

## A Catholic Reflection on the New Charismatic Churches

### An Initial Attempt at an Ecclesial Discernment

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I begin with some preliminary comments. First, terminological. In the 1970s when a charismatic movement outside the existing churches was clearly developing, it was often called “non-denominational”. Today in Britain this term is rarely used, and people speaks of the “new churches” or the “new charismatic churches”. I will follow this usage, as it both accurate and simple to use. Second, this phenomenon of the new charismatic churches is now a massive worldwide occurrence. It has spread very rapidly, it is very varied in its manifestations, but there remains an evident commonality between all those groupings described by this label. This category is most clear in Europe and in North America, where the new charismatic churches are clearly different from the Pentecostal and from denominational renewal. As to the other continents, my impression is that this category retains a validity, but there are groupings that sometimes call themselves Pentecostal and sometimes charismatic.

A third preliminary observation is that it is more difficult to make accurate statements about this sector globally, as the relevant scholarly literature is rather thin. As yet there are no scholarly works studying this phenomenon globally or even continentally. The countries with the most reliable data available are Britain (the works of Andrew Walker<sup>1</sup> and William Kay<sup>2</sup>) and Ghana (the writings of Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu<sup>3</sup>). There are some studies on particular new church networks (e.g. Simon Coleman on Word of Life, Uppsala). There are a handful of works by participants about their new church grouping or network that have above average reliability, and are more than mere publicity and self-promotion.

I will examine in particular the origins and developments in both Britain and the United States, both because I have done more research in these areas and because in these nations the origins go back to the 1960s. In other parts of the world, the new charismatic churches really took off from 1980 onwards.

#### The British Roots

In Britain, there was a stronger anti-denominational element in the origins than in the U. S. A. This animus was first due to those who came from a Brethren background. Several of the first leaders in Britain were ex-Brethren. The Brethren movement had from its beginnings in the 1820s firmly adopted a “cessationist” position concerning the spiritual gifts described in the New Testament. As a result, any claim to exercise such gifts was ipso facto spurious and to be rejected. In consequence, those Brethren who spoke in tongues – the most identifiable sign of charismatic leanings – were expelled from the Brethren assemblies.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom* (Guildford: Eagle, 1998: revised edn.).

<sup>2</sup> William Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2005).

One of the first Brethren to be excluded for this reason was David Lillie from Exeter in Devon (1913 – 2009). Although Lillie always maintained that his teaching was totally derived from the New Testament, his understanding of the New Testament was strongly shaped by the convictions and ethos of the Open Brethren with whom he had identified from his teenage years. Among these convictions were the authentic character and marks of the New Testament church. For Lillie, the restoration of the New Testament church was the deepest reason for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the 1950s Lillie had become friends with Arthur Wallis (1922 – 88)<sup>4</sup>, also from the Brethren and at that time a resident of Devon, a friendship which led later in the 1950s to their convening a series of conferences devoted to this theme: Exmouth (1958), Belstone (1961) and Mamhead Park (1962).<sup>5</sup> One could describe these conferences as “pre-charismatic”, as many of the participants later became active within the “house churches”, the first designation given to the non-denominational segment of the charismatic movement in Britain. In fact, Wallis himself only entered into the charismatic dimension in 1962, just when the Devon conferences were being completed. But the charismatic dimension was especially operative through the teaching and ministry of Cecil Cousen, a Pentecostal who had suffered exclusion from the Apostolic Church. There was a certain irony in the fact that Lillie and Wallis invited for their restoration-oriented conferences Cousen who had been formed in one of the only Pentecostal churches that had taught and practiced the ministry of apostles and prophets and that, maybe in reaction to his expulsion, Cousen did not refer to this dimension in his Devon teachings.<sup>6</sup> The Open Brethren vision of the New Testament was always presented by David Lillie.<sup>7</sup>

A second source came through Roger Forster (1933 - ), later founder and leader of the Ichthus network of new churches, who had been one of the youngest participants in the Devon conferences and among the best equipped theologically. Forster had served as assistant pastor to T. Austin-Sparks, pastor of Honor Oak Fellowship, Forest Gate in South-East London, that many years earlier had disaffiliated from the Baptist Union. Austin-Sparks had developed a teaching on the church that showed marked Brethren influences, which had some impact on the teaching of the Chinese leader, Watchman Nee, for whom Honor Oak was a major British connection.<sup>8</sup> Nee’s teachings were widely diffused after his death and had a definite influence on charismatic non-denominationalism.<sup>9</sup> Forster saw himself as an heir of the Anabaptist heritage.

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<sup>4</sup> I am correcting here the year of birth given in *The International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), p. 1184, as Jonathan Wallis speaks of his father’s 65<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration held on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1987 (*op. cit.*, p. 303).

<sup>5</sup> A fourth conference was held at Herne Bay in Kent in 1965. See Jonathan Wallis, *Arthur Wallis: Radical Christian* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1991), Ch. 7, pp. 126 – 140, for the fullest written account of the genesis of these conferences.

<sup>6</sup> On the ministry of Cousen, see Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, rev. edn. 1997), pp. 5 – 10, 14 – 16, 18, 39 – 43. Cousen never embraced the ecclesiology of Lillie and was invited to the Devon conferences because of his maturity in relation to the spiritual gifts. Later in his life Cousen joined the Anglican Church.

<sup>7</sup> At Exmouth, Lillie gave the opening address on the conference theme “An Enquiry into the New Testament regarding the Church of Jesus Christ – Its Purity, Power, Pattern & Programme, in the Context of Today”, and at Belstone on “The Emergence of the Church in the Service of the Kingdom”. At Mamhead Park, Lillie spoke on the conference theme “The Present Ministry of the Holy Spirit” and presented a study concerning spiritual gifts from 1 Corinthians 12.

<sup>8</sup> Angus Kinnear, the son-in-law of T. Austin-Sparks, became a biographer of Watchman Nee.

<sup>9</sup> The many books bearing Nee’s name were all teaching given by him at conferences, with the exception of *The Spiritual Man*, the only teaching he wrote as a book, which ran to three volumes.

Another influential figure in Britain was Bryn Jones (1940 - 2003), a fiery Welshman, who was later to present the strongest version of Restorationism in the British house church movement. Jones had been baptized in the Spirit in 1957 at an Assemblies of God church in Aberaman, Wales, and was a youthful itinerant evangelist before spending two and a half years with his wife as missionaries in British Guyana. How did Jones come to focus on the ministry of apostles and prophets? The Apostolic Church does not seem to have played any direct role despite its origins in that part of South Wales. According to Jones' own testimony, two influences stand out: "The Pentecostal men who I met in my early days, used to drum it into me that Pentecost was an experience, not a denomination. 'We are a movement,' they would say, 'not a denomination.' They were fiercely non-denominational."<sup>10</sup> The second factor was his reading Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods – St Paul's or Ours?*<sup>11</sup> Although the foremost Pentecostal teacher of that period, Donald Gee (1891 - 1967), always remained strongly opposed to the restoration of recognized apostles and prophets, he always insisted that Pentecost was above all a movement, a movement of revival, and that denominations were a subordinate reality.

In the mid-1970s, the new church movement clearly emerged in Britain, with Arthur Wallis being seen as a father-figure and Bryn Jones as the most prophetic voice<sup>12</sup>. The first magazine to spread their teachings, *Restoration*, began in 1975. In its first issue Hugh Thompson wrote: "He [God] intends to restore apostles and elders, signs and wonders, joyously disciplined giving, and so much more."<sup>13</sup> The third issue had items on both apostles and prophets.<sup>14</sup> Subsequent issues taught frequently on these themes.

Today the strongest new church network based in Britain, one of the most international of all the new church networks, that clearly preaches the restoration of the five-fold ministries, is New Frontiers International, founded and led by Terry Virgo (1940 - ).<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, New Frontiers is the only network centred outside North America with a significant presence within the U. S. A. Virgo emerged as a major figure in the later 1970s. He was first nurtured in a Baptist church and baptized in the Spirit in a Pentecostal assembly, was much impacted by the preaching of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel in London, a congregation belonging to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (F. I. E. C.), which was firmly anti-denominational. But Virgo's restorationism came from the influence and teaching of Arthur Wallis.<sup>16</sup> In 1985, Virgo's book "Restoration in the Church" was published. The self-understanding within New Frontiers International is expressed in this interview: "We don't see ourselves as a denomination, since they tend to be static and associated with rules and regulations. They have headquarters. They also don't tend to be charismatic, even if they started that way. We resist being called a denomination. Instead we see ourselves as an

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<sup>10</sup> Cited in Brian Hewitt, *Doing a New Thing?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> See Hewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> On the influence of Wallis see Jonathan Wallis, *Arthur Wallis: Radical Christian* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> "From 'Renewal' to 'Restoration' Cliches or Scripture", *Restoration* 1/1 (Mar. – Apr. 1975), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Restoration* 1/4 (Sept./Oct. 1975).

<sup>15</sup> A recent issue of the *New Frontiers Magazine* describes their remarkable expansion and growth throughout the world, 4/3, July – Sept. 2011.

<sup>16</sup> There is a brief allusion to this in Virgo's autobiography, *No Well-Worn Paths: Restoring the Church to Christ's Original Intention* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 2001), p. 101. See also Hewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

apostolic sphere. This is defined as the relationships which draw upon the gift of the apostle.” (p. 11)<sup>17</sup>.

The only British new church network that arose from a local church excluded from a mainline denomination is the Multiply network, at the centre of which is the Jesus Fellowship and the Jesus Army.<sup>18</sup> This originated in Bugbrooke Baptist church in Northamptonshire, led by Noel Stanton. Along with Ichthus, Multiply is multi-racial with a number of black member churches. They were excluded by the Baptist Union, not because of doctrinal reasons, but because of their adoption of elders and departure from the Baptist pattern for each local church.<sup>19</sup>

### The North American Roots

A major impulse for the “non-denominational” current came from the “Latter Rain revival” which occurred at North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1947 – 48. Its leaders in North Battleford were Pentecostals whose teaching and praxis were not accepted by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada nor subsequently by the Assemblies of God in the USA. But the movement had a major impact on some large Pentecostal or independent Pentecostal assemblies (e.g. in Detroit, in Philadelphia) and on the Elim Bible Institute soon re-located to Lima, NY. Latter Rain leaders differed from mainline Pentecostals by promoting the five-fold ministries of Ephesians 4 and by laying-on hands for baptism in the Spirit. Richard Riss, the chronicler of the Latter Rain revival, wrote that “Many hundreds of ‘revival churches’ became visible ... most of these churches were independent and autonomous, and many became mother churches to numerous others that were established or nurtured by members of the mother church.”<sup>20</sup> However this development was not one of the main impulses that gave rise to the clearly “non-denominational” currents of the 1970s, but nonetheless fed something into what had emerged by the 1990s, of which more in a moment.

The origins of the “non-denominational” stream in North America are especially found in the story of the Holy Spirit Teaching Mission, founded in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1966 and that in 1972 was transformed into Christian Growth Ministries (CGM). CGM was led by five prominent teachers: Derek Prince (1915 – 2003), Don Basham (1926 – 89), Bob Mumford (1930 - ), Charles Simpson (1937 - ) and Ern Baxter (1914 – 93). What brought the CGM teachers together was a shared concern for the large numbers of Christians coming into a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit, but then lacking teaching, guidance and formation, and so being vulnerable to deception and disillusionment. Many young people impacted by the Jesus movement were especially needy in these respects.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the current coming out of the Devon conferences in England, the focus of the Fort Lauderdale group was Christian growth and discipling to facilitate growth. The focus was never on apostles and

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<sup>17</sup> Adrian Warnock, “Together on a Mission 09” *New Frontiers Magazine* 3/13 (Oct. – Dec. 2009), p. 11. See also David Smith, “An account for the sustained rise of New Frontiers International within the United Kingdom” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* XXIII (2003), pp. 137 – 56.

<sup>18</sup> See Simon Cooper and Mike Farrant, *Fire in Our Hearts: The Story of the Jesus Fellowship/Jesus Army* (Nether Hayford: Multiply Publications, expanded edn., 1997), Stephen J. Hunt, “The Radical Kingdom of the Jesus Fellowship”, *Pneuma* 20/1 (Spring 1998), pp. 21 – 41.

<sup>19</sup> In discussion after the paper, Paul Goodliffe from the Baptist Union in Great Britain, commented that Bugbrooke’s exclusion would probably not have happened if it had not been for their sectarian and exclusive tendencies at that time.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Riss, “Latter Rain Movement” in Stanley M. Burgess and Ed van der Maas (eds.), *International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), p. 832.

<sup>21</sup> See S. David Moore, *The Shepherding Movement: Controversy and Charismatic Ecclesiology* (London & New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), pp. 42 – 45.

prophets, though issues of church government and authority were brought more clearly into focus by the pastoral leadership needs that preoccupied them.<sup>22</sup> Their ministry had brought them into contact with many Spirit-impacted believers in scattered fellowships without denominational affiliation. But, as Moore writes, “Their goal was in the beginning to renew existing churches through their teaching. As time passed, however, this would prove more and more difficult. In the end, they decided to create their own churches.”<sup>23</sup>

In this way, the Fort Lauderdale group gave a strong impulse and a new visibility to the growth of “non-denominational” assemblies. The “non-denominational” impulse in the United States was primarily pragmatic, influenced by the surrounding entrepreneurial culture (starting a new church as one starts any new enterprise) and a need for freedom from institutional constraints so as to develop newer and more effective forms of communicating the Gospel and forming Christian community. The only one of the five leaders to advocate the restoration of apostles and prophets was Ern Baxter, who had been shaped by Pentecostalism, by the healing evangelists and the Latter Rain movement.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly it was Baxter who provided a short-lived but influential point of connection between the North American and the British “non-denominational” leaders, especially connecting with Bryn Jones.<sup>25</sup>

By the time Christian Growth Ministries folded up in 1986, following the controversies that broke out in 1975 – 76, the “non-denominational” currents in North America had developed strongly around a number of other leaders and ministries. Among them were Bill Hamon, Francis Frangipane, John Eckhardt and Rick Joyner. There does not appear to have been any one major source, but several contributory factors. These include the Faith groupings, of whom the foremost was led by Kenneth Hagin, that came out of Pentecostal roots and that re-labelled themselves charismatic, perhaps primarily for marketing reasons; the influence of those Pentecostal groups that had accepted the Latter Rain teaching<sup>26</sup>; the progeny of various healing ministries<sup>27</sup>; churches that had been under the Fort Lauderdale umbrella. A major new church network in Europe, Livets Ord (Word of Life), based in Uppsala, Sweden, arose from Ulf Ekman and two colleagues studying at Kenneth Hagin’s school in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

As we have seen, the new charismatic churches in Britain mostly embraced the ministries of both apostles and prophets. In the United States, the focus was first on the prophetic and only subsequently on the role of apostles. A major teacher has been Bill Hamon, who in 1990 published a book *Prophets and the Prophetic Movement: God’s Prophetic Move Today*<sup>28</sup>. The publisher’s blurb states that Hamon “has functioned in the ministry of prophet for over 36 years”, had been 23 years a

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<sup>22</sup> The church backgrounds of the five men were: Prince (Assemblies of God), Basham (Disciples of Christ), Mumford (Assemblies of God, then Reformed Episcopal), Simpson (Southern Baptist), and Baxter (Pentecostal).

<sup>23</sup> Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Baxter was a Canadian, born in Saskatchewan, who ministered in British Columbia for many years before the locus of his ministry shifted to the United States

<sup>25</sup> See Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom* (Guildford: Eagle, 1998: revised edn.), pp. 93 – 101. Baxter spoke at the last Capel Bible Week in 1975, and at the Dales Bible Week in 1976 and 1977.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Riss gives a list of pastors and congregations so influenced by the 1970s: *Latter Rain* (Mississauga, ON: Honeycomb Visual Productions, 1987), p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Oral Roberts had founded the International Charismatic Bible Ministries in 1986 to provide fellowship for ministerial leaders, mostly non-denominational.

<sup>28</sup> Shippensburg, Pa: Destiny Image, 1990. There is no mention here of the Kansas City prophets, a phenomenon that briefly hit the headlines around 1990.

bishop, and that he established the CI-Network of Prophetic Ministries in 1988. Hamon notes “The 1948 Latter Rain Movement brought the seed of revelation that there are prophets in the Church today, but the 1988 Prophetic Movement is bringing the activation and reproducing of those prophets.”<sup>29</sup> But ten years later, in Hamon’s writing, the Prophetic Movement has become the Prophetic – Apostolic Movement.<sup>30</sup> This later book has a full account of Christian history from a restorationist standpoint.<sup>31</sup> “The Holy Spirit activated the Prophetic – Apostolic Movement to restore Christ’s ascension-gift ministries of the apostle and prophet back into the Church.”<sup>32</sup> According to Hamon 2003 version, the way for the Prophetic - Apostolic Movement was prepared by the Latter Rain movement of the late 1940s, and then “John Sandford and Bill Hamon were the first to write books that prepared the way and made ready a people for the Prophetic – Apostolic Movement”<sup>33</sup>, which was birthed in 1988.<sup>34</sup> This US-centred version of the history seems unaware of what had been happening in Britain, much of it somewhat earlier in date.

The Prophetic – Apostolic movement has been non-denominational for both pragmatic and theological reasons. The pragmatic is that it is impractical to have space for recognized apostolic and prophetic ministries within the existing churches and denominations, in addition to which the Prophetic – Apostolic movement is a movement in a hurry. The theological reasons lie in the restorationist character of its vision of the church, in which restoration means in effect rebuilding the church from scratch. In this view, renewal was never more than a half-way house or filling station on the route to full-blown restorationism. Why are such restorationists so strongly resistant to the prospect of becoming new apostolic – prophetic type denominations? It is because restoration is of the church. They are building the church, and denominations can never be the church.

The most common restorationist position in the new church movement sees the restoration of the five-fold ministries of Eph. 4: 11 as a climactic stage in a progressive restoration that began with the Protestant Reformation. Protestantism has been marked by restorationist currents since its beginnings, but its most typical form has been the restoration of biblical patterns of preaching, church government and ministry in the place of what were seen as Catholic corruptions and additions. The Pentecostal movement then preached the restoration of Pentecost power, and of signs and wonders, including healing and prophecy. But there was no distinctive Pentecostal form of church government. But with the new churches and the restoration of Eph. 4: 11 ministries, there is a stronger form of primitivist restorationism, that abandons strict congregationalism in various ways: (1) by affirming a form of hierarchical order in the Church ; (2) by accepting the trans-local character of apostolic and prophetic ministries; (3) by creating trans-local patterns of relationships in structured networks. However, the restorationist teachers typically uphold the authority of the local pastor, with some rejecting free-lance ministries that do not defer to the authority of the local pastor in their home-base congregation.

While most restorationists present a development of the phases of restoration that sees their climax in the Prophetic-Apostolic movement, Hamon teaches that we are currently in stage 5 of an 8-stage restoration. Hamon’s phases of church restoration are based on 8 doctrines of Christ, outlined in a

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>30</sup> Bill Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (Shippensburg, Pa.: Destiny Image Publishers, revised edn. 2003), Ch. 26, pp. 263 – 287. C. Peter Wagner uses the term “The New Apostolic Reformation”.

<sup>31</sup> See next section on Restorationism.

<sup>32</sup> Hamon, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

chart.<sup>35</sup> He has 8 corresponding phases: the Protestant (Reformation), Holiness, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Body of Christ, Army of Lord, Queen Church, Eternal Church. We are at present in the fifth phase, with the last four phases being ushered in by the prophets.

But the ways of avoiding denominationalism remain very pragmatic. Dick Iverson of Ministers Fellowship International identifies three elements that “have historically caused fellowships to become denominations”: credentialing, ownership of buildings and a central missions board, all very pragmatic factors. So the non-denominational answer is ordination and issuing of credentials by the local fellowship, ownership by the local fellowship and mission work organized and supervised from the same level. In this network, the three factors promoting network bonds are relationships, integrity and doctrinal compatibility.

### A Catholic Approach to these Developments

First, the issues raised concern all Christian traditions. But when I comment as a Catholic, it would seem a fortiori that if Catholics can adopt such an approach, Protestant Christians should be able to do so. Any wider Christian reflection on this theme today has to be ecumenical. That is to say, it has to ask in what ways these developments can contribute to the full unity of the whole body of Christ. Its method has to be ecumenical: that is to say, it has to begin not from what is problematic in the other, taking one’s own position as the norm, but from what is positive, that is to say, from the work of the Holy Spirit in the other, taking the Scriptures as the foundational expression of the apostolic tradition.

*The Determination to Avoid Becoming New Denominations.* It should not be hard for a Catholic of an ecumenical spirit to commend this determination. The new church networks have begun as a movement or as movements. A movement is characterized by a vision that inspires and energizes its participants and by core convictions that drive the movement forward and shape its direction. In a Christian movement, the vision is understood as coming from the Holy Spirit and as an unveiling of the purposes of the Lord, and the core convictions as faith convictions that articulate fundamental biblical and Christocentric teaching. In this way, a Christian movement never is nor can become the church. But the church needs such movements to shake it up, to challenge all forms of immobility and stagnation, and to unleash fresh dynamism from the Spirit of God. A Christian movement does not have a complete and rounded doctrine, but it emphasizes key elements from a fuller Christian heritage of doctrine and teaching. A movement does not draw up its own creed, though as it develops it will typically express in written form its own doctrinal convictions and emphases with a non-negotiable core. As a Christian movement develops, it will typically recognize distinctive ministry gifts in its members and it will probably have forms of commissioning of new leaders, without imitating the ordination rituals of the historic churches. Movements are not territorially limited – though the English language plays a major role in their diffusion – and are potentially global in reach. This is all the more so in the globalized world of today with its modern means of communication and travel.

So the element in the new church movement that can be viewed wholly positively is the determination to remain movement, and to resist the process of becoming fixed and established organizations having lost their earlier movement character. This aspiration was vividly expressed in an interview by a young leader in Britain of 24 – 7 prayer. In answer to the question “How are you

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<sup>35</sup> Op.cit., p. 176

going to keep all this going?”, he replied: “We’re not! It’s vital we don’t keep it going. .... We don’t want to become an organization, but keep as a movement.”<sup>36</sup> We can ask: “Is this spiritual wisdom or is it sociological naiveté?”

From the standpoint of the ancient churches, the process of denominational formation has to be regarded as at best ambiguous. Much of this is best examined under the heading of restoration of the church, for which see below. But immediately one can identify some elements in this process that are theologically questionable. First, the process of “totalization” whereby the formation of a new denomination is typically the start of a process by which it becomes a complete system in itself with the tendency to adopt self-sufficient attitudes assuming that the denomination does not need interaction, contribution or discernment from other Christians to be faithful to the Christian mission. Second, there is the most common pattern whereby Protestant denominations are organized on a national basis. This is not to say that there are no good reasons for some organization at the national level, for example, to relate to government and public authorities. But theologically the church has three levels that go back to New Testament times. There is the **local or city** level (most New Testament uses of the word “church” refer to the local city-wide church), the **family or house** level (see Rom. 16: 5, 1 Cor. 16: 19; Col. 4: 15), and the **universal** level (see Matt. 16: 16; Eph. 1: 22; 3: 10; 5: 32; Col. 1: 24; 1 Tim. 3: 15). At all three levels, the church is an instrument of communion. Any structures are clearly to serve the communion. But with denominations organized on a national basis, whether their head offices are in the capital or elsewhere, the structures play too big a role at the expense of life and creativity. So in fact each formation of a new denomination and its subsequent consolidation makes future reconciliation and unity with the historic churches more difficult.

*Restoration of the Church.* A characteristic of the new churches is that for the most part they have manifested a greater desire for church than, for example, the Pentecostal movement generally did in its origins and early development. This trend is of course strongest in those with a vision for restoration, which almost always means a restoration of the church according to the mind of Jesus. This trend to focus on church is obviously to be welcomed.

From an historic church standpoint a vision of restoration that is restoring “from scratch” dismissing the history of the Christian church for almost twenty centuries is obviously unacceptable. The real question is not Tradition or Restoration, but whether there can be a truly significant element of restoration within an overall respect for tradition. The principal characteristics that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches regard as essential to be church are apostolic succession, episcopal ministry in this succession, and a form of eucharist embodying this continuity. Without some visible connection to this historical continuity and without a historic form of liturgy, I do not believe that the restorationist endeavour can succeed. It lacks embodiment (incarnation), that is to say a rooting in history, without which a real body cannot be formed. As I see it, the new church movement shows a deep desire for church, with increasing attempts to form church that can produce deep patterns of Christian togetherness with increasingly ecclesial elements, but which lack a visible coherent unity. This search for church could favour real progress towards an organic and embodied unity. As the new networks overcome any sectarian tendencies, further down the road it may make a reconciliation with the ancient churches more feasible than with firmly established denominations.

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<sup>36</sup> Pete Greig, *Jesus Life* 60 2002, p. 13.



[So a first question is whether some concept of restoration can be received within the ancient churches. The historic churches in apostolic succession do not typically think in terms of restoration. Such an idea seems incompatible with the Catholic and Orthodox conviction of being the repositories of the fullness of divine revelation and the fullness of the means of salvation. However, there are some clear signs that some concept of restoration is not only receivable within the Catholic tradition but necessary for the thorough renewal mandated by the Second Vatican Council. I will pick out some instances of restoration before returning to the overall pattern. A restoration is already taking place in the Catholic Church in the following areas:

- The renewal of the liturgy restoring (a) the complementary roles of word and sacrament, (b) an active participation of the whole assembly; (c) a communal celebration of the rites of initiation.
- The restoration or rediscovery of the charismatic dimension of the church, symbolized in the outpouring of the *charismata pneumatika* in the charismatic renewal.<sup>37</sup> This dimension correlates most readily with restoration thinking within the Pentecostal movement and the new charismatic networks.
- The commitment to ecumenism and Christian unity is a work of restoration to restore the unity of the whole body of Christ. The Catholic abandonment of an “ecumenism of return” has led to the acceptance of a mutuality in which the restoration of unity presents a major challenge to all parties. Here John Paul II has made a key statement: “Ecumenical dialogue does not consist only of an exchange of ideas, but it also includes an exchange of gifts.”<sup>38</sup> The gifts to be received from the other Christian churches and communions are elements of restoration.<sup>39</sup>
- The return to the Jewish roots of Christian faith is a major element in an authentically biblical restoration. This element in restoration emphasizes the importance of historical roots, of the physical and biological order, that grounds a full concept of incarnation. It involves the restoration of a holistic view of humanity, and of the whole created order.

Reflecting on these elements of restoration in the vision and work of the Second Vatican Council indicates that authentic renewal of the Church has to involve restoration. The presentation of renewal as a half-way house to restoration by some early apologists for the new charismatic churches, such as Arthur Wallis, is understandable as a reaction to expressions of charismatic renewal within the churches that did not seem to present a prophetic challenge. But theologically it is unacceptable, because renewal is foundationally a more comprehensive concept than restoration. Renewal in its full sense means the revitalization of all Christian life by the Holy Spirit, whereas restoration refers to the recovery of missing or neglected elements. In this view, restoration is needed for church renewal to move forward significantly.

As we take all these developments into consideration, we can see that it is far from impossible for the Catholic Church to recognize that there is some truth expressed in the Pentecostal concept of the

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<sup>37</sup> “Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements ..... The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential as it were to the Church's constitution.” (John Paul II, Address to new ecclesial movements, May 30, 1998, cited in *Good News* 136 (July/August 1998), p. 2).

<sup>38</sup> John Paul II, encyclical letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, para. 28.

<sup>39</sup> The concept of “receptive ecumenism” has since been building on this insight.

Latter Rain, with a progressive restoration of forgotten or neglected elements of the biblical presentation of Church and Kingdom. In the characteristic Pentecostal presentation, the process began with justification by faith in the sixteenth century. In fact, this seems to be more a development of doctrine taking place first in the Protestant Reformation rather than a clear restoration. Can Catholics accept an element of restoration in the next phase of the Latter Rain schema, namely, sanctification (John Wesley and Holiness movement)? Not in the sense of restoring an element forgotten or neglected over many centuries. But possibly yes, in the sense of the Vatican Two teaching of all the baptized being called to holiness and it not being the preserve of consecrated souls. But the next stages of divine healing and of the spiritual gifts flowing from baptism in the Holy Spirit are clearer examples of elements being restored to normal church life and ministry in modern times. These last two instances are, however, the restoration of charismata, more than the restoration of teaching or doctrine. That such an evaluation of history is not impossible for Catholics is shown by John Paul II's statement at Pentecost 1998 when he spoke of "this providential rediscovery of the Church's charismatic dimension ... before and after the [Second Vatican] Council"<sup>40</sup>. However, this framework needs to be set free from its total separation from the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, and the generally negative evaluation of Christian life between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

I would in fact argue that the concept of restoration requires the element of historic continuity that the ancient churches embody, whatever their limitations. The prevailing view of Pentecostal restoration through a series of divine interventions since the time of Luther requires that the restored elements be recovered by the wider church. If restoration is not reappropriation by the existing church, then there can be no solid process of increasing restoration. Nothing solid and lasting is being built. From this angle the history of Evangelical – Pentecostal Christianity since the 18<sup>th</sup> century offers some salutary lessons. In some respects, there has been an accumulation of elements restored: justification by faith, sanctification, divine healing and the spiritual gifts. But at the same time, the process by which "the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love (Eph. 4: 16) has been seriously undermined by sectarianism, individualism and other weaknesses, of which a lack of appreciation for the historical, the bodily and the liturgical stand out.]"<sup>41</sup>

*Apostles and Prophets.* For most of the new charismatic churches, restoration has at its heart the recovery of the fivefold ministries of Eph. 4: 11, which in practice means a focus on apostles and prophets.<sup>42</sup> At first sight, this view of restoration appears to present a huge barrier to the possibility (and for them the desirability) of reconciliation with historic Christianity affirming an apostolic succession of bishops. But we need to distinguish between three different issues in discussing the role of apostles and prophets:

1. *The exegesis and interpretation of the biblical data.* The new church literature is mostly apologetic and/or pastoral, with little that academics would regard as scholarly. For example, you will find little recognition of the issue of the Twelve and of others described

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<sup>40</sup>Cited from *Good News* 136 (July/August 1998), p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> The section here shown in parenthesis was omitted from the oral presentation in Riga due to lack of time.

<sup>42</sup>See earlier passage on writings of Bill Hamon.

in the New Testament as apostles, and no mention of the connection made in the New Testament between the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>43</sup>

2. The self-understanding and self-presentation of the new charismatic churches. This typically sees the restoration of apostles and prophets to directive roles in the church as necessary for the church to be church according to the mind of God, and necessary for the fulfillment of the church's mission before the Lord comes.
3. The actual organizational, behavioral and practical ways in which the new charismatic churches act and work.

I suggest that the third area is the most fruitful to be examined both by those within the new churches and by those in the older churches and denominations. We do not have to agree with the new church exegesis and incipient theology to recognize that the Holy Spirit is at work in the flexible and creative ways the new churches actually. In fact, of course this is an application to the new charismatic churches of what Hollenweger was saying for many years that what Pentecostals do is much more important than the argumentation they give for doing them.

*Flexibility and Creativity.* Likewise, the desire for space to be creative and to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit without having to pass through layers of officialdom, committees and bureaucratic procedures can hardly be condemned. It is in their most creative contributions to the Christian world today that the older churches can and should learn the most from the new. For example:

- the way leaders emerge, and the attention paid to encouraging young people, especially young men, to develop leadership abilities and to have opportunities for wide-ranging experience;
- the forms of oversight and coordination played by those with "apostolic ministries", which in many ways resemble the best concepts of ecclesial episcopate, not just territorial, but today exercised at all level up to the global; the formation of networks with varying patterns of belonging;<sup>44</sup>  
  
new patterns of mission sending and oversight, made possible in the world of jet travel and the internet;<sup>45</sup>
- new patterns of local church planting and community formation; the Vineyard magazine in the USA, today called *Cutting Edge*, has frequent contributions illustrating the experimental approach to church planting, learning lessons, making major changes, in interaction with other leaders and the people involved;
- Diversification of forms of ministry and diakonia: ministering to different categories of people, teenagers and young people, young mothers, artists, drug addicts, etc. (some ministries characterizing particular new church groupings);
- creativity in music and forms of worship expression, with a massive contribution to the overall Pentecostal – charismatic musical repertoire coming from the new churches,

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<sup>43</sup>See Matt. 19: 28; Rev. 21: 12, 14.

<sup>44</sup>In subsequent conversation, Paul Goodliff mentioned that some 13 Baptist churches in Britain belong to the New Frontiers network.

<sup>45</sup>I am indebted to William Kay for this point.

especially for example Vineyard and Hillsong (Australia), and the creation of praise marches by Graham Kendrick (Ichthus, UK) as part of March for Jesus;

- houses of prayer and 24/7 prayer, spearheaded by the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, USA (IHOP), led by Mike Bickle.

Let us suppose that a humbler approach could be possible from both sides. That is to say, that each side (historic churches and new church networks) could modify their more exclusive claims and seek to formulate the key gifts that each can bring to each other. In terms that I used in a previous EPCRA talk, it is a sifting of the authentic theology from the encroaching ideology. On the Catholic side, a greater humility would entail an openness to recognizing that the Catholic Church can learn from these new seemingly upstart groups (for Catholics they are like the new kids on the block), even learning something about the church, that Catholics easily regard as their prerogative. On the new church side, I would see a greater humility including a more modest estimate of their own contribution and historical significance. Instead of any thoughts that the new churches are the only New Testament churches, the restored church or the church of the future<sup>46</sup>, their leaders could see themselves in a more experimental and provisional way as forerunners and trail-blazers in some areas for the whole body of Christ. Such an approach corresponds fits much better with their entrepreneurial and experimental approach and the spirit of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If then they make their experience and their giftings available for the wider church, and invite genuine assessment and discernment, then I could see remarkable things happening. For such a generous servant approach to become possible, all judgmental mentalities and sectarian narrowness would need to be abandoned, e.g. “the old churches are dead” which are happily rarely found today among the new church streams that are transitioning to a second generation.

Is this vision completely Utopian? I don't think so, because there are already places in the world where the new church networks include local churches or communities belonging to historic churches or who have a free church affiliation. The free church instances seem to be mostly Baptist or Assemblies of God, as their pattern of denominational structuring makes this easier. The Vineyard movement in Europe has been moving in a direction of seeking some form of agreement with the historic churches in the regions where they are planting a new church. Surprisingly there is even an instance of a Catholic charismatic community belonging to Vineyard. In this case, it was a condition from both sides that the arrangement had to have the blessing of the local bishop. The community in question in Ravensburg, Germany, received this permission from Bishop Walter Kasper, then bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart<sup>47</sup>, who himself wrote the agreement, which stipulated that all sacramental activities should happen within the Catholic framework but accepted their being under the leadership of the wider Vineyard leadership.

In such a context, the ministries of apostle and prophet can be evaluated over time, with an ongoing assessment of the biblical exegesis and theology used to support these ministries, together with a parallel evaluation of their missionary and pastoral effectiveness. As I have already hinted, there are many elements characteristic of the new charismatic networks that fit very well with seeing them as

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<sup>46</sup> “I recently came across one church stream that stated they were planting a church in that particular town because there was ‘no New Testament-type church there’. ... I didn't object to the church plant .... What did concern me was the attempt to monopolise the phrase ‘New Testament-type church’ for churches of their particular kind of organization.” (Rob Warner, *I Believe in Discipleship* (London; Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), p. 157.

<sup>47</sup> Later President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Cardinal.

an experimental workshop for world Christianity: their creativity, their flexibility, their subordination of structures to mission, their confidence in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, their aversion to patterns of dogmatism and the tyranny of the conventional.

A more modest estimate of their role in the Christian world, as streams, movement, networks, that do not call themselves collectively church, would ironically make the new charismatic churches more significant in the Christian world than when their self-perception is more sectarian and self-sufficient. From this angle, the refusal to become denominations can be recognized as having a prophetic dimension. The instinct to avoid the totalizing tendencies typically arising from the formation of denominations can and should be totally affirmed, and distinguished from the question of developing the structures needed in any coherent and growing movement. The refusal to become denominations also allows for more flexible approaches to “double” or “multiple belonging”, a better formulation than double or multiple membership, which is an increasing phenomenon in our mobile and fast-changing society. This is true both for individuals and families, as well as for local assemblies, as when for example a local church affiliated to a denomination (e.g. Baptist or Assemblies of God) joins a new church network.

An abandonment of claims simply to be the restored church of the New Testament does not mean that the new charismatic churches do not have an ecclesial significance, or that they are not contributing to the restoration of the one church of Jesus Christ. The older churches need to recognize and to take seriously the genuine concern of the new charismatic churches for church. By the creativity already noted and by seeing them as a kind of ecclesial laboratory, they can enter into serious interaction with the older churches. They can challenge for the good of all parties the denominationalism of the Evangelical and Protestant churches, and the rigidities of the older liturgical – sacramental churches.