

Livets Ord, Uppsala

Wednesday November 8, 2006

Talk 1: The Contribution of the Evangelical and Free Churches

As a charismatic Catholic, I want to express my thanks to the Lord for the work of the Holy Spirit in the Evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic streams and denominations. In this first talk, I want to try and identify more clearly what this work of the Holy Spirit is. It will be clear, especially as I proceed to the second talk, that I do not think the work of the Holy Spirit is restricted to these milieux. But it is important as a method to begin from the work of the Holy Spirit and not from the weaknesses.

In my book *The Strategy of the Spirit?*, a sequel to *The Glory and the Shame*, of which Livets Ord has published the Swedish translation, I describe the Evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic movements as “streams”. This is a deliberate choice of terminology, as the term “streams” for me expresses what is most clearly the work of the Holy Spirit in these movements. The word “streams” expresses movement, life, vitality, power, direction. These movements do not by themselves constitute church, but they bring new life to the church.

I have written about 4 major streams. First came the Evangelical stream, with its origins in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, though with roots in the earlier Pietist and Puritan movements. The Evangelical stream was associated with revival, with the focus on revivalistic preaching aimed at repentance and conversion, with an emphasis on spreading the Gospel through evangelism and missionary work, all with its foundation in the Bible and with an emphasis on the cross, as David Bebbington has noted. This was the period when Protestant missionary work really began.

Second is the Holiness movement, which arose within the Evangelical stream, in the second and third quarters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also had a strong missionary thrust – Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission came from the Holiness stream - but it represented a realisation that the work of the Lord requires a complete purification from sin. Increasingly, this was seen to require a direct work of the Holy Spirit.

The third identifiable stream is the Pentecostal. From its beginnings in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in which the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles played a key role – the Pentecostal stream was based on the renewing and empowering experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, evidenced for most by speaking in tongues and opening the way for other spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and healing. With the Pentecostal movement, there is a heightened expectation for the soon-coming of the Lord.

The fourth stream is the Charismatic, dating from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. At first, the charismatic stream was seen as the gifts of Pentecost reappearing in the historic

Protestant churches (and to everyone's surprise from 1967 in the Catholic Church), i.e. the same work of the Holy Spirit as in the Pentecostal movement, but in a different ecclesial and cultural context. But the spread of the charismatic stream in new patterns outside the existing denominations – as in Livets Ord – was marked by claims to the restoration of the fivefold ministries of Eph. 4: 11, especially of apostles and prophets. These ministries had in fact been found in a small Pentecostal grouping, the Apostolic Church, from the time of World War I, but had been rejected by the majority of Pentecostals as a deviation. They resurfaced in the Latter Rain movement among some Pentecostals in Canada from 1948, and from there there was some direct inflowing into the charismatic stream.

The four streams possess some things in common, but there is also a progression. What is common to them as streams is their connection with revival and prayer for revival. The distinctive features of all these streams (Gospel preaching, conversion, sanctification, Spirit-baptism) are foundationally the work of the Holy Spirit. They cannot happen apart from the Holy Spirit. The basic Evangelical pattern has been repeated in the Holiness, Pentecostal and charismatic streams, though the increasing focus on Pentecost and the Holy Spirit has affected the Cross-centredness to some degree.

The progression aspect through the history of these streams has been expressed in various ways, particularly in the language of restoration. So, for example, Pentecostal writers frequently spoke of the restoration of justification by faith through Luther, of sanctification through John Wesley, of divine healing through people like Charles Cullis and A. B. Simpson, and of baptism in the Spirit and the spiritual gifts through the Pentecostal movement. Some charismatic authors continue this pattern of restoration with the addition of the fivefold ministries, especially of apostle and prophet, in the later part of the twentieth century. Other Pentecostal language emphasised the uniqueness of the Pentecostal movement, e.g. the terminology of the **latter rain**, contrasting the major rainfalls of the first generation of the Church and in the twentieth century with the drought or the small showers of the intervening centuries. In this way “latter rain” highlights the preparation for the coming of the Lord beyond what “restoration” commonly signifies.

I want to agree with both these pictures – of restoration and of latter rain – but with some qualifications. I think the historical evidence is that there has been a build-up in the restoration of core elements and core convictions for revival and of spiritual power over the period since the Protestant Reformation. The Holiness stream arose out of the Evangelical, indeed formed a segment within it, and prepared the way for the Pentecostals. The element of restoration is clearest in relation to the spiritual gifts that characterise the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, because the spiritual gifts have an objective bodily character that is not the case with justification by faith and with sanctification. It is also clear that these streams, and especially the Pentecostal and charismatic with the diffusion of spiritual gifts, have formed the most dynamic element in the Protestant missionary expansion and in the rise of indigenous patterns of revivalistic faith in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is in this Pentecost-

dimension that I see truth in the “latter rain” imagery. What was distinctively new in the Pentecostal movement was the reappearance of the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12: 8 – 10 as part of the equipment of the local church, available in principle to every believer open to the Holy Spirit. There have been more examples of such gifts throughout the centuries, particularly in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, than Pentecostals have been aware of, but they were not seen as the equipment of the church to do its task but were seen as signs of unusual holiness, rather than as gifts for ordinary Christians. The historical evidence is that these gifts were not seen as normal from about the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which fits in with the latter rain imagery. But it is with the Lord’s work with the Jewish people that the appropriateness of “latter rain” language is most clearly seen, which I will speak of in the third talk.

I also accept the eschatological aspect of the “latter rain” interpretation. I do believe that this unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century is preparing for the coming of the Lord. I have interpreted the meaning of “baptism in the Spirit” in this sense (article “Baptized in Spirit” in JPT).

The progression point in restoration is important. The Lord is the One who prepares His future, the Kingdom of God. Preparation presupposes a continuity. This point indicates the limitations of the language of **waves**, used by many Evangelicals. With waves, each new wave replaces the previous wave and then spends itself upon the beach. But this is not what has happened with the streams, though it may be more true of revivals. With the streams, the arrival of the Pentecostal stream did not mean the drying up of the Evangelical and Holiness streams. The arrival of the charismatic stream did not involve the end of the Pentecostal. All these streams continue to flow, which is my biggest problem with the wave terminology.

What are the reservations or qualifications? While I accept that this process of restoration has been taking place and there has been a major outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last century, I do not accept the presuppositions – judgmental presuppositions – that generally go with this understanding of Christian history. So I do not accept that these revival streams constitute the whole of Christianity; I do not accept that nothing spiritually significant was happening outside these streams. In other words, I refuse a **sectarian** understanding of this history.

Accepting that a highly significant restoration has been taking place through these streams, that is preparing the coming of the Lord, and believing that they do not constitute “Christianity” as such, I reach the conclusion that these streams are poured out by the Lord for the revival and the renewal of the whole Church that is bigger than these streams. They are to awaken and prepare the whole Church for the Lord’s coming. This understanding of God’s work fits in with the biblical understanding of the call of Israel and of the nature of **charisms**. First, the people of Israel are chosen not for their own sake, but as a priestly people (Exodus 19: 6) to be the instrument whereby God’s salvation comes to all peoples and nations. Second, each charism of the Spirit is given not for the benefit of the recipient, but for the common good of the whole body (see 1 Cor. 12: 7). So, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the revival

streams is not just for the benefit of Evangelicals and Pentecostals, but for the sake of all who profess the name of Christ and indeed for the salvation of the whole world.

I believe that to call these movements streams of the Spirit is accurate, for it highlights what is central to their self-understanding. It highlights the stream-features which are spiritual emphases, and downplays the denominational element. In fact, the streams all began as movements of the Spirit, and the organisational elements came later, which included the formation of new denominations. Some stream organisations became denominations against their earlier intentions, like the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

I make these comments at the end of this lecture, because I think they help to explain some of the weaknesses of the streams, in fact why they are not themselves Church. My position then is: They are from God, but they are not Church. The streams are much stronger on the personal-individual than on the corporate. When the streams lead to the formation of new and independent groupings, these very easily suffer division when any conflict arises. But the desire for Church is getting stronger.