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It Was the Time and Place

A Testimony by Stephen B. Clark

The Duquesne Weekend is often spoken about as the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal, and that has some truth to it. As someone put it, the weekend kick-started the Charismatic Renewal.

If you want to know what happened on the Duquesne Weekend, there is no better source than Patti Gallagher Mansfield's book *As By a New Pentecost*, with its many testimonies from participants¹. Not having been on the weekend, I have no personal testimony about the weekend itself, but I was involved in the events that led up to it and what happened afterwards.

My first acquaintance with charismatic things began with reading *The Cross and the Switchblade*, a very influential book in the beginnings of the renewal. Paradoxically enough, it was given to me by a Campus Crusade staff member who also worked at Michigan State University. At that time Campus Crusade was negative on “Pentecostalism” (the word that was used for charismatic movements), but the staff member did not seem to realize that she was in fact promoting Pentecostalism by passing on the book. Like her, I was impressed with what I could read about what happened to people when they were baptized in the Spirit. I was even more impressed, because I had worked with young people in a New York neighborhood like the one described in *The Cross and the Switchblade* and knew how hard it was to get them to change for the better.

The significance of reading *The Cross and the Switchblade* has a certain symbolism. It is symbolic first of how many have been impressed with the effects of being baptized in the Spirit. It is also symbolic of the ecumenical origins of the charismatic renewal and of the Duquesne Weekend itself. Some have described the Duquesne weekend as if it was a Catholic devotional experience — a group of Catholics praying to renew their baptism and confirmation or a group of Catholics praying before the sacrament and experiencing grace. *As By a New Pentecost* makes clear the Duquesne Weekend would not have happened without the input of various non-Catholic Pentecostals and of the Pentecostal movement as a whole and without the message of baptism in the Spirit, in whatever terminology it was presented. We Catholics should be grateful to the Pentecostals as Pope Francis recently said².

As By a New Pentecost makes something else clear — the Charismatic Renewal and the Duquesne Weekend did not humanly come out of nowhere, but it began with a group of people who were seeking to serve the Lord and who were working together to evangelize and bring renewal to the church. That group had grown out of the Cursillo Movement, at that time

¹ *As by a New Pentecost: The Dramatic Beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* by Patti Gallagher Mansfield (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University of Steubenville, 1992).

² “...Do not forget your origins, do not forget that the Charismatic Renewal is, by its very nature, ecumenical” from Pope Francis to members of the "Catholic Fraternity Of Charismatic Covenant Communities And Fellowships" 31 October 2014.

somewhat new in the United States. The origin of the group was at Notre Dame University in the early Sixties, as described in *As By a New Pentecost*, and many of those involved in it worked on the Antioch Weekend movement, an offshoot of the Cursillo. The first Antioch Weekend held at Duquesne was something of a pre-cursor of the Duquesne Weekend. The group that worked on the Antioch Weekend and in the Cursillo Movement was not a formal organization, but there was a conscious bond among them that came from working together.

Some have said that the Charismatic Renewal did not have a founder as other movements have. That is partly accurate. But it did have a founding group that provided the leadership for the beginnings of the Charismatic Renewal, including the Duquesne Weekend and its follow-up. It included many of those who have added their testimonies to *As By a New Pentecost*: Ralph Martin, Jim Cavnar, Peter Collins, Bert Ghezzi, and myself.

Those of us who had worked in the endeavors of that group had seen some real success, but we were also aware that we were not seeing something up to the standard of what we could read about in the Acts of the Apostles. More could be possible. We were ready for the understanding that the Charismatic (Pentecostal) experience could provide the spiritual power that would make something much more effective happen. *The Cross and the Switchblade* and *They Speak With Other Tongues*, the successor book, circulated rapidly among this group, and it oriented many among us to look to the Pentecostal experience for the answer to a felt need. The folk at Duquesne were the ones who took the key step.

Here then is the key point I would make about the Duquesne Weekend. It was put together to get people baptized in the Spirit. But the result was something different than any old program that might be effective in bringing people into a charismatic experience. It was the time and place when God met people who were looking for the power to advance his kingdom, not just those who were on the weekend at the time (most of them were not) but also those in the broader movement. They in turn quickly received the testimony of those on the weekend and entered into the charismatic experience themselves. It was the initial action of God that began something that could be described as a revival, and whose rapid and successful spread surprised those involved with it.

Most spiritual renewal movements have begun much the same way. They have grown out of a group of people seeking the Lord and seeking to serve him. His grace then meets them, and equips them for something beyond their ability.

I would put the next most important single event in the launching of the Charismatic Renewal to be the First International Conference in the summer of 1967. Much had happened before then. Those who had been on the Duquesne weekend, especially the two professors, immediately began to talk about what had happened to them. Their word spread among those who had worked together at Notre Dame and in the Cursillo and Antioch Weekend movements. Most of those entered quickly into the charismatic experience. But they also began to spread the word and spread the baptism in the Spirit.

In two important places prayer meetings developed that created groups of charismatics, mainly at first of students: Notre Dame and Michigan State University. The latter group also began regular Days of Renewal that soon attracted people from throughout Michigan. The Notre Dame people decided to hold a conference in the summer. The Michigan State people joined them. This conference and its successors became the events that fostered and maintained the existence of the Charismatic Renewal in a self-conscious way and was named in retrospect the First International Conference.

It is perhaps this conference and related activities that established the Duquesne Weekend as in a certain way the founding event of the Charismatic Renewal. We referred back to it as the origin of something new and a testimony to God providing a new grace. Since then the Duquesne Weekend has been considered central to the origin of the Charismatic Renewal, even though many have entered into the charismatic experience without any direct or indirect connection with the Duquesne Weekend.

The international conference was held every year for a number of years thereafter. In 1969 the leaders who gathered at the Third International Conference agreed to set up a communications office for the Charismatic Renewal and a service committee, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service Committee. That was done in June 1970 and the services provided by the communities at Notre Dame and now Ann Arbor, Michigan were unified under that committee. Most of the members of the committee came from the group that had prepared the way for the Duquesne Weekend. The basic principles of the organization were derived from the Cursillo Movement.

The Duquesne Weekend was an important event. I described it as the kick-start for the Charismatic Renewal. It did not, however, stand alone. It was prepared for and carried on by many other efforts for spiritual renewal of the churches and of many Christians. We all would say that the success of the Charismatic Renewal was something God did. But we also should say that it was effective because of the dedication of early members of the movement and from those outside who helped them but also of the wisdom predecessor movements, especially the Cursillo, could teach us.