

'Catholic' and 'Charismatic'

Two Logics of Legitimization and the Negotiation of Belonging in the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Hannah Grüenthal

Abstract *This article explores how the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal (GCCR) navigates its positioning in the Catholic Church as well as in the Charismatic Movement. Focusing on the movement's two logics of legitimization – the 'Catholic' and the 'Charismatic' logic – this paper delves into the strategies employed by its members to assert their position within these two contexts. In order to be recognized within the Catholic Church, the GCCR needs to adopt a 'Catholic' logic of legitimization, which is based on the hierarchy, structure, tradition, and doctrine of the Catholic Church. With regard to the Charismatic Movement, the GCCR legitimizes its practices based on personal religious experiences and the experience of the Holy Spirit. The question of legitimization is tied back to the question of social forms in which German Catholic Charismatic practice takes place. The GCCR provides its members with a wide variety of social forms and opportunities for participation. By analyzing the two logics of legitimization connected to social forms, this article provides insights into the multifaceted strategies employed by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement in Germany to navigate its intricate dual identity and foster a sense of belonging in both spheres, the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement.*

Keywords *Belonging, Catholic Church, Charismatic Catholicism, Charismatic Movement, German Catholic Charismatic Renewal, logic of legitimization*

1. Introduction

Scene 1: A Catholic Church, the smell of incense and the age of centuries lingers in the air. Approximately 300 people are gathered here, more than usual. They sit in the pews, looking at the altar where an elderly priest celebrates the Holy

Mass. A song is sung, then the sounds transition to a muttering and mumbling. No recognizable words are spoken, but people utter syllables and make noises; some stand up and open their arms widely, and many have their eyes closed. It grows louder, and their voices fill the high, gothic ceilings. After a few minutes, it grows silent again, and the priest continues his celebration.

Scene 2: Six people sit in a circle at the apsis of a small church around the altar. It is dark in the nave and only the apsis is illuminated. One after the other, sentence by sentence, they read out the gospel of the week. After the last one finishes, they remain silent. The Paschal candle flickers next to the icon of Mother Mary in the middle of the circle, next to the altar. Suddenly, one of the participants repeats a word from the gospel that has just been read. Someone else repeats a whole sentence, three times, with gravity. Then it is silent again. After a few minutes, one woman, the leader, begins to sing a song, and the others join her one by one.

Scene 3: A man in his early forties walks dynamically up and down the stage, wearing tight jeans, a casual jacket, and brand-new sneakers. He draws circles, lines, and arrows on a flipchart to illustrate his message: Men are men and women are women; they are created as such by God and must behave accordingly. In the audience, there are around 500 people of all ages, sitting on padded chairs, applauding, cheering, and nodding in agreement. After the presentation, a worship band begins to play. The stage is illuminated in bright green, yellow, and blue light. The people in the room stand up from their chairs, join the singing, clap their hands, and move to the rhythm.

All three of these scenes, though very different in mood, content, and character, were taken from meetings of the GCCR, the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal. German Catholic Charismatics go to the Holy Mass in their local parish, host Bible reading groups, and go to national and international faith events. They celebrate the sacraments and practice charisms. They are part of the Catholic Church as well as of the Charismatic Movement. In between those two, the GCCR has developed its own strategies of positioning itself within the Catholic Church on the one hand and the Charismatic Movement on the other. Those strategies include debates about legitimate and illegitimate practices and arguments as well as authority constructions, and the establishment of specific, yet fluid social forms according to the respective goals and needs.

Members of the GCCR are typically involved in several different religious social forms and contexts – some of them organized by members of the GCCR itself (like GCCR regional meetings), some situated in the Catholic Church (such as parish prayer groups with worship elements), some situated in the

Charismatic Movement (like weekend seminars on the charisms), and some situated somewhere in between (like Catholic Charismatic life-communities that are recognized by the Holy See). To grasp the GCCR's predominant social form is therefore not an easy task. In addition to the fluid social forms of GCCR activities, membership is also widely fluid.

In 2017, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Germany stated on its website that "currently about 12.000 Catholic Christians of all ages meet in about 500 prayer groups, house groups, and new spiritual communities",¹ and listed 32 Charismatic communities, initiatives, and ministries in addition to local prayer groups. Since the GCCR "does not accept 'members' in the manner of an association", there are neither membership statistics nor fixed criteria for who is part of the GCCR and who is not. It is merely the leaders and those who hold offices within the GCCR who are "tangible [...] – and these only as long as they participate in a 'binding' way" (Baumert 1998: 599). Elected communal, diocesan, and national spokespersons organize communication and networking on the regional and transregional level and form the 'Council of the GCCR' (Rat der CE), where matters of importance – structural as well as content-related – are discussed and decided. These structures are very much parallel to the Catholic diocesan structure. Furthermore, many members of the GCCR are actively involved in their local Catholic parishes and participate in Catholic activities. On the other hand, GCCR members are frequently involved in (non-Catholic) Charismatic group meetings, workshops, worship services, and other events. These social forms – or ways of coordinating interaction – are shaped by the different organizational structures in the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement: while the Catholic Church as an organization is hierarchically structured, the Charismatic Movement has the form of a network of individual churches, communities, and groups. The roles of hierarchy, authority, and members follow the respective organizational logics. As the GCCR positions itself in both contexts, this results in different points of contact with the two contexts. Apart from that, there are other, equally important social forms within the GCCR, such as prayer circles, religious life communities, open prayer meetings, blessings, praise services, seminars and lectures, and regional and national GCCR events.

As seen from these examples, the GCCR refuses to adopt one specific social form that can be understood as typical, permanent, or even exclusively Catholic

1 <https://www.erneuerung.de/wer-wir-sind>. All translations from German (written sources and empirical data) by the author unless indicated otherwise.

Charismatic. Is the GCCR a network, event community, group, organization within an institution, or movement? I argue that the GCCR can be understood as all of the above, and adapting different social forms in different contexts is one of the GCCR's core strengths. The GCCR, although bound together by a head association, is not a static construct. Rather, it is a crowd of individuals and groups meeting in different, changing contexts and social forms, shaping and maintaining their collective identity, ascribing religious authority in different contexts, and facing different challenges. They are, as I will argue in this article, bound together not only by a strict sense of belonging, but also by the simultaneous application of two parallel, yet exclusive, logics of legitimization: the 'Catholic' logic and the 'Charismatic' logic. The decision which logic is applied in which situation is a matter of constant negotiation, which at the same time embeds and demarcates the GCCR from both reference groups: the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement.

The data and reflections presented here were derived from a research project on positioning processes and the construction of religious authority in the case of the GCCR (Grünenthal 2021). The project covered a wide range of data: on the one hand, ethnographical data was collected and interpreted (extensive fieldwork in 2016–2017 with 43 protocols of participant observation and eight qualitative interviews). On the other hand, the media discourse of the GCCR between 2015 and 2018 was evaluated (the website², 16 issues of the quarterly journal "CE Info", an e-mail newsletter, and six publications by the theological committee). The total number of documents analyzed was 860.

2. Academic perspectives on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

In academic literature, there are, aside from theological discussions about the charisms and Catholic Charismatic theology³, three main perspectives on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal: empirical studies that explore certain aspects

2 <https://www.erneuerung.de>.

3 Although those debates are academic and important to understand the Charismatic Renewal Movement, they depict more internal debates and negotiations about the validity of Catholic Charismatic theology as well as their belonging to the Church. These debates are not included into the overview on academic literature about the CCR; they are, however, an important element of the negotiation of the place of the CCR in the Catholic Church.

of the CCR in specific contexts, scholarly research on 'EPC Christianity'⁴, and the German theological discourse.

Empirical studies, mainly anthropological or sociological case studies, usually focus on the CCR in one specific (often national) context or explore one specific aspect of Charismatic Catholicism. Oftentimes, these studies are set in contexts where Charismatic practices are a strong factor in local Catholicism (which is not the case in Germany). In this area, mainly psychological studies about conversion and religious experience of Charismatic Catholics have been conducted (e.g. Halama/Halamová 2005; Siekierski 2012; Zarzycka et al. 2015). They found that, on the one hand, religious experience plays an important role in religious actors' self-conception as Charismatic Catholics, and on the other hand, conversion is perceived as a turning point in their religious biography that strengthens their connection to the Catholic Church. Anthropological studies have focused more on local forms of Charismatic Catholicism and its relation to Catholic hierarchy and structure (e.g. in Italy: Pace 2006) or the relation between local and global forms of Charismatic Catholicism (e.g. Theije/Mariz 2008; Hoenes del Pinal 2017; Lado 2017; Pace 2020). One aspect that surfaces again and again in these studies is that Charismatic Catholics have a strong sense of belonging and a generally positive attitude toward the Catholic Church. Furthermore, they aspire to attain institutional recognition by Church authorities (Turco 2016).

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is also a focal point in the context of Pentecostalism research or research on EPC Christianity. In these approaches, the Charismatic Movement in the Catholic Church is usually subsumed under Charismatic movements, although it is a special form of Charismatic Christianity. EPC research usually focuses on the transnational and transdenominational entanglements of EPC Christianity. The history and development of global EPC Christianity is narrated as "one of the great success stories of the current era of cultural globalization" (Robbins 2004). The perspective on Charismatic Christianity as one form of EPC Christianity, and on Catholic Charismatics as one type of Charismatic Christianity, is characterized by two premises: the narrative of growth and the concept of Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon.

4 Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. As distinctions between those forms of Christianity are difficult, EPC Christianity is used for the whole spectrum.

Pentecostalism in all its multi-faceted variety, including the 'Pentecostal-like' independent Churches and the Catholic Charismatics, is one of the most significant forms of Christianity in the twentieth century. According to oftquoted but controversial estimates, there may have been over five hundred million adherents of these movements worldwide in 2000, found in almost every country in the world and spanning all Christian denominations. In less than a hundred years, Pentecostal, Charismatic and associated movements have become a major new force in world Christianity. (Anderson 2006: 106)

While Charismatic Catholicism is frequently mentioned as the largest Charismatic movement, especially active in Latin America and the Philippines (Johnson/Zurlo 2020), the focus usually lies on non-denominational EPC Churches.

While the core narrative in the discourse on global EPC Christianity is one of growth and globalization, the discourse on the Catholic Church in Germany is characterized by the narrative of the decline of Catholicism in times of decreasing membership and increasing secularization (Gabriel 1996: 11). The GCCR is discussed mainly in two contexts: first, as a new community and a sign of pluralization of Catholicism – these perspectives on the GCCR are mostly sociological – and second, as a connecting point between the Catholic Church and EPC Christianity – usually with more practical theological implications.

The earlier, mostly sociological studies on the field saw new communities as alternative forms of Catholicism that are partly independent from traditional parish structures and parish priests. They offer what is perceived as new and appealing forms of spirituality, theology, and religious practice (Hochschild 2005). Their sociological interest was to formulate a Sociology of Catholicism. These new communities therefore were seen as examples of non-traditional social forms of Catholicism in Germany; the GCCR, in this context, serves as a case to discuss whether it is a movement or not (Lehmann 2003).

More recently, the second debate has become more prominent: there have been several publications on Charismatic Catholicism as a Catholic form of Pentecostalism and the dogmatic and theological questions that arise in this context (e.g. Krämer/Vellguth 2019). The aim of these publications is twofold: on the one hand, they try to find solutions as to how to attract people to Catholicism and stop membership decline; on the other hand, they discuss the dogmatic and practical implications of Charismatic Catholicism and its place in the Catholic Church.

Overall, the academic discussion of Charismatic Catholicism is characterized by the tension between being Catholic while at the same time being Charismatic. The question of belonging is asked and answered on two different levels. First, on the individual level – do individual actors in the Catholic Charismatic Movement perceive themselves as members of the Catholic Church? Second, on the level of the local groups – do they identify more as Catholic or Charismatic, and what does this mean for the Catholic Church? The goal of these debates is to categorize the GCCR and solve the question of belonging. I, however, will not try to sort them into one box or the other but rather take a closer look at how they themselves maintain this two-fold positioning. The abovementioned social forms, between which members of the GCCR move frequently, serve as lenses through which their oscillation between these two positions can be observed.

3. Strategies of positioning and two logics of legitimization

While the position and belonging of the GCCR is debated in the literature, there seems to be no struggle for the actors themselves. They see themselves as belonging to both the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement. By belonging, I refer to the actors' understanding of being part of a group. Positioning, on the other hand, refers to social practices to explicate, reinforce, change, or claim affiliation to a social form and, therefore, make belonging socially visible. Positioning and belonging therefore are tightly connected. In order to defend their belonging to the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement, the GCCR and its members must develop positioning strategies, that is, a set of practices and narratives to legitimize their strategies, claims, and values. The recognition of belonging as well as the strategies of positioning need to be negotiated internally, among the members of the GCCR, as well as externally, with regard to other groups, namely the Charismatic Movement and the Catholic Church. In order to legitimize actions and practices, actors of the GCCR refer to elements from both interpretative frames, the Charismatic Movement and the Catholic Church. They apply two different logics: a Catholic logic on the one hand and a Charismatic logic on the other.

In the following, I will explore Catholic Charismatics' strategies of positioning themselves in the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement and the two different logics of legitimization which actors apply to legitimize and reinforce their positions and thereby negotiate belonging. Additionally, the so-

cial forms in which the examples take place speak to these logics of legitimization and serve as markers of belonging.

3.1 Strategies of positioning the GCCR in the Catholic Church

The GCCR firmly positions itself within the Catholic Church. To underline this claim of being Catholic, members and texts frequently reference elements of the Catholic symbol system and interpretive framework, such as Catholic theology, structure, and ecclesial hierarchy, but also doctrine, tradition, Catholic literature, liturgy, and the sacraments. Furthermore, the Catholic Church as an institution is referenced. Although the reference to the Catholic Church as an institution implies the notation of the Church as established by God on one hand, while being a societal institution on the other, these implications are not discussed in the data. It seems that the status, form, and nature of the Catholic Church are not seen as topics of debate in the GCCR. At a time when the status of the Church in society is repeatedly discussed and questioned, this lack of debate hints at a strong loyalty towards the institution in both aspects.

The GCCR's fundamental positioning in the Catholic Church is first of all expressed in the explicit statement to be part of the Church and the understanding that there is a mission that the GCCR – and the CCR in general – must fulfill: to renew the Catholic Church in the name of the Holy Spirit. The Church in its current state is seen as “dried up” and “not on fire.” It is perceived as the GCCR's task to “bring the flame of the Holy Spirit back into the Church.” Florian⁵ explains how people who experienced the Holy Spirit change and bring that change back into the Church:

Florian: And then there are these charisms, of which we can read a lot in the Bible, and which we have experienced again and again in our movement, that they come from God, that a life with these charisms is possible [...].

I: hmhm. That would mean that the change would come from the roots, so to speak, right? So it is always people...

Florian: A change of the humans' inner nature. Like, people have a personal encounter with God, experience God's work in their own life, in their own inner being, in their everyday life, and with that they change themselves,

5 The names of all interview partners and field contacts have been changed for anonymity.

but they also change their environment, their family, and with that also the Church. Yes.⁶

The “renewal” that is aimed for in the GCCR, however, is expected to take place purely on a spiritual level. It explicitly does not result in any demands for changes at the structural or hierarchical level of the Catholic Church. Neither structure, hierarchy, nor Catholic doctrine is questioned in the GCCR’s publications and articles at any point. On the contrary, one strategy to position the GCCR within the Catholic Church is to explicitly subordinate it to the Church and its structures. In one interview, Manfred, a leading member of the GCCR, described the strategy in the early days of the CCR in Germany:

So in the early days of the Charismatic Renewal, Herbert Mühlen was very significantly involved, they tried to integrate it very well into the Catholic Church. Therefore, good statutes were quickly established, and a good theological policy paper was quickly written, which was then also recognized by the bishops, so much effort was made. I think in other movements, they just developed over time, and at some point, someone looked at what they had become and put it into papers. These papers were drawn up very, very quickly and quite uncharismatically. However, perhaps also out of fear that it is so new, and we do not want to be seen as a cult and we want to be Catholic, so that they made such papers very quickly. And then they said, OK, so let’s have a diocesan structure.⁷

What Manfred points out here is a) that for the GCCR, it was and is very important to be acknowledged as being part of the Catholic Church and b) that the GCCR tried to achieve this goal by developing a “good” theological position (meaning a position that holds up to Catholic standards) and structure, as affirmed by the Catholic hierarchy (meaning the bishops and the pope), and integrating their structure and organization into the Catholic structure of dioceses. This integration can also be seen in the fact that the Catholic Charismatic Bible reading and prayer groups I attended during my fieldwork took place in local Catholic parishes with the agreement of local priests and parish leaders. Thus, they were firmly embedded in Catholic institutional contexts.

Another strategy to strengthen the GCCRs claim of being part of the Catholic Church, while at the same time practicing charisms, was to for-

6 Interview (I#7) with Florian, member of the GCCR leaderboard, March 08, 2016.

7 Interview (I#8) with Manfred, member of the GCCR leaderboard, March 09, 2016.

mulate a Catholic theology of charisms. In the Charismatic Movement or in Pentecostalism, the formulation of a theology of charisms in an academic sense did not play a major role for a long time (Chan 2020: 39). In the circles of the CCR there were efforts from the 1970s onwards to classify the experiences of the actors theologically and to have them recognized by the Church. Such attempts were made (and partly successfully so) by leading CCR members such as Kilian McDonnell, Edward O'Connor, and Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan (Anderson 2014: 166). The formulation of a distinct Catholic Charismatic theology began as early as the 1960s and early 1970s in the USA (Ciciliot 2019), but from the mid-1970s, it was advanced locally, especially in Germany (Hocken 1999, 406). With the establishment of the Theological Committee of the GCCR, a body was set in place to accompany developments within the GCCR theologically. Peter Zimmerling notes that "given the Protestant counterpart [...] the *theological clarification* of the Charismatic spiritual experience in the Catholic sphere is significantly more advanced" (Zimmerling 2018: 25, original emphasis). In this context, Zimmerling identifies the professors of Catholic theology Heribert Mühlen, Norbert Baumert, and Otto Knoch, the theologians Lucida Schmieder and Michael Marsch, as well as "a number of pastors and retreat masters known in the Catholic field" (ibid.) as formative figures of the GCCR. In their publications, they firmly based Catholic Charismatic practice on Catholic tradition and theology. The writings were directed not only toward the members of the GCCR themselves but especially toward Catholic externals and critics. Parallel to and partly interwoven with this more academic-theological debate, leaders of the GCCR constantly reflect on and discuss their own theology and practice, their foundation in Catholic Theology and Tradition, and communicate those debates to GCCR members and groups at meetings, in books, faith courses, and seminars. The multiple platforms and ways of communication within the GCCR reflect, like the multitude of social forms, its fluidity. There is not one medium through which to stay theologically and religiously informed, but many; there is not one social form to practice faith and have religious experiences, but many. It is the individuals' responsibility to pick and choose the subjectively most adequate one. Though in this sense, the GCCR is an individualistic, post-modern phenomenon, the individual's choices are not arbitrary but rooted in their faith and shared interpretive frame.

Like structural integration and the theology of charisms, sacraments play an important role in the GCCR's positioning within the Catholic Church, especially Eucharist and Confession. Frequent emphasis on the importance of the

sacraments implies and enhances the acknowledgment of the Catholic hierarchy, as sacraments can only be given by ordained priests. For example, the Eucharist can only be granted by ordained Catholic priests. While there are ordained priests among the members of the GCCR, most of the members of the GCCR attend the usual Catholic Mass to receive the Eucharist. Therefore, the Holy Mass is a Catholic social form in which members of the GCCR participate. Especially in the context of GCCR events, mass is either held by GCCR priests or by non-Charismatic priests or bishops, making this a distinctly Catholic social form in which the GCCR gathers.

3.2 Strategies of positioning the GCCR in the Charismatic Movement

The GCCR's positioning in the Charismatic Movement is as firm as in the Catholic Church, though it manifests very differently; while its positioning in the Catholic Church occurs in the dimensions of structure, hierarchy, theology, and tradition, its positioning in the Charismatic Movement takes place at the individual level of personal experience. Therefore, it is characterized by fluid, individual patterns of attribution and justification in specific situations. Members frequently refer to personal and subjective experiences and the work of the Holy Spirit. The social forms in which these experiences take place are also more fluid and individualized, such as weekend seminars, irregular worship services, or Charismatic prayer conferences or events.

The unifying element across denominational boundaries in the Charismatic Movement is the shared emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit, the "baptism in the Holy Spirit", and charisms as the most visible and obviously distinguishing Charismatic features.

Another aspect that connects the GCCR with the Charismatic Movement is its attitude towards the Bible. In the interviews and during field research, it became clear that most of the actors read the Bible for themselves, both in a weekly prayer group and at home on their own. In doing so, the Bible or selected biblical passages are repeatedly referenced as a guide and instruction for questions of everyday life and for shaping one's own life. In prayer group meetings, reading the Bible together takes a lot of space, with the focus on relating the Bible passages to one's own questions and individual needs:

When we have concrete questions about life, we may look for corresponding answers in the Bible. It is an ingenious guide to life, as God intended

and willed it to humans. Thus, God can speak into our lives through his written word. (Hemberger 2012: 34)

The Bible, from the GCCR's point of view, is not to be understood primarily as a historical text, but as the "Word of God" and a guide for everyday life. Thus, there are many actors within the GCCR who distance themselves from a hermeneutical approach to the Bible, which is present in German Catholic theology and the Church, and instead push for a more personal and literal understanding of the Bible, which is characteristic of the Pentecostal and Evangelical context (Buchard 2014: 141).

Many members and also the GCCR as a group are committed to ecumenism, especially in the form of joint events and projects. Ecumenical cooperation is not without tension, for example regarding theology or the role of the Pope. Personal experience, however, is regarded as being at a different level than the debate between Catholic and non-Catholic Charismatic Christians. The underlying religious experience is identified as the same in all Charismatic groups:

The Holy Spirit works in all Christian Churches and ecclesial communities, and often in the same way, despite their different and sometimes contradictory theologies. (ThO#5, p. 30)

Against the background of a similar experience, the GCCR sees itself simultaneously as part of the interdenominational Charismatic Movement and as different from the others, as something "special." Florian points out:

So, what I find quite exciting is that the Charismatic Movement exists in all denominations, all over the world, and we are the only movement that exists in all denominations. Sometimes that makes us special, but sometimes it is [...] that it becomes normal, so you can be interdenominational and always meet someone who thinks similarly. And then there are still differences. And you notice them again and again.⁸

This ambivalent attitude between affirmation and demarcation fundamentally characterizes the positioning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Charismatic Movement. It allows members of the GCCR to draw a line towards

8 Interview (I#7) with Florian, member of the GCCR leaderboard, March 08, 2016.

Charismatic and Pentecostal theology and doctrine, while still recognizing their experience as being the same. At gathered events, Catholic Charismatics do not regularly meet as a subgroup, but just take part, pray, listen, worship, etc. In reports about such events in the CE-Info, the quarterly journal, the denominational affiliations of organizers, speakers, and participants are usually mentioned. No judgement is attached; it is more of a contextualization, which again leaves the interpretation to the individual actors.

Subtle commonalities between the GCCR and the Charismatic Movement can be found with regard to positions on everyday religious life and the surrounding society, where the statements of members of the GCCR show strong links to EPC patterns of interpretation. In the GCCR's publications, topics such as gender roles and family values, as well as immigration, Christian values, and the "right" way to deal with Islam, are explicitly addressed in only a few programmatic texts (Grüenthal 2021). However, in more informal discussions, they are a recurring theme and are addressed and discussed, for example, at prayer meetings in connection with biblical passages. However, the leadership of the GCCR is reluctant to make public statements on socially controversial issues.

The GCCR positions itself in the Charismatic Movement mainly through religious practices and attitudes in daily life, such as worship, the charisms, the significance of prayer as a form of communication with God, a vibrant Bible study practice, an emphasis on personal relationships with God, and the importance of God in everyday life.

3.3 The double logic of legitimization: Catholic and Charismatic

The strategies of legitimization that have been discussed above are, however, not effective in themselves, but have to be enacted, applied, and maintained by concrete members in concrete situations. In encounters with other Catholics, as well as other Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians, members of the GCCR need to explain themselves and demarcate and justify their position on a regular basis. In these statements, they draw on the strategies of legitimization that are established within the GCCR and apply them to the situation at hand. They thereby switch between two different modes of legitimization, the Catholic and the Charismatic modes of legitimization.

I argue that in the positioning of the GCCR, but also in the everyday religious life of its members, there are two basic logics at work at the same time: on the one hand, the Catholic logic, which is based on the institution and hi-

erarchy of the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, the Charismatic logic, which is based on the experience of the Holy Spirit. Depending on situation and context, actors within the GCCR use either one or the other logic to legitimize their positions, actions, and principles and substantiate them within the Catholic Charismatic framework.

As shown above, the Catholic logic is characterized by references that are assumed to be valid for actors in the Catholic Church. These include not only references to theology, structure, and ecclesial hierarchy, but also doctrine (represented, for example, in publications of the bishops or the papal Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), tradition (e.g., saints or mariology), historical situations (such as the Second Vatican Council), Catholic literature (e.g., the Book of Hours or other pious literature), liturgy and sacraments, and the Catholic Church as an institution with all its implications: the organizational aspects as well as the understanding of the Church as a holy, perennial, and eschatological body.

The Charismatic logic, on the other hand, is characterized by references that relate to and are validated through the experience of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is characterized by fluid, individual patterns of attribution and justification. The validity of the references and their position in the GCCR's shared frame of reference are actively negotiated, with the basic standard of evaluation being the individual experience of the actors.

Within the GCCR, both logics are available at the same time within the same shared interpretive framework. They can be used flexibly, depending on the context and situation. For example, a decision by the bishop of Passau to raise the age of Confirmation to sixteen years can be argued to be legitimate because he is the leader of the diocese who made the decision, or because it is presumed that Confirmation at an older age means that the candidates for confirmation are more likely to be ready for a personal relationship with Jesus. However, the application of the logic is not arbitrary: which references can be made in which situation by whom is subject to constant negotiation processes within the GCCR. These negotiation processes take place all the time when actors of the GCCR meet as such. Their shared framework is negotiated in informal conversations as well as in religious seminars, theological guidelines, articles in the quarterly journal and reading recommendations, the implementation of expected behavior as well as forms of organization and meetings. Of course, there are cases where it is clear which mode to apply, but more interesting are cases where it is not clear, where ascriptions are contradictory or in conflict. In two examples, I will analyze how actors apply one or both modes of

legitimization in the discussion of topics in the example of the negotiation of religious authority.

3.4 Sacraments and charisms

When asked about what was special about being Catholic in a Charismatic context, one participant at a regional prayer meeting answered:

In contrast to the independent Churches, where you also sing and also experience the Holy Spirit, Catholicism is more serious, and more grounded, deeply rooted in tradition and the sacraments. Especially in the sacraments. It's not just worship, but it is also confession and eucharist. (FP#4)

The importance of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession, also becomes apparent when looking at reports about events at Holy Mass and who celebrated it. The emphasis on sacraments is one of the most prominent distinguishing traits of Catholic Charismatics in the EPC Christianity, as are the charisms in the Catholic Church.

Regarding sacraments, the GCCR is interested in proving that the Charismatic understanding of the works of the Holy Spirit does not contradict the Catholic understanding of the sacraments. In the Catholic Charismatic understanding, the charisms are considered to be worked by the Holy Spirit, but unlike the sacraments, no universality or generality is assumed. While the charisms in the GCCR's view are dependent on the respective person and concrete situation, i.e. "subjective", the sacraments are "objective" in the sense that they work independently of the person and situation. Accordingly, in the Catholic Charismatic view, the sacraments are "superior" to the charisms. At the same time, "one reckons that the sacraments themselves can also become places of spontaneous and spectacular spiritual experience" (Zimmerling 2018: 133–134). The coexistence and parallel use of the two logics mentioned above become evident in the GCCR's discussion about sacraments and charisms.

In the publications of the Theological Committee of the GCCR, the practice of charisms is clearly restricted and subordinated to Catholic doctrine and structure. As charisms are understood as "gifts of the Holy Spirit" to individuals, Charismatic practices elude external control: neither "prophetic impressions" nor the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" nor the personal experience of God can be objectively verified. When talking about the charisms, the GCCR consistently applies the Catholic logic and subordinates personal experience un-

der the rules and hierarchy of the Catholic Church. For example, in the area of “prophecy”, where actors claim to receive impressions or images sent by the Holy Spirit, the GCCR emphasizes the need for examination and refers, among other things, to the teaching of the Church as an important standard:

Received impressions are always subject to examination: Do they agree with the Word of God, with the commandment of love, with the teaching of the Church, and with the criteria of the discernment of spirits? (CE-Info#330)

Elsewhere it is clearly stated that:

If something violates the commandments of God, the standards of Holy Scripture, or the doctrine of faith and morals of the Church, then it is not of God. (ThO#2, p. 14)

The teachings of the Church are thus mentioned – along with the Bible – as the decisive standard against which “prophecies” would have to be measured in order to test their authenticity and validity. If statements are marked as prophetic that are not compatible with the teaching of the Church, then from the GCCR’s point of view this is an indication that the corresponding impression does not come from God. The “spontaneous working of the Spirit”, which is emphasized again and again in the GCCR, is thereby subordinated to the teaching of the Church. Here, the Charismatic logic of legitimization is subordinated to the Catholic logic: if the Catholic logic is not applicable, it is not legitimate.

The case is a little bit different when it comes to “baptism in the Holy Spirit”. According to Catholic doctrine, the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation confer to the recipient a “stamp” of belonging to Christ and his Church when they are administered. In the Catholic understanding, this imprint is unrepeatable and cannot be changed, which is why these two sacraments can only be received once. According to Catholic dogmatic understanding, renewed baptism – and therefore, “baptism in the Holy Spirit” – is impossible. Narratives of baptism in the Holy Spirit are, however, one fundamental pillar of Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality. There is an entire genre of literature on testimonies and the experience of conversion. Catholic Charismatic theologians dealt with this conceptual problem already in the early days of the GCCR. As a result of these disputes, the understanding

of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as a "reactivation" or "actualization" of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation has become established in the GCCR:

Theologically, the main effect of the educated leaders was to help integrate the CCR into existing ecclesial structures and to argue that baptism in the Spirit was a "release" of the Spirit or, at any rate, functioned in a way that was compatible with the sacramental theology of Christian initiation. The argument was that the Holy Spirit is first given at infant baptism but subsequently released at the time of Spirit baptism. (Kay et al. 2011: 330)

This integration of the Charismatic experience into the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments, which was pushed by early leaders and theologians, was an essential prerequisite for the recognition of the GCCR in the Catholic Church by the bishops and the Pope. In today's GCCR the matter of baptism in the Holy Spirit does not play a role, though nearly everybody has their own narrative of personal conversion, albeit slightly different: While the Pentecostal narrative typically describes life before the experience of the Holy Spirit as sinful, in German Catholic Charismatic narratives life before conversion is described in terms of membership in the Catholic Church, but still missing 'something'; that missing 'something', i.e. the personal experience of the Holy Spirit and the personal relationship with God, is filled through conversion. Here, the Charismatic logic is applied while the subject of legitimization is moved out of reach of the Catholic logic.

Similar mechanisms are at work in cases where members of the GCCR implement Charismatic alternatives to priestly or sacramental practices, for example the "prayer for deliverance" as an alternative to exorcism or "pastoral conversation with lay people" as a Charismatic alternative to confession. In all three examples, laypersons assume tasks and roles that are functionally similar to those reserved for priests in the Catholic Church without questioning priestly actions or their importance. Formally and theologically, the Charismatic, spirit-given alternatives are strongly demarcated from priestly practices. However, in practice, there is a great overlap in terms of content and function. Although it seems natural that the different practices take place in different social forms, this is not always the case. Prayers for deliverance take place in the context of Charismatic faith courses as well as in Holy Mass organized by GCCR members; confession is taken in the context of large prayer events, even interdenominational events. Again, the social forms are fluid and reflect the fluidity of the logics of legitimization.

In the first example, the case of exorcism and the “prayer for deliverance”, the Theological Committee of the GCCR, formed of elected priests and theologians with the role of supervising and supporting theological developments in the GCCR, published a *Theologische Orientierung* (“Theological Orientation”) with the title *Gebet um Befreiung. Ein Beitrag zum innerkirchlichen Gespräch* (“Prayer for Deliverance. A contribution to the debate within the Church”). The authors distinguish clearly between the responsibility and authority of the layperson and those of the priests:

For laypeople [who enact the prayer of deliverance], the following applies: According to the law of the Catholic Church, insight into the actions of evil or evil powers does not automatically lead to a vocation to the exorcist ministry. This is reserved for some priests who are expressly called to it by their respective bishop. Exorcism is a special case of the Church's liberating actions. (ThO#2, p. 34)

From the perspective of the GCCR, laypeople may have insight into the “action of evil powers”, but the exorcistic ministry is explicitly reserved for specific priests who are called to it by their bishop. Thus, the exorcistic ministry is integrated into the ecclesiastical hierarchy and marked as inaccessible to laypeople. The “prayer for deliverance”, on the other hand, is distinguished from exorcism and thus available for non-priests. The lines drawn indicate that, in contrast to exorcism, Satan is not directly addressed, but conspicuous annoyances are met without directly addressing invisible powers. In the Theological Orientation “Prayer for Deliverance” (ThO#2), the Theological Committee sets out to show in detail how to deal with “demonic activity” and the practice of “prayer for deliverance”, and discusses not only biblical foundations, systematic-dogmatic considerations, Church tradition, and magisterium, but also describes various forms and causes of “demonic activity”, possibilities of “anamnesis and diagnosis”, and “healing methods”. In doing so, the text constantly refers, on the one hand, to Catholic tradition and doctrine, and, on the other, to the spiritual effects of “prayer for deliverance”, thus separating the formal framework from the practical application in concrete situations.

A rather pragmatic approach to questions of spiritual competence becomes clear in the following interview excerpt:

Manfred: I can also consciously say in prayer, 'Power of evil, depart from me,' if I feel somehow attacked, why not. [...] And then there's always this discussion, may non-priests command demons directly.

I: hmhm

Manfred: Well. I also find it to be a bit of an idle academic discussion. I mean, the form can be quite different. If someone does not want to say: 'Spirit of lies, leave me!', then he should pray the Lord's Prayer and 'Deliver me from evil'. I think you shouldn't be so anxious.⁹

Without fundamentally questioning the meaning of an exorcism or the separation between "exorcism" and "prayer for deliverance", Manfred bases his evaluation on the question of the concrete effectiveness of spiritual action. He attributes such effectiveness both to a direct address, for example, of the "spirit of lies" within a prayer, and to the formula "Deliver us from evil" in the Lord's Prayer, which anybody can pray at any time. In the further course of the interview, Manfred emphasizes that he is not talking about explicit "demonic possessions", which, according to Catholic doctrine, require an exorcism, but rather about "nuisances", which, in his view, can arise in everyday life and which he understands as an expression of the "spiritual struggle" between God and the devil.

A similar evaluation, based on the effect of spiritual action, is also found in relation to spiritual and pastoral support and, in particular, "pastoral conversation with lay people" as an alternative to confession. The *'Theological Orientation' 'Receiving Forgiveness. Repentance and forgiveness of sins in pastoral conversations with lay people'* describes the following:

Spiritual accompaniments are being increasingly valued and sought. Christians look for believers as companions with whom they can talk about their lives. [...] Trust, grown from common spiritual experiences, opens a space for fearless personal encounters. Weakness, guilt and sin are given a name. One believer confesses his sins to another. There are people with a pronounced pastoral charism. One goes to them. It is all like confession. What happens here in terms of spiritual consummation must be recognized and named in its true value. [...] What is 'missing' in the sense of the sacrament of penance is an authorized minister of the sacrament. The 'absence'

9 Interview (I#8) with Manfred, member of the GCCR leaderboard, March 09, 2016.

can have several reasons. Sometimes a priest is simply unavailable. Or the priest may well have the official authority to administer the sacrament, but not the conversational and contact skills. A space of trust as a prerequisite for the free opening of oneself does not exist. (ThO#3, p. 3, emphasis H. G.)

As a prerequisite for the sacrament of penance, that is, confession, a personal prerequisite is addressed here in addition to the “official authority to administer the sacraments” with the “ability to talk and make contact”, which creates a “space of trust”. For cases in which this personal requirement is not fulfilled by the priest, the GCCR points out the alternative of conducting conversations about guilt and atonement with laypeople who fulfill these personal requirements. Although they are not ordained and therefore have no “official authority”, they are endowed “with a pronounced pastoral charism”. Even if it is not a confession in the sacramental sense, there is a “spiritual consummation” that must be “recognized and named in a true value”. The importance of the priest and the sacramental confession is not disputed, but a “Charismatic alternative” of equal value is pointed out. The legitimation of the people in question takes place firstly via an authorization by God or the Holy Spirit, secondly via the personal prerequisite, and thirdly via the effect, i.e. the “success” of the spiritual act. These aspects are closely connected to the question of authority, which in turn is connected to the question of the organization of the social, and therefore with social forms.

3.5 Legitimizing and questioning religious authority

Authority, as understood here, is not a quality that people ‘have’, nor can authority be taken away from them. Rather, authority takes place where actors take into account the positions of others and consider them in their own decisions, actions, attitudes or opinions (Sofsky/Paris 1991). Authority, therefore, is ascribed by actors to authority figures, acknowledged, and can be withdrawn. However, the attribution of authority in social contexts is a matter not merely between two actors – the one that ascribes authority and the one authority is ascribed to – but is negotiated within social groups with recourse to a common frame of reference. Thus, both recognition and denial of authority are closely linked to the negotiation of group identity and, moreover, to the relation of the group to its environment (ibid.; cf. Grünenthal 2021). Therefore, religious authority is also ascribed or denied in connection with the social form in which a specific practice takes place.

In the case of the GCCR, the ascription and recognition of religious authority are tightly connected to processes of legitimization. As the GCCR needs to argue for its belonging to the Catholic Church as well as to the Charismatic Movement, the recognition of authority that is also recognized by other actors in the respective fields indicates the GCCR's belonging to the field. By acknowledging the authority of, for example, the Pope, Bishops or Catholic priests, members of the GCCR indicate that they acknowledge the shared Catholic frame of reference and thus belong to the Catholic Church. By not opposing recognized authorities, they indicate that they do not oppose the Catholic frame of reference. In the Charismatic setting however, that same acknowledgment of the Pope's and the Bishops' authority sets them apart from non-Catholic Charismatics. For example, at the interdenominational Charismatic Congress 'pfingsten21', which took place in 2016 in Würzburg and was organized by Catholic, Protestant, and non-denominational Charismatic Christians, there were specifically Catholic activities, such as a Holy Mass on Sunday morning.

In the media discourse of the GCCR, there are quite often references to especially Catholic authority figures, such as bishops or cardinals, or the popes, that merely mention them without further elaborating or substantiating their authority. This indicates that their authority is not up for debate, but rather set. References to Charismatic leaders are more often accompanied by an explanation or elaboration; for example, their expertise on the topic at hand, their deep connection with the Holy Spirit, their religious affiliation, or their reputation in the Charismatic field.

At first glance, it seems clear that Catholic clergy is legitimized in the Catholic mode and that Charismatic actors are legitimized in the Charismatic mode. At a second glance, however, it is not quite that simple. In the negotiation of religious authority, that is, whether and to what extent views, positions, and opinions are considered for one's own decisions, one or two modes of legitimization are applied depending on the situation at hand. In some cases, the person's authority is legitimized in one mode but delegitimized in the other. In some cases, both modes of legitimization are applied to support a person's authority. I will illustrate this using three examples.

The first example is how a member of the GCCR talks about a German Baptist leader. Asked whom he considers an authority, Florian answers, after a moment's thought:

[T]he former leader of the Spiritual Renewal in the Baptist Church, Dr. Heiner Rust, he is someone, a very sought-after speaker, really competent theologian, and an extremely gifted, prophetic man. So his main focus is really the prophetic gift, so the charisma of prophecy, and how to deal with it, and so on. And he also is a totally humble person. So, he impressed me very much recently. We were in a group, before an event which was to start soon, and we simply prayed before, as a preparatory prayer, prayed the Lord's Prayer. I asked, is there anything else? Does anyone want to say anything here? And then he answered tersely, "yes, well, I have the impression that God wants to say something to you, and to you..." That was so very clearly prophetic as I have experienced it very rarely in someone. [...] He really spoke into their lives. And into mine, too. And deep truth that he could not know. But he spoke things with a determination and courage, though he could not know if they were right or wrong. Just out of God's impulse Yes.¹⁰

In narrating this episode, Florian first characterizes Rust with reference to his affiliation and position, outreach, and theological expertise, but also as a "humble man", thus characterizing him as a man of Christian values. The actual basis for the ascription of authority, however, are not these traits, but the subjective acknowledgment of Rust's Charismatic, i.e. spiritual, actions when he utters prophetic words in an unexpected situation that were experienced as being 'real,' that is, as indeed coming from God. In this case, a Charismatic leader doing charisms is legitimized in the Charismatic mode.

That it is not always so simple will be shown in the second example, where a Catholic local priest's authority, although not questioned in principle, is implicitly questioned by the application of the Charismatic mode of legitimization. Rüdiger, a GCCR group leader and part-time deacon, describes his experiences in trying to establish specific Charismatic social forms in his local parish:

I thought at some point, just a few years ago, now it's time, now I would like to offer a new possibility and have a Charismatic worship service, not in the Church, but next door in the parish hall... No, our pastor didn't want that. He somehow got cold feet, like that something could happen that slipped away from him, where he no longer had any control over it... and, no, he did not allow it. [...] He also did not allow for a course of faith. Our

10 Interview (I#7) with Florian, member of the GCCR leaderboard, March 08, 2016.

pastor saw that as competition to his faith course, which he didn't even hold personally, but invited someone from the vicariate general. Hmmm, no, that did not go very well.¹¹

The pastor's structural authority in prohibiting – or permitting – the worship service as well as the faith course is not at all questioned in this account: No Charismatic worship service took place, and the faith course was chosen to the pastor's preferences. The Catholic mode of legitimization is applied. At the same time, however, the Charismatic mode of legitimization was applied, in which his authority was highly questioned: Rüdiger attributes the refusal of Charismatic social forms to a fear of losing control, which from a Charismatic perspective can be interpreted as the pastor not trusting the work of the Holy Spirit. His formulation that the pastor "got cold feet" stands in a strong contrast to the "determination and courage" which was ascribed to the Baptist leader in the first example. Furthermore, by pointing out that the pastor had not even held the faith course he chose himself but had invited someone from the vicariate general to do so, Rüdiger suggests that the pastor could not or did not want to give testimony of his own faith but retreated to hierarchies and formalities.

The third example shows how authority is negotiated and legitimized within the GCCR: The ecclesiastic office of leadership, which is reserved for the clergy, is contrasted by the charism of leadership, an equally "spiritually based" leadership competence, which is not bound to ordination or clerical status. Norbert Baumert, priest and former chairman of the GCCR, addresses this in an interview on the occasion of the CCR's 50th anniversary:

I always resisted the tendency that – typically Catholic – the priests would have the say. Leadership should be given to those who have the charism of leadership, including some priests. And I noticed that women in particular often received this charism. So I saw my task rather in discovering and supporting such vocations. (CEInfo#246)

Not only is the charism of leadership attested to laypeople, it is also separated from priesthood. This means that from the GCCR's perspective, there can be priests who are ordained but do not have the charism of leadership. Baumert

11 Interview (I#2) with Elisa and Rüdiger, diocesan spokespersons for the GCCR, March 21, 2014.

explains that he had often experienced this “charism of leadership” especially in women, who are systematically excluded from priesthood in the Catholic Church. He continues that he himself withdraws to the status of a promoter of these charismatically gifted women. With respect to leadership roles and decision making, no difference is made between ordained priests and laypeople.

It is, however, considered very useful to have ordained priests within the movement. Thomas, who is a priest himself, explains:

It does not matter so much that I am a priest. It's practical, because we can celebrate the Eucharist together when we come together, which of course is not possible without a priest, but... yes. Also, the first [...] sacrament is baptism, that's the most fundamental of all. Without baptism there is nothing. We also need priests, and I would also still ask people to pray for priestly vocations, but above all we need people who let themselves be addressed by God, let themselves be addressed by Christ, and who are ready to follow him.¹²

Thomas defines his role as priest in terms of its usefulness for the community – namely, that it is “practical” because it allows celebrating the Eucharist together – and otherwise emphasizes the equality between all members of the GCCR. When he emphasizes that the first and most fundamental sacrament is baptism, he implies that after being baptized, every human being is called by God, one of the possible vocations being that of a priest. Thomas thus presents his vocation – and his status as priest – as equal to other vocations and relativizes the special status of priests in the Catholic Church, which is expressed, for example, in their authority for spiritual (sacramental) action and access to resources and ministries.

Another practical aspect of having priests in the group was brought up in a conversation over lunch during a diocesan election meeting. Two members of the GCCR, laypeople, talked about a Charismatic priest they knew who had lived in the area but had moved away. They said it was a shame because they could really do with a priest like him. When I asked why, they explained that priests are beneficial because they represent GCCR ideas in the priests' councils and the higher bodies to which the laity has no access (FP#4). Here it becomes clear that the hierarchical position of priests, also of priests in the GCCR, by no means goes unnoticed, but that it is considered not to be important with

12 Interview (I#5) with Thomas, member of the GCCR leaderboard, October 15, 2015.

regard to GCCR religious life, other than representing the GCCR in the Church structure and administering the sacraments.

On the other hand, personality very much adds to the ascription of authority, as the following interview segment illustrates:

Julia: this course, it's so beautiful. Have you ever heard of Hans Buob?

I: I have a CD, yes, where he talks about the Gospel of Mark, I think. I think he has a pleasant way of speaking, right, so very, vividly.

Julia: Yes, exactly. Very simple. And when he celebrates Mass... Well. That's... There, really, heaven and earth connect. Heaven and earth are one. He also conveys that well. He also has humor. He is matter-of-factly. He always says it doesn't depend on feelings. It doesn't depend on feelings. God is real, you can believe that, he is there, it doesn't depend on feelings. [...] Because the feelings pass away. And he's totally right about that.¹³

What is remarkable about this interview is that Julia hardly responds to the suggested legitimization of his authority – namely that he speaks well and can convey things vividly. Instead, she highlights another aspect: the experience she associates with his services. Buob's authority is also based on his qualities and abilities ("can communicate well", "has a sense of humor", "matter-of-factly"), but her focus is on the content he conveys and his actions, for example, the way he celebrates Mass and how this affects her.

To tie these three examples of the construction of religious authority back to the question of social forms, some observations need to be made. First, Charismatic leaders are usually referred to in a Charismatic context. Their authority is acknowledged and negotiated in the Charismatic mode of legitimization. The social forms in which charismatic leaders' authority is enacted are workshops, events, lectures, and social forms that are characteristic of the Charismatic Movement. Second, the Catholic clergy's authority is not negotiated or questioned when it comes to the sacraments or their office in the Church. The Catholic mode of legitimization is applied whenever it comes to sacraments and Church hierarchy. Third, the Catholic clergy's authority is subject to negotiation in questions of experience. When GCCR members discuss a priest's or bishop's impact on their personal faith and experience,

13 Interview (I#6) with Julia, member of a GCCR prayer circle, February 02, 2016.

they discuss their authority in the Charismatic mode of legitimization, but without questioning their authority in the Catholic mode of legitimization.

4. Conclusion

How do members of the GCCR position themselves and the GCCR in the Catholic Church as well as in the Charismatic Movement? How do they negotiate their belonging in concrete situations and topics? And what does that mean for the social forms the GCCR takes?

As I have shown, members of the GCCR negotiate their position in both contexts, the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement, by applying both a 'Catholic' logic – a logic that is oriented to the Catholic Church, its hierarchies, structures, theology, and practices – and a 'Charismatic' logic – a logic that is oriented towards personal experiences. These two logics, although independent of each other in principle, are often combined or, in some cases, played off against each other. While in official texts the Catholic logic is often stressed, in private religious practice there are more pragmatic solutions. The basis for this flexible construct of legitimization is the wide range of social forms in which Charismatic Christianity in Germany takes place: the simultaneity of Holy Mass and Worship Weekends, weekly Bible groups, EPC events, seminars, and community meetings. In these different events, members of the GCCR negotiate their positions and arguments and thus establish a shared frame of reference that consists of both Charismatic and Catholic elements, which can be referenced in the Catholic as well as in the Charismatic logic to legitimize actions and arguments. The religious experience, the experience of the Holy Spirit, is explicitly not tied to one social form or the other in GCCR practice but can occur in different situations and contexts. The wide variety of social forms found in the GCCR reflects the emphasis on subjective beliefs and the individual experience of the Holy Spirit within the GCCR.

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