiguity was caused in part by the prevailing anti-American culture in the Catholic hierarchy, which forced them to downplay the specifically American aspects of their charism. They were also forced to compromise on Hecker's vision for the Paulists as a strictly missionary community, as they agreed to take on parish duties in order to receive episcopal approbation. This meant that the Paulists were, from an early stage, forced to divert some of their meagre resources to parish ministry, undercutting their evangelistic focus. Hecker then raised the question of a change of charism when he attempted to convince the Paulist community that they should expand into Europe in the mid-1870s. In the case of the Salvation Army, the ambiguity was caused by the Army's autonomy from all other ecclesial institutions. This meant that, while Salvationists expressly claimed that they were *not* a church, they began to morph into a movement-church from a very early stage. I then discuss the potential change in the Salvationist charism in relation to William Booth's "Darkest England" scheme and the Salvation Army's subsequent expansion of its social work.

In chapter 8 I examine the ecclesiological assumptions of each movement, and the degree to which a theology of charisms might have helped to clarify the relationship between each movement and the broader Church. I discuss Hecker's hopes for a Roman Catholic Church that was more "interior" and yet more intelligible to the people of his age and more active in the world. The Paulists were thus envisioned to be men of the church for the needs of the age. While Hecker's convictions concerning the direct work of the Spirit in the lives of people caused some of his critics to brand him a crypto-Protestant, he strongly affirmed that the Spirit worked unfailingly through the church's external authority as well. The Paulists understood their movement's relation to the Church in a way that accords quite well with the theology of charisms I propose – as a specialized movement, but one under the authority and direction of overseers. The theology of charisms might have made a significant difference for the Paulists, however, if it had been embraced in relation to the charism of oversight – both by the Paulists themselves, and by the Catholic hierarchy of their time. Conceiving of oversight as a charism among other charisms might have mitigated the triumphalistic tendencies of nineteenth century Catholic

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<sup>12</sup> It has become common in recent Salvation Army literature to refer to Catherine Booth as the "co-founder" of the Salvation Army. This is a laudable attempt to emphasize the immense role that Catherine played in shaping the movement's mission and identity. However, I have chosen to focus on William Booth as founder, because he is the one who has been universally acknowledged as such throughout the movement's history.

views of ecclesial authority, and allowed for a greater appreciation of the Paulists' particular vocation to evangelism in America. Salvationist ecclesiology, on the other hand, has been marked by a profound ambiguity from the beginning, again resulting from the movement's status as an autonomous ecclesial body. Booth claimed that his people were part of the Church, but that they were *not* "a church" or a sect, even though his members found their spiritual home and nurture exclusively in the Salvation Army. Furthermore, Booth sometimes also claimed equality for the Army and its officers in relation to other churches, undermining his argument that he was not creating another denomination. The Salvation Army's negotiations with the Church of England in 1882-83 and its decision to abandon sacramental observance both serve as illustrations of this ambiguity. The theology of ecclesial charisms, of course, would suggest that Booth ought to have sought integration of his movement within an established church, so that the movement could truly have remained focused on the charism of evangelism among the neglected.

In chapter 9 I examine the ways each movement has interpreted its particular mission through their respective historical evolutions. I begin by examining the Americanist controversy as the first trial of the Paulist community after Isaac Hecker's death. The controversy, while not officially a censure of the Paulists, nevertheless left the community under a cloud of suspicion for decades. I also discuss changes in the characteristic activities of the Paulists, with particular attention to the internal ferment caused by the decline of "missions." This ferment paved the way for a significant re-interpretation of the Paulist charism in the wake of Vatican II. The most significant change in this re-interpretation is the introduction of ecumenism into the Paulist charism – a move which resolves the earlier problematic interpretation of the Paulist charism as a mandate to "convert" Protestants. The ongoing interpretation of the Salvationist charism focuses on the tension created by the status of the Army as a movement-church. I chart the gradual trend of the movement towards a more "churchly" identity, culminating in official self-identification as "a church" in the 1970s. This means that the Salvationists' focus on their specific charism of evangelism among the neglected became more and more diffuse as the movement increasingly took on the various tasks of a church.

Finally, in light of my reading of the two case studies, I draw out the theological lessons learned from the concrete history of these two particular movements in chapters 10 and 11. Revisiting the argument of the opening chapters, I draw out the implications that the history of these two movements has for the theology of ecclesial charisms, with particular attention to the effects of separation and misapprehension upon the exercise of a charism. The final chapter spells out the ecumenical implications of my argument, both for our understanding of the place of movements in the church, and for the nature of Christian unity.