

Brentwood Talk to UK Leaders

Outline for October 30, 2007

“The Renewal is nothing if it is not prophetic” (Raniero Cantalamessa).

The opposite of **prophetic** is **domesticated**.

Introduction

All my life in Renewal a fight against domestication.

Two sources for Renewal in England:

- From USA (Bob Balkam)
- Via Simon Tugwell, OP (through Pentecostals in Oxford area)¹

Tugwell stream: emphasis on freedom in the Spirit, on charisms (Hawkesyard chapel), suspicious of structures and systems, of organized Renewal. Romantic view of Pentecostals compared to Desert Fathers and early Dominicans. My experience at Hockley Pentecostal Church in inner-city Birmingham: more vibrant, more earthy, more full-blooded than my first experiences of charismatic gatherings.

After 2 or 3 years of being critical of “the Renewal” I realized that the Tugwell pattern was too eclectic to impact the Church. At Hopwood Hall 1975, I sensed the Lord was asking me to commit myself to the Renewal, whatever its defects. So I did.

Lessons from this early experience that have remained with me:

- It is wrong to distance ourselves from the Pentecostals. Renewal as inherently ecumenical. The charismatic movement could probably never have happened without the Pentecostal movement first.
- I was wary of “packaged” Renewal. Renewal always means exposure to the unpredictability and the raw power of the Holy Spirit. Inoculated against domestication: ultimately domestication is a disaster, because God cannot be tamed.
- I believed that this was for the whole Church.
- It would be hugely challenging to all Churches, because the Holy Spirit is God!
- Two-way challenge: from Renewal to Church(es); from Church to Renewal. Never tempted to become Pentecostal.

Part I: The Biggest Issues for a Profound Renewal of the Church

1. Becoming a Biblical Church, a **Church of the Word**, a Church soaked in the Scriptures.

¹ The prayer meeting in the home of Joan Steele in the village of Denton.

We have to become people of the Word. Faith comes through hearing and believing the Word. The Word produces conversion. Without the Word there is no clear-cut conversion (no inner “death”) so that spiritual ambiguity flourishes. There is a widespread Catholic mentality that the Word of God is a helpful extra! This shows up in the ease with which homilies are omitted, or with which sermons without any biblical content are given. It is a survival of the attitude that the sacrament is the real thing, and the liturgy of the Word is merely prior adornment. It is largely through the Renewal that Catholics have responded to the Vatican Two appeal for full access to the Scriptures. But while many of us have come to a much greater knowledge of bible texts, it is probably also true that few of us are as yet deeply soaked in the Scriptures. It is not really possible to be deeply soaked without a profound sense of the roots in Israel and of the faithfulness of God to all his promises.

Secondly, the Bible comprises two Testaments, Old and New. The doctrine of inspiration is that both are inspired by the Holy Spirit, not that the New is more inspired than the Old. God is consistent. He has one plan from the beginning, that is expressed in words like **kingdom** and **mystery**. Earlier some groups reported a sense of not knowing where God was leading. I feel that this comes out of not being soaked in the Word. The whole Bible is an unfolding of the one plan, which reaches its first climax in the first coming of the Lord, and which will reach its second climax in his second coming.

Thirdly, the biblical pattern is always that God chooses one (**election**) to bless the many; this process begins with Abraham; it continues with Jacob, with Moses, with David and reaches its climax with Jesus. God never begins with the general or the universal, but always with the particular. “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Rom. 5: 19). “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.” (1 Cor. 15: 21).

Fourthly, the Word always involves event and promises. God speaks to Abraham, the father of faith, and makes him promises. Abraham believes the promises. Through the angel God speaks to Mary, the mother of faith, and makes her promises. Mary believes the promises. Faith always includes promises for the future. “Christ has died, Christ has risen (events), Christ will come again (promise). Biblical faith begins with Abraham; Mary enters into a heritage of faith. If we emphasise the mother of faith without the father, we produce a distortion.

How can we help people in the Renewal to become soaked in the Scriptures? Especially the young people. I am often approached by young Catholics who long for a deep biblical formation, and they come and ask: where can I get this? They know that they will not find what they are seeking in academic Catholic biblical studies. I feel there is a deep need for Catholic Bible schools, and I cannot really see this coming from any other source than the Renewal.

2. Becoming a Church of the Word Incarnate, a Church of living Liturgy, celebrating the full Mystery of Christ.

But the Word of God is never just naked Word. It is always the Word made flesh. God speaks, God promises, Abraham believes, God makes a covenant with Abraham and seals the covenant with blood sacrifice. So the proclamation of the Word, eliciting faith, leads to the liturgy of covenant sacrifice. So Catholic renewal will restore the proper place of the Word, but it will also lead into revitalized liturgy. The Liturgy is the biblical Word enacted in signs. It goes beyond mental acceptance of the Word to a total feeding on the Word Incarnate.

In this liturgical context, Catholics will receive from a profound immersion in the Scriptures:

- A profound reverence for God; learning from Israel a sense of the holiness of God, the awesomeness of God, and the tenderness of the Father's heart; amazing Hebrew words: *Hesed*², *Shalom*, that come out of Israel's experience of God;
- a **holistic** vision for all creation, for the whole human race, for all components of the human person (body, soul, spirit); all creation was disturbed by the Fall: "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3: 8);
- the pattern of WORD and SACRAMENT: first, the proclamation of God's Word, second the celebration of a covenant sacrifice (see Exodus 24);
- the rhythm of feast and fast, of particular seasons, of years and of weeks, as a communal experience and formation; "a time to rejoice, a time to weep";
- the liturgy and sacraments as belonging to "the age of the Church" between the first and second comings of Jesus (CCC, 1076);
- the repeated pattern of disobedience, disaster, mercy and repentance; "For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all." (Rom. 11: 32);
- The Trinitarian structure of Almighty God and of his mission in the world; the mission(s) of the Son and of the Spirit.

The Liturgy and Devotions. Historically, devotions grew up in the Catholic Church as a substitute for living liturgy (the Orthodox Church has no tradition of non or extra-liturgical devotions). Big spiritual battle in the Catholic Church for liturgical renewal versus a "devotional backlash". Authentic renewal in the CC will be strongly liturgical and thus biblical. The devotions are for the most part not strongly anchored in the Scriptures, they tend to produce religious sentiment rather than to promote conversion, they fail to form character (Beauduin, Parsch), they do not produce prophets. Devotions tend to become instruments for domestication, because they lack the prophetic thrust of the biblical Word. But I am not advocating the abolition of all devotions, which are in any case very varied in content.

I am not arguing for a preoccupation with liturgy. I am urging a personal and corporate drawing from the whole biblical revelation that issues in an authentic celebration of the biblical sacramental signs by whole people in real fellowship. I.e. Word become flesh today.

² "*Hesed* means indeed more than grace. It includes all that is suggested by the Greek words *charis*, *agape*, *eleos*, and by the English words, 'goodness,' 'kindness,' 'mercy.' It is best rendered by the beautiful word 'lovingkindness,' which we owe to Coverdale. *Hesed* is used of God's love to man rather than of man's love to man or to God. It is a mercy which comes down, a divine condescendence, a pure gratuitous gift." (Lev. Gillet *Communion in the Messiah*, p. 135).

A living liturgy forms the Church in the biblical vision, in the eschatological hope, and is profoundly transforming. The liturgy forms the Church, already pregnant with the Kingdom, emotionally, affectively, aesthetically, intellectually, culturally.

3. Becoming a **Humble** Church, confessing our sin and acknowledging our weaknesses.

Renewal is impossible without profound cleansing. Often we want a renewal that will bring new life, new zip, but without any upset! No big challenge, no humbling. It is an illusion.

Prophetic step of John Paul II, calling for Catholic confession of the sins of the past (1994). He saw that without confession and repentance for the sins of the last millennium, they would be repeated in the next millennium.

The humbling of the Church is already happening in many places: esp through shortage of vocations, through child abuse scandals, through loss of power and influence. But we tend to be suffering these passively, without entering into God's spiritual dynamic. When the Church's liturgy was shaped in its beginnings, the Church took over and adapted the Jewish feasts of Passover and Pentecost (for obvious reasons). But the Church did not take over two other major Jewish observances: **Yom Kippur** (the Day of Atonement) and the Feast of **Tabernacles** (the feast of harvest completion). These two feasts speak a lot, I think, about two of our greatest weaknesses as Church. Lacking in corporate repentance, lacking in Messianic hope.

Currently, we have no mechanism (like Yom Kippur) to confess our sins as Church. Because we do not have any mechanism to confess our sins as a People, we also seem unable to address the real spiritual situation of the Church openly and honestly. So while our bishops have learned many lessons about being more open as they handle the crisis of child abuse, there has not as far as I know been any liturgical celebration of a diocese humbling itself before God because of this. In the same way, our bishops now seem to be becoming increasingly managers of decline! They are in an unenviable situation! But does not the whole message of the Scriptures tell us that the only answer is for God's People to humble themselves before the Lord, to confess their sins, and to beg for the Lord's mercy?

4. The Renewal has to be Ecumenical or it will be (domesticated, nothing ...)

Renewal was ecumenical in its origins (God's way): *One Lord One Spirit One Body* (1987). Amazing how there was an ecumenical element in the origins even in many countries with a Catholic majority (several Latin American countries).

Divisions happen because of sickness and weakness in the Church. What is neglected or denied in one part of the Body inevitably springs up somewhere else. This is God's goodness and mercy, not disorder. The process of restoring unity is then a restoring of the **fullness**. The term "Catholicism" has to be about fullness. The word "fullness" is used twice in Vatican Two: once to refer to the fullness of divine revelation, and once to refer to the fullness of the means of salvation. The Pentecostals speak of the "Full Gospel" (Jesus as Saviour, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit and coming King). The Scriptures speak of the fullness (*pleroma*) of Jesus and the Church (Eph. 1: 23; 4: 13), of the fullness of the Word of God that is the

mystery of Christ” (Col. 1: 25 – 26), of the fullness of Israel (Rom. 11: 12) and the fullness of the Gentiles (Rom. 11: 25), of the fullness of time.

Renewal has to be concerned with fullness: with all the gifts, all the ministries, all the equipment of the Spirit for building up the whole body. John Paul II said: “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an ‘exchange of gifts.’” (*Ut Unum Sint*, para. 28). We cannot become fully biblical, soaked in the Scriptures, without the help and the witness of Protestant and Orthodox Christians. We need them, and they need us.

Part II: What does this mean for the leadership in Catholic Charismatic Renewal?

1. The Renewal as **spear-head**. CCR has to be at the forefront of the renewal of the whole Church. We are not the only players on the field. But we have been entrusted with a gifting and an empowering of the Holy Spirit that the Church needs for a thorough-going and profound renewal. **Hearing the voice of the Lord:** in Liturgy, in Catechesis, in Evangelization, in Care for the Needy and Oppressed, in Biblical Formation, in Intercession (experience in Toward Jerusalem Council II). A renewal coming from the Holy Spirit and being shaped by the Spirit.
2. A leadership that is **courageous** and **encouraging**. Understanding the gifts and calling that the Lord has given us – for the whole Church. Being humble and obedient to the Holy Spirit.

Presenting the real work of the Holy Spirit and the real challenges honestly to the bishops. Trusting the Holy Spirit (the greatness of John XXIII), humility and love for the Church. We have to be prophetic: saying (with wisdom) what we see in the Spirit. Also do not just tell the bishops what is happening in CCR within the diocese: help them to realize what is happening worldwide, as described e.g. in Philip Jenkins’ book *The Next Christendom*, indicating that the Christianity of the 21st century will be increasingly charismatic and Spirit-filled, and centred primarily in the southern hemisphere.

Being spear-head does not mean renewal leadership organizing everything. But it means truly **encouraging** everyone and everything where you can see the Holy Spirit at work. I want to say something about intercession. Intercession is a primary task: the effectiveness of everything else will depend on the prayer cover from the intercessors. There has been a big explosion of intercession throughout the world in the last 25 years, especially in the non-denom sphere, e.g. 24-7 prayer, International House of Prayer, Kansas City, World Prayer Centres, etc. Catholics are being impacted as through Kim Kollins’ upper Room initiative, but my impression is that we are somewhat lagging behind. Intercessors receive the heart of the Lord for the Church before it begins to take on flesh in the real world. We need to find a way of corporate intercession seeking the Lord’s way forward together through words of revelation and the opening up of the Scriptures in a way that still honours the riches of the Catholic tradition concerning eucharistic adoration. My experience is that the Holy Spirit is calling many people to intercession, but that they are being limited in

their application and experience because they are not being properly or adequately recognized or encouraged.