

## Talk No 3

### How Both Revival and Renewal Can be Seen as Necessary

In my teaching and in my writings over the past 15 years I have made clear that in my view<sup>1</sup>:

1. the work of the Holy Spirit in the new streams (Pentecostal, non-denominational) and the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of the existing denominations/churches is complementary;
2. the focus on personal conversion in the Evangelical-Pentecostal world and the focus on church renewal in the historic churches are both necessary and important (therefore to be received as a gift of God).

Therefore in my view, it is wrong to say:

- God has rejected/written off the historic churches;
- movements appealing to the Holy Spirit outside the existing denominations or outside the historic churches are inherently deviant and not the work of the Holy Spirit.

*Excursus:* The view that God has rejected the historic churches is historically a consequence of replacement theology, namely the view that God has rejected Israel (primarily because the Jews had not accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Saviour). Replacement theology is an expression of human arrogance, usurping God's role as judge and violating the command of Jesus: "Judge not, that you be not judged." (Matt. 7: 1). The biblical witness is that God always punished the sin and unbelief of Israel, but God remains true to his covenantal promise. So to say that the Protestant Reformation was God's judgment on the Roman Catholic Church is fair; but to say that God has definitively rejected the Catholic Church is wrong and a form of judgmentalism.

### Complementarity

*What is characteristic of renewal in the existing churches?* First, that charismatic renewal forms an element within a larger whole. Those seeking the renewal of their churches do not restrict their focus or their interest to what is explicitly charismatic. Second, that the renewal movement wishes to be an instrument of renewal for the whole church or denomination. Third, this servant vision involves a recognition of the value of much in each church that needs to be preserved and to be renewed. Here the

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<sup>1</sup> Especially in *The Strategy of the Spirit?* (1996) and *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements* (2009).

“renewalists” insist that the Holy Spirit has been present (with ups and downs) in the historic churches and has not been limited to post-Reformation times, or to post-Wesleyan times or to post-Azusa Street times.

This is a less negative account of the history of the Church through the ages. Obviously charismatic Catholics have a different reading of history from say Lutheran charismatics or Anglican charismatics. But none of them are likely to be happy with the interpretation that assumes that nothing spiritually significant happened between the early centuries (whether the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup>) and the outpourings of the Spirit in recent centuries. So although Lutherans for example obviously see the Reformation inaugurated by Martin Luther as foundational and very central in their reading of Christian history, Lutherans typically have a high evaluation of the historic Creeds and the early Church’s formulation of Christological and Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>2</sup> In a parallel but different way, more liturgical than theological, Anglicans value the pre-Reformation tradition, with which they typically see themselves in continuity but to which they brought a needed reform. We will come back to this question of the Christian reading of history.

Renewal therefore means the reshaping of the heritage and bringing forth new life from old trunks and branches. It means a new subordination of all forms of church life to the Lordship of Jesus, crucified and risen. Charismatic renewal is based on the realization that this can only be done by the light and the power of the Holy Spirit. So, for example, charismatic renewal requires a renewal of worship traditions, which in the case of many historic Churches, are liturgical patterns. So HC charismatics cannot take the attitude that all liturgy is dead and it needs to be replaced by spontaneous worship in the Spirit without dependence on any books or traditions. Those who have been at charismatic liturgies will have found a blend of liturgical forms received from the past and spontaneous response to the leading of the Spirit. One regular experience of HC charismatics is the discovery how full the historic liturgies are of praise to God: so for example the Gloria in the Sunday Eucharist<sup>3</sup> and in the prayers introducing the Eucharistic canon/prayer, that is called the Preface.

As liturgy is celebrated by Christians brought alive in the Spirit, they experience and notice several things. First, that there is more public reading from Scripture at a Catholic Mass than at the average Pentecostal service. The problem is that the preaching is less good and the people don’t have the same knowledge and love of Scripture. Second, they discover how Trinitarian the prayers of the liturgy are. This is very important because with this historic doctrinal framework we can easily find a lot of Jesus-worship with minimal reference to the Father. The liturgical prayers also express a very rich theology of Christ and the Church, of the Christian life as Trinitarian communion, of God’s awesome holiness and of God’s overflowing mercy.

Charismatic renewal also requires a renewal in Christian education and formation. It requires a new

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the 5-volume history of Christian doctrine written by Jaroslav Pelikan (1923 - ), who was a Lutheran at the time of his writing this history: *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*.

<sup>3</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father.: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.”

grounding in the basic kerygma expressed in such statements as: “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” (Rom. 4: 25). “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.” (1 Cor. 15: 3 – 5).

Charismatic renewal also highlights the need for the renewal of received Christian theology. Theology is faith seeking understanding; so theology in the Spirit is faith brought alive by the Spirit seeking understanding through the light of the Spirit. The Vatican II document on Divine Revelation stated: “the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology.”<sup>4</sup>

In the Catholic tradition particularly there is a long heritage of community life.<sup>5</sup> So it is not surprising that the rise of charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church should produce a flood of new communities, expressing an old tradition in new and creative forms. The majority of the new charismatic communities include married couples and families which had very little precedent in the tradition. Many communities included priests and sisters, as well as couples and singles not yet decided on their state in life. The first countries where a number of new communities sprang up in the 1970s were the USA, Australia and France. It is interesting that the French communities have mostly stood the test of time better than the American and the Australian: I think because they were more deeply rooted in the historic heritage and had greater resources of spiritual wisdom to face the inevitable challenges of growth, expansion and adaptation.

Summing up what renewal means I could not express it better than to cite the words of an Orthodox Patriarch:

Without the Holy Spirit, God is distant and Christ belongs to the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is just an organization, authority is domination, mission is propaganda, worship, at best a memorial, and the behaviour of Christians is a morality of slaves. But in the Holy Spirit and with the Holy Spirit, the cosmos is raised up and groans in the pains of birthing the Kingdom, the risen Christ is present, the Gospel is the germination of life, the Church manifests the communion of the Trinity, authority is a ministry that sets free, mission is a Pentecost, the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation, the activities of men are deified. (Metropolitan Ignatius Hazim, Syria).

*The Contribution of the New Church Streams.* The new church streams pose radical challenges to the older churches. By their freedom, they can think new thoughts, do new things, experiment and evaluate in a way that is difficult for established denominations. Lacking the restraints and the inherited wisdom of the older churches, their new thoughts may be unbalanced, naïve, or even plain wrong. Their new activities may occasionally be unwise, impulsive and ultimately destructive. Nonetheless, it is from the new churches that the most dynamic thrusts have mostly come: in terms of the apostolic and the prophetic, in terms of intercession, in terms of the Father’s blessing.

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<sup>4</sup> *Dei Verbum*, para. 24.

<sup>5</sup> From the 19<sup>th</sup> century there has been a rediscovery of community life in some Protestant churches, particularly the Anglican, the Lutheran and the Reformed.

It is even more difficult to keep up with the rise and development of new charismatic networks and ministries than with the spread of charismatic renewal. Things are constantly in flux, indeed the new churches can glory in change. Unlike the early stage of the Pentecostal movement, the new charismatic groupings have generally been determined not to become new denominations, even though many sociologists say this is impossible. The new churches think that the Pentecostals took a major wrong turning when they formed denominations, thereby seriously weakening the dynamic of the Spirit, and they are determined not to repeat this mistake. The new church attitude is vividly illustrated in this quotation from a magazine interview: “Q: How are you going to keep all this going? A: We’re not! It’s vital we don’t keep it going. So often, initiatives which start with God soon become part of an institution. We’ve got to keep God central to all that is happening. He has started this and He must continue to inspire it. We don’t want to become an organisation, but keep as a movement.”<sup>6</sup>

Their hallmarks are contemporaneity, flexibility, and creativity. They are much better normally than historic churches in using new technology, the latest means of communication and resonate with the style of the under-40s. An American study notes the parallels between what he calls “new paradigm churches” and new forms of business and social organisation. “More generally, new paradigm churches fit a number of the postmodern trends emphasizing decentralization, flexibility, and networking, rather than centralized management.”<sup>7</sup>

The new church networks are based on relationships with peers and with brothers having an apostolic oversight, not on acceptance of formal authority, positions and titles. They are very functional, geared towards spiritual effectiveness and productivity, organised in view of mission focused on particular tasks. The new churches founded in Europe and North America in the 1980s and 1990s typically have dynamic leaders (then in their thirties, but now in their forties or fifties) mostly without training in denominational institutions, intelligent and skilled, with real gifts for leadership. They are spiritual entrepreneurs, who have experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and use all their skills – natural and acquired – to spread this new life. They launch new Christian ventures, including church planting, like business leaders engaged in expansion rather than like traditional church leaders, including traditional free church leaders. Their style is pragmatic, constantly adapting, one eye on the latest move of the Spirit and the other on marketing methods and visible results. The training and discipling of young leaders is a priority, but the bulk of the training is “on the job” and centred on relationships not study. Several major trends in Evangelical Christianity worldwide have in effect been pioneered by the new charismatic church leaders: for example, worship and prayer marches, the focus on impacting whole cities, the major increase in intercessory ministries, the teaching on identificational repentance and prayer journeys of reconciliation, houses of prayer (model in IHOP, Kansas City) and 24 – 7 prayer.

How do you organise “church life” without developing centralised organisations that are new denominations in the making? A major element in “new church” answer to this question is

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<sup>6</sup> Talking to Pete Greig, *Jesus Life*.

<sup>7</sup> Donald E. Miller, *Re-Inventing American Protestantism*, p. 154.

“networking”, which is seen as a flexible “non-institutional” form of partnership and collaboration. Much of the new church movement consists of networks of local churches accepting the leadership of a pastor recognised as having an apostolic ministry. In most cases, the leader of the network was the founder of a church that became a model, a kind of flagship church, from which other churches were planted and around which some existing churches gathered. As the network grows, the main leader hands over the local church he founded to another pastor, and concentrates on network leadership and wider ministry, seen as an apostolic role.

So in many places the new churches are growing fast and achieving impressive results in terms of numerical growth and new initiatives. However, there are downsides: and here we can see that the strengths and weaknesses of the HCs and the NCs are frequently the opposite. The NCs have no sense of tradition: this frees them for new initiatives, but it makes long-term survival more questionable. It also means they lack resources of spiritual wisdom (except that a few are discovering old sources of spirituality – Vineyard, IHOP). They have no developed theology, which makes them more vulnerable to the limitations of their founding figures (often not immediately apparent). Without much theology and without a tradition of spiritual wisdom, they easily repeat the mistakes of earlier movements. In particular, the focus on success and prosperity easily limits the cross to the life of Jesus, as though he carried all the suffering, so we only have victory. But the constant message of the New Testament is that new life comes through suffering and death – not any kind of suffering but the suffering of the faithful witness. Without a deep theology of cross and resurrection these churches are likely to hit a crisis point between 20 and 30 years after their origins, or maybe even sooner, when they have to face human weaknesses, the depth of purification we all need, etc.

### Need for Each Other

The bottom line is our need for each other. Revival and renewal currents should be seen and received as complementary. Renewal in the older churches and the rise of new churches should also be seen as complementary and in need of each other. The relationships today at least in many European countries are generally much better than 25 or 30 years ago.

Why? All works of the Holy Spirit belong with other works of the Spirit. It is required by the teaching of the New Testament about one body and many gifts.

I return to this tomorrow.