

THE
CATHOLIC CHARISMATICS
The Anatomy of a Modern Religious Movement

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Impression Management: The Relationship between the CCR and Its Environment

At this point we have considered a neophyte movement that has almost all the essentials necessary to promote continuity and growth. The embryonic CCR has a committed leadership, who have both goals and training for effective leadership, a pool of searching individuals who could find such a group attractive, official proclamations that serve to legitimate its activities, and a set of highly effective commitment techniques. One further aspect is necessary to ensure success: an effective public relations program.

If an emerging social unit is to have any hope of success, it must present itself to potential members and potential critics in a manner suggesting legitimacy, impeccability, and desirability. This is especially crucial in contemporary society, with its extensive, rapid, and explicit communication media. Impression management is as essential for a would-be successful movement as it is for a would-be successful job applicant.

We contend that the CCR leadership has shown extreme adeptness in constructing a definition of itself that is acceptable to the wider public and the church hierarchy. Some of these public relations maneuvers have come back to haunt CCR spokespersons but in general they have been and continue to be successful in presenting themselves. The reader should not assume automatically that these self-definitions have been arranged in a planned, Machiavellian manner. In certain instances public relations were an integral part of leadership planning; in others, such a blatant construction of reality is not so obvious. In any case, successful public relations is a must for any social organization, and as such, does not constitute grounds for condemning the CCR. The successes of the CCR are a result of careful planning by well-educated human beings who have an uncommon understanding of group dynamics.

Three major types of impression management are of particular concern here. First, there is a construction of reality in order to appeal to the general public, and particularly to potential members. The CCR wishes to encourage as wide a base of attraction as possible, consistent with its goals. Second, if the CCR is to have any realistic hope of renewing the Catholic Church—in the sense of creating important structural changes—then it must favorably impress at least some portion of the influential clergy. Careful courting of the clergy has been one of the hallmarks of the CCR. Finally, as the movement and its social environment experience critical changes, its public face must be adjusted to show those changes advantageously.

Impression Management I: Encouraging Membership Growth and Promoting Public Appeal

As previously noted, the CCR leadership defines Christianity as in its death throes as a result of attacks by and capitulation to secular humanism. Divided Christianity is seen as suicidal. It is not simply the Roman Catholic Church that is in trouble but Christianity in general. Real ecumenicism is an absolute necessity, not an ideal luxury. To pursue this goal effectively the CCR leadership has been faced with an incredibly difficult task: it must appeal to as wide a spectrum of Christianity as is possible without alienating itself from the parent church. The other side of this coin is equally true: the CCR has had to continue courting the favor of the church hierarchy without alienating non-Catholic Christians. They are, as the old colloquialism says, between a rock and a hard place. We will eventually make it clear that the CCR has not been able to please all of the people all of the time.

The CCR has done a remarkable job in favorably impressing Protestant neopentecostals and at least some classic pentecostals as is evident from their participation in national conventions and their contributions to the *New Covenant*. An interdenominational convention held in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1977 further dramatized the success of the CCR's ecumenical efforts. On that occasion classic pentecostals, Protestant neopentecostals, and Catholic pentecostals praised the Lord as a body, and even engaged in a display of Christian humility by literally washing the feet of some Messianic Jews who were present.

Equally important, the CCR has been successful in harmoniously joining people of different political leanings, occupations, age categories, and cultures. This integration of heterogeneous people has been one of the primary reasons for the success and growth of the movement. The fostering of smooth interpersonal relationships has been an explicit policy, one which Steve Clark and others have written about in some detail.

In 1973 we attended a seminar session for neophyte pentecostals led by Steve Clark at Ann Arbor, Michigan. During the session a young man asked Clark whether it was the duty of a recommitted Christian to work actively toward social change designed to improve various problems of injustice. Clark's reply mirrored the position taken in his article "Social Action: Strategy and Priorities" (S.B. Clark, 1972b): that when all men accept the Lord, then and only then will there be any meaningful world change. The young man persisted, arguing that such an eventuality was highly unlikely and suggesting that social protest was a more viable, short-run alternative. The inquiring neophyte also attempted to pin Clark down to a policy statement about racial prejudice and poverty, but he received essentially abstract statements of principle, reaffirming Clark's belief in the need to bring all to Christ.

This illustrates a striking aspect of most prayer meetings and group life among CCR people: an extreme reluctance to discuss anything that might introduce conflict. In fact, anything that threatens unity is viewed as fertile ground for the working of the devil (*Team Manual*, p. 30). Recall our description in chapter 3 of the prayer meeting where the multiple sclerotic who voiced doubts about a supposed cure he had undergone was immediately silenced by a tongue speaker who, with the leader, said that the M. S. victim's problems were the work of the devil.

The avoidance of conflict is explicitly addressed at various points in the *Life in the Spirit Seminars: Team Manual*. In the section describing the construction of talks given to aspiring CCR members, the team member, who is more or less a teacher, is cautioned that "it is important for the speaker to avoid arguments and controversies in his talk. He should be sympathetic with others and not critical; criticism should be reserved only for sin and inadequate ideas. People and groups, especially churches, clergy, and religious practices, should never be criticized" (p. 41).

The emphasis in the movement literature concerning interpersonal relations is on creating a positive, reinforcing atmosphere that will draw people closer together and strengthen their commitment to each other and the movement's goals. Clark (1972:79) advocates open expressions of affection, actions indicating honor and respect, service to others in even the most menial tasks, and positive and encouraging speech. *The Life in the Spirit Seminars: Team Manual* stresses unity among the pastoral team to the degree that they have "one mind and one heart together" (pp. 3-31). They are to display concrete expressions of love, humility, and service toward each other.

This harmonious interpersonal atmosphere is clearly something that attracts many newcomers. Over the years Dick Bord had a number of social psychology students who were interested in religious phenomenon attend campus prayer meetings for a term and then write up their

observations. Without exception these students are struck by the degree of warmth and acceptance that is communicated among CCR participants; this closeness is the single feature that impressed all of the observers. They do, however, report varying degrees of discomfort at being so generously hugged; such open expressions of affection are generally frowned upon in our culture.

The resulting image of harmony appeals to potential members, people of other faiths, and inquiring clergy. It is difficult to be critical of such a positive collective experience; and it is precisely this quality of warm personal relationships and relatively tension-free public gatherings that have, at least initially, endeared the CCR to potential critics. It is also precisely this quality that is often cited as evidence that Christ is truly present in the movement (by their fruits shall you know them). This image is not left to chance, but is carefully and explicitly promoted by the movement leadership.

Another related characteristic of movement dynamics is a relative absence of the kind of preaching and moral exhortation that have often been marks of similar movements in the past. We do not mean to suggest that issues of morality are left entirely to the predispositions of individual participants. We simply have noted relatively little explicit treatment of behavior the church has traditionally considered moral or immoral. Certainly traditional sexual values (prohibitions against premarital and extramarital sex, stressing marriage as a lifetime commitment, emphasizing modesty in dress and acts, and conscious control of sexual impulses) are stressed in some of the CCR literature (e. g., Gavrilides, 1976). Also at least one antiabortion article has appeared in *New Covenant* (Dozier, 1973). However, fire and brimstone preaching about morality are not characteristic of the CCR. Nor have we noticed any reference to acceptable birth control techniques for married Catholics, an issue that has caused so much consternation in the Catholic Church.

Our own data demonstrate that there is a rather wide variation in CCR participants' attitudes about the moral issues that have preoccupied the modern church (see table 3 in chapter 1). When presented with the statement, "any method of birth control is acceptable for married Catholics," 62 percent disagreed, 25 percent took a noncommittal position, and 13 percent agreed. The statement, "the rhythm method of birth control is the only acceptable method of regulating family size for married Catholics" elicited 31 percent agreeing, 30 percent taking a noncommitted stance, and 39 percent disagreeing.

Some confusion may be engendered by the statement that abstinence is permissible according to church teaching, although not advised, and that there are "natural" methods that are not strictly rhythm methods—the Billings method, for example. However, although our respondents

were never reticent about adding comments at places on the questionnaire that somehow displeased, confused, or misrepresented them, not one commented on this particular item.

This attitudinal variation among CCR participants not only reflects a general secularizing trend among Roman Catholics, but it also shows that this is not something the CCR leadership has felt worthy of much attention. Again, if one is seriously attempting to unite committed Christians, it is probably an optimal strategy to focus on those moral issues that most biblically based Christians can agree with and to simply ignore those that might be divisive or viewed as purely Catholic issues. The presentation of the CCR's moral stance has been such as to alienate as few committed Christians as possible.

One does not find in the CCR an emphasis on strict, extremely ascetic life styles. It is true that some CCR members have adopted very ascetic life styles, and in the covenanted communities simplicity is the order of the day. In some communities we visited we saw no television, few personal belongings, simple food, an early to bed and early to rise policy, and no secular magazines or newspapers. (The absence of secular magazines and newspapers does not completely shut the community member off from the world events. One household had an official news condenser who, at the evening meal, was asked to reiterate the important news of the day. He very eloquently discussed some events in the Middle East, some of Richard Nixon's difficulties, and other national events. We inquired as to why this individual was saddled with such a responsibility and were told that he was particularly intellectual and was able to get at the heart of important issues. This confirmed our personal impression of the man.) On the other hand, we have drunk beer with CCR members, watched football games and played cards with them, and even sat around "pickin and singin" Woody Guthrie songs with a talented young pentecostal in a household in Ann Arbor. This degree of flexibility has not been left to chance. *The Team Manual* tells us: "Our objective is to avoid all puritanism. People may decide it is better not to smoke or drink or take drugs. We do not want to say that something is incompatible with Christianity when the Lord did not say it was incompatible" (p. 140).

The point seems clear. The objective of the CCR, as viewed by a dominant component of its leadership, is to bring as many people as possible to an experiential relationship with Christ. To accomplish this end the leaders concentrate on getting people committed to a set of interpersonal relationships with already renewed Christians, and they deemphasize anything that would be needlessly divisive. Once people become involved in intense interpersonal relationships with already renewed Christians, they will come under an effective system of norms and sanctions that will shape behavior in desired directions.

The public face that the CCR leadership has evolved has been very effective in attracting people from diverse religious, sociopolitical, and generational backgrounds. The emphasis is on flexibility and acceptance, not doctrinaire stances and exclusion. Whether or not this degree of acceptance can be maintained is a serious question and will be addressed in the next chapter.

Impression Management II: Courting the Hierarchy

To say that the CCR leadership has engaged in a heroic struggle to present an acceptable, undeniably within-the-church image to the hierarchy would be an understatement. From the beginning, Clark, Martin, and others have been acutely aware of the necessity to market the CCR as something that is neither strange nor new, but rather something that is strongly bound to Christian and Catholic Church tradition.

At the very beginning the CCR leadership attempted to establish cordial, cooperative relationships with local pastors; however, they found this to be a singularly frustrating experience because pastors were quick to see possible infringement on their own sovereignty and were unable to appreciate what the young pentecostals were attempting to do. It was soon recognized that acceptance would have to come from the top of the church hierarchy before it would have any kind of significant impact on the parish priests.

Unofficial liaisons were then established to inform bishops of Charismatic activity within their jurisdictions. These liaisons were instituted by the charismatics and not by the bishops. In some instances bishops were regularly sent newsletters that gave accounts of Charismatic activity and portrayed the participants in a desirable Catholic light. Church officials were often extended standing invitations to attend prayer groups and covenanted communities to see for themselves the "fruits of the Spirit."

In general, these efforts to establish legitimacy have been quite successful. On October 10, 1973, a contingency of CCR leaders, including Ralph Martin, met with Pope Paul VI in Rome. The Pope's remarks were very encouraging, although marked with notes of caution.

We rejoice with you, dear friends, at the renewal of spiritual life manifested in the Church today, in different forms and in various environments. . . . (The Pope then listed a series of effects the CCR was having on participants that contributed to more effective Church involvement. However, he sounded an equally vigilant note.) The spiritual lives of the faithful . . . come under the active pastoral responsibility of each bishop in his own diocese. It is particularly opportune to recall this in the presence of these ferments of renewal which arouse so many hopes.

Even in the best experiences of renewal, moreover, weeds may be found among the good seed. So a work of discernment is indispensable . . . [and this discernment is the responsibility of] . . . those who are in charge of the Church (*New Covenant*, December 1973).

We were in Ann Arbor the day after Ralph Martin returned from this trip to Rome. The people we met in the Ann Arbor community, and those staffing the *New Covenant* office, were beside themselves with joy because of this event. Their desire to be accepted by the hierarchy was obviously genuine. However, this desire for acceptance was tempered by the leadership's desire to keep the CCR primarily a lay movement. The impression we received from our interviews with the Ann Arbor leaders (we were not permitted an audience with Steve Clark) was that clerics were more than welcome to come, observe, and participate, but they were not to be accorded positions of influence simply because they were clerics.

That the vast majority of CCR participants share in this concern for official acceptance was evidenced by the enthusiasm exhibited at national conventions each time a leading cleric took the podium. Standing ovations were the common responses to the cardinals and bishops introduced to the assemblies. Furthermore, a full 80 percent of our sample indicate that they think it would be helpful if more clerics were involved in the movement.

Each year of the CCR's history has seen a growing number of clerics participating in prayer meetings and national conventions, and assuming various leadership positions. In 1975 the American bishops formally acknowledged the CCR, and many of them established official liaisons between themselves and prayer groups within their jurisdiction. Clearly, the concerted efforts of the CCR leadership to gain official acceptance had paid off. In this official acceptance, an important role has been played by one particular prelate, Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens of Belgium, in presenting an acceptable image of the CCR to the Vatican and in adding an aura of respectability through his own participation.

One continuing and acrid critic of the CCR, Dr. J. Massynberde Ford, associate professor of theology at Notre Dame, has implied that Cardinal Suenens's support of the CCR is a result of his having been manipulated by the CCR leadership. There does exist sufficient evidence to indicate that the face of the CCR initially presented to the cardinal was indeed carefully orchestrated. However, we do not think this incidence of manipulative self-presentation is sufficient to explain the cardinal's support for the CCR. The cardinal's own long-standing goals and problems meshed very nicely with what the CCR was doing. One can be viewed as the complement of the other. Before elaborating that point, we will

discuss the planned manipulation incident at the True House community during Cardinal Suenens' visit to Notre Dame in 1973.

Some of the events we are about to discuss have been mentioned in the national and Catholic press (see *National Catholic Reporter*, August 15, 1975 and have been partially rebutted in *New Covenant* (November 1975: 22-23). The rebuttal essentially argues that the facts of the case were not sufficiently investigated, that the complainants were disaffected members and therefore not credible witnesses, that the community in which the events occurred has since disbanded, and that those events were not characteristic throughout the movement. The latter two points seem to us to be generally true and will be treated in greater detail in the next chapter. We were aware of these incidents almost as they happened. We had close friends in positions of authority in that community and talked to members who at the time were not disaffected at all. In fact, at the time these events were narrated to us, the narrators were jubilant about the degree of success their community was enjoying. Over drinks in a private home in South Bend, Indiana, one evening after a general session during the 1972 convention, we offered the opinion that the degree of outright manipulation characterizing the True House community was unhealthy and boded ill for its future. At the time our hosts downplayed our concern, but one year later, after discovering that they too were on the receiving end of the manipulation process, they abandoned the renewal in shock and disgust. However, at the time of the events at the True House community at Notre Dame, they were high placed members in good standing. Two influential CCR members who had originally been involved in the Notre Dame community, Kevin Ranaghan and Paul deCelles, split from the campus group and formed their own People of Praise community in South Bend. The People of Praise community is modeled after the Ann Arbor community and is considered one of the more successful existing communities. Ranaghan was the only individual we encountered in our research experience who absolutely refused to talk to us. The report was that he was fed up with researchers. However, he did send someone to talk to us, and some questionnaires were distributed within that community.

The individual who headed the True House community was until 1973 an influential CCR leader who had originally been a friend of Steve Clark, had contributed to the movement literature, and who had been heavily involved in organizing the early national and international conventions. He has subsequently left the movement. It was he who was apparently primarily responsible for the manipulative atmosphere of the Notre Dame community. (This individual and Steve Clark experienced a cooling of their friendship. One informant told us that "the two egos could not take each other.") For example, when arrangements were being made to pur-

chase property for what was to be the True House community, adjacent property owners began organizing a protest over the intrusion of these religious "weirdos." A neighborhood picnic was organized by the True House leaders to get the two factions together. Only the most articulate, attractive, and impeccably well-behaved pentecostals were selected to attend. They were told which topics to discuss and which to avoid. The whole picnic was designed to create the desired image. The event was successful, and the property was purchased by the Notre Dame group.

A similar but more elaborate orchestration took place when Cardinal Suenens visited Notre Dame in 1973. Our sources for this information were three members of the community. Again the effort was devoted to creating as positive an image of the pentecostals as was possible. Only the most stellar examples of CCR membership were allowed near the cardinal. During a reception for the cardinal, a loose but effective protective ring of bodies shielded him from persons deemed by the leadership to be intrusive or unacceptable. If such a person attempted to approach the cardinal, he or she would be intercepted by one of the body guards and led off to the punch bowl or to some area where little harm could be done. The entire visit was preplanned and controlled to a remarkable degree. The phrase "create an artificial environment" was used by the Notre Dame leadership to characterize what was happening. The cardinal was not aware of the orchestration.

He left the Notre Dame community with a positive image of the CCR leaders. However, to assume that it was the creation of that "artificial environment" that committed him to the defense and support of the CCR is naive indeed. Cardinal Suenens and the CCR were made for each other. Suenens is a liberal prelate who, among other things, has expressed his hope and belief that science was close to perfecting a morally acceptable birth control pill (it has yet to happen). During the Vatican Council's 106th general meeting, he advocated a more open and flexible relationship with atheists, and more recently, he took issue with the papal ban on formal discussions of clerical celibacy. (Suenens's positions on these matters are referenced in McCormick, 1964; Wallace, 1965; and Fesquet, 1970.) More importantly, Cardinal Suenens has long been a proponent of shared responsibility in the church—that is, shared between clergy and laypersons.

During the Second Vatican Council, which predated the CCR, Cardinal Suenens mounted a courageous campaign aimed at promoting consideration of the importance of the charismatic gifts for the modern church.

One of the unforgettable speeches of the Council was Cardinal Suenens' address on charisms. The Cardinal struck at the false notion that these

gifts of the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church were unessential phenomena in the life of the Church. "Do we not all know laymen and laywomen in each of our dioceses . . . endowed with various charisms of the Spirit? Whether in catechetical work, in spreading the Gospel, in every area of Catholic activity in social and charitable works (Fesquet, 1970).

This statement clearly indicates that the CCR did not manipulate the cardinal into an interest in the charismata or the Holy Spirit. "I did not discover the Holy Spirit through the renewal. As I have said, the Spirit had long been at the center of my life" (Suenens, 1975).

The cardinal's interest in the charisms is related to his wish for more democratic decision making at even the highest levels of the church. He has attempted to present the church's primary mission as that of fellowship, not hierarchy, and has also dealt with the limits of papal authority. His quest for shared responsibility has been singular enough to be characterized as a voice crying in the wilderness. "Is Cardinal Suenens a voice crying in the wilderness? There is much evidence for fearing that as long as the present administration remains in Rome, there will be no change" (Baum, 1969). A focus on charisma for members at all levels justifies an emphasis on shared responsibility. Shared responsibility is primarily what the CCR is all about. Some long-standing goals of the cardinal and the goals of the CCR are clearly identical; therefore, it would have been unusual if Suenens had not risen to champion the CCR.

The cardinal's relationship with the CCR, however, is even deeper than that between a person with a dream and an organization that gives promise of realizing that dream. Like many Vatican II and post-Vatican II clerics, Suenens was apparently experiencing grave doubts about the ability of Christianity and the church to remain viable in the modern world. The CCR has been a "shot in the arm" to some clerics on the verge of despair and to Suenens himself: "I can say, I think, that I owe to the renewal a spiritual youth, as it were, a more tangible hope, and the joy of seeing impossible things become possible" (Suenens, 1975).

Although Suenens has been the champion of the CCR, his support has not been unqualified. For example, in an article reflecting on the accomplishments of the CCR during its first decade, Suenens repeatedly stresses the continuity of the CCR with church tradition. "It is of the utmost importance that the charismatic renewal maintain this sense of continuity and not create the impression that the renewal is coming out of the blue to start radically new things" (Suenens, 1975). The fact that he feels compelled to address this issue amply illustrates his awareness of the possibility of elitism and schism inherent in such an organization. In a *New Covenant* article, he argues against the idea that the CCR is a movement separate from the church: "Is the renewal some sort of injec-

tion of new blood into the body of Christ, something coming from outside? No. There is no such thing as an institutional church in contrast to a charismatic church. There is only one church." (Suenens, 1977).

These types of remarks are not simply comments on the accomplishments of the first decade of the CCR; they are cautions directed at CCR participants. Cardinal Suenens is quite cognizant of potential threats the CCR poses to the institutional church.

Another way the CCR has presented itself as strongly prochurch is through articles and statements in *New Covenant*. There have been three classes of these prochurch articles. First are those written by clerics, which are essentially cautions to the CCR. Second are those articles that attempt to tie events common in the Charismatic Renewal with church tradition. Finally, a number of articles and statements have been issued by the CCR leadership which reaffirm the CCR's goals while attempting to place these goals squarely within the church.

Among the articles by clerics that are caveats to the movement is one written in 1973 by Bishop Joseph McKinney, Auxiliary of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and member of the Service Committee of the CCR, himself a Charismatic and involved quite early in the development of the CCR. This article was designed to further the integration and participation of priests in the movement. The bishop clearly regards clerical participation as a necessity to keep the CCR on the proper path: "There is no doubt in my mind that, when balanced priests are involved over a year or two with a prayer community, that prayer community is a deeper expression of the Church. We need shepherds, and priests are our most reliable source" (McKinney, 1973). Although the bishop apparently does not share the CCR leadership's enthusiasm for retaining the movement's primarily lay character, his letter was still published in *New Covenant*.

In a 1975 issue of *New Covenant* appeared an article by Cardinal Willebrands, who is president of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. The cardinal minces no words in establishing the church as the principal seat of the Holy Spirit:

Brothers and sisters, I would like to ask the specific question: if the Spirit and the Church are so inseparable that the coming of the Spirit is the birthday of the church, could we ever separate the charismatic, the special gifts of the Spirit, from the church? The only solid and sound explanation of what is usually called the charismatic renewal in the church, is to be sought in the fact that the Spirit has been bestowed upon the church (Willebrands, 1975).

In other words, the CCR should not view itself as the originator of the charismata, as the giver of the gifts to the church; it must realize that

the charismati come from the church, via the Holy Spirit—a vivid assertion of Church primacy.

In 1976–77 Killian McDonnell, a respected scholar of the CCR, contributed articles to *New Covenant* which warn Charismatics that their quest for ecumenicity may lead to a “churchless Christianity” (McDonnell, 1976). He argues for the need to integrate the veneration of Mary into the CCR, since by and large the CCR has not been a champion of Marian devotion. The mention of Mary at prayer meetings is extremely rare, and only 18 percent of our sample agree that “There should be more emphasis on Mary in prayer meetings.” McDonnell (1977:29) views this as a discontinuity in Catholic tradition and argues that Mary was “the first charismatic.”

But if the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is not to restrict the Spirit, it needs to see in the whole historic experience of the church the footsteps of the Spirit. Over the centuries the experience of millions of Christians witnesses to the role of Mary.

Again, even though Marian devotions are not central to the CCR, the leadership saw fit to publish this plea from a cleric to integrate Marian devotions into the CCR.

The fact that the CCR leadership publishes critiques and warnings in its principal periodical adds authenticity to their claim that they are “in the church and for the church” (Martin, 1976). It would indeed be difficult for critics and potential critics to argue convincingly that the CCR has ignored possible sectarian issues.

New Covenant also publishes articles devoted to establishing unambiguously the perception of continuity between traditional Catholicism and CCR beliefs and practices. For example, one article ties the CCR’s emphasis on Satan to traditional Catholicism and the contemporary needs of the Church (*New Covenant*, April 1974). Another issue of *New Covenant* has two articles attempting to demonstrate that baptism in the spirit has always been in the Catholic tradition. Essentially, these authors argue that the spirit is initially received in baptism, but is given with renewed intensity in such sacraments as confirmation and holy orders. So, it is argued, issues of personal renewal are not new to Catholicism. Even esteemed theologians are called upon to justify the CCR within the context of the institutional church. Father Heribert Muhlen (*New Covenant*, July 1974) tells us that: “I think the charismatic renewal is God’s response to what was called for in Vatican II as regards a more collegial, brotherly, communal way of making decisions and exercising authority in the Church.”

Through the publication of these types of articles and features, the

CCR covers itself from charges of elitism and of attempting to introduce something new to a church which, by definition, already has the basics of everything. The CCR says that they are simply stressing what has been there all along.

The CCR leadership itself occasionally publishes position statements in *New Covenant*. These statements generally include specific attempts to cement, in the reader's mind, the perception of the CCR's loyalty to the church. Two articles in the January 1974 issue attempt to do this in a rather dramatic way (*New Covenant*, January 1974, 19-20; 21-23). A statement made by the Service Committee of the CCR concerning ecumenicism assures the reader that the CCR's comradeship with Protestants constitutes no threat to their Catholic allegiance:

We recognize that, as Catholics, we are called to work for a unity among the followers of Christ . . . We are called to this commitment because we realize that the renewal of the Church will not be complete until a full and visible unity among Christians has been restored . . . At the same time, we are committed to our Church. This commitment is genuine and loyal, and we know that the Lord wants us to remain faithful to it. We recognize that the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church are over us in the Lord and that we should be subordinate to them (*New Covenant*, January 1974a:19-20).

In the same issue of *New Covenant* a statement of the CCR's theological foundation is presented. This statement, originally constructed at the 1974 International Convention in Rome at the instigation of Cardinal Suenens, reinforces the point that the renewal represents an emphasis in intensity and not in kind.

Those within the charismatic renewal make no claim to a special spiritual endowment or to a special grace which distinguishes those involved in the renewal from those not so involved. If they differ at all they differ in awareness and expectations and therefore in experience. The purpose of the renewal is not to bring to the Church something she does not have, but to bring local churches and the Church universal to Jesus Christ, and to widen the expectations of how the Spirit comes to visibility in the charisms within the life of the Church (*New Covenant*, January 1974b: 21).

A final example of the CCR leadership publicly defending their pro-church orientation concerns a rather dramatic minor scandal in neopentecostalism. At the August 1973 International Lutheran Charismatic Convention, David Wilkerson (see chapter 4), publicly divulged the content of a vision he had experienced. Among other things, Wilkerson's

vision portends a time of persecution of Catholic Charismatics by the official Church:

The Roman Catholic Church is about to "pull in" the welcome mat to all Catholics who speak with tongues and who lean toward Pentecostal teachings concerning the Holy Spirit. High level political pressure will be placed on priests to "put the fire out." Watch for the Pope to take a negative stand against the charismatic movement within the Catholic Church. The honeymoon is over (Martin, 1974: "David Wilkerson's Visions" p. 11).

Ralph Martin levies charges at Wilkerson of sensationalism and of purposely manipulating public opinion for his own ends. He quotes from a biblical text which encourages the testing of prophecy to ensure its authenticity. In the same issue of *New Covenant*, the influential Protestant pentecostal David duPlessis (1974) also deals with Wilkerson's vision and urges careful discernment of spirits to avoid deception and falsehoods.

In Martin's and duPlessis's rebuttal of Wilkerson's "vision," it again becomes apparent that prophecies which support the movement's goals are deemed authentic, while those which are critical or potentially divisive are judged as not from God. This congruence between movement goals and accepted prophecy is of more than passing interest and constitutes the last focus of our attempt to describe ways that the CCR adapts to its external environment.

Impression Management III: Movement Directives through Prophecy

It is essential that a developing movement be able to change emphases as it experiences varying degrees and kinds of successes and reversals. A social organization must be able to mobilize its members in desired directions in order to facilitate goal attainment. This is a formidable task for an organization such as the CCR, which is only partially structured and is composed of geographically and culturally disparate, autonomous groups. One way the leadership of such an organization can guide its progress is to have its pronouncements considered as moral imperatives. We suggest that the prophecies emanating from the CCR leadership have the characteristics of moral imperatives that set the tone throughout the entire movement. They are viewed as moral imperatives because they are considered products of the Holy Spirit. The fact that movement leaders, at various times and places, give prophecies having similar content is taken as evidence that the prophecies are authentic. These prophecies are published in *New Covenant*, audio taped and distributed to those who

care to purchase them, discussed at regional, state, and local meetings, and also disseminated through the informal communication networks that exist between national and international leaders. They set the tone for the entire movement.

The CCR leadership shares an intense and oftentimes intimate culture. There is a great deal of mutual discussing, sharing, and giving of testimonies. For example, during our visit to the *New Covenant* office in 1973 the entire staff dropped everything at a designated morning time and conducted a period of prayer and sharing. Many mutual trials and triumphs were here discussed. Leadership at all levels are constantly engaged in team or pastoral meetings to discuss critical issues. In other words, it is a culture in which ideas are rather freely and profusely shared.

In this atmosphere people find themselves thinking along the same lines about the same topics. As they pray, contemplate, and think about various problems, prophecies form in their minds which relate to these problems. As they give these prophecies, they are struck by their congruence of content. This congruence is then viewed as evidence that the prophecies come from the Holy Spirit. We would argue that they come from a shared culture and from minds working in similar directions. In any case, the more dramatic, congruent prophecies are then passed on to the membership, who view them as moral imperatives and use them to guide their own activities and form the themes that dominate prayer meetings all over the country. The more dramatic and congruent prophecies then become part of the wider CCR culture.

The prophecies we are about to discuss are viewed as benchmarks which indicate problems the CCR was trying to cope with at the time the particular prophecy was in ascendance. The change in their respective content indicates critical phases that the CCR has experienced. These prophecies and prophetic talks guided movement participants in ways which furthered movement goals. There are roughly three phases that can be abstracted from CCR development up to this point: the building phase, the triumphant phase, and the consolidation phase.

Prophecy: The Building Phase

The first six years of CCR development centered primarily on the establishment of an identity as respectable and church-loyal Christians. It was a time of continuing and dramatic growth and rising expectations. As previously discussed, the CCR was successful in attracting supports from church officials and from sympathetic Protestant pentecostals. During these first six years, the CCR took substantial strides toward becoming an ecumenical and international movement. This was a period of tentative-

ness, of groping, of advancing and retreating, of almost extreme humility. This was primarily the building phase.

This phase probably reached its culmination in 1972 and 1973. The June 1973 International Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at Notre Dame, Indiana, was an interesting mixture of the humble emphasis characterizing the first six years and the seeds of the triumphant phase, which was publicly expressed at the 1974 meeting at Notre Dame. In 1973 the number of conventioners became too large to minister to in an available indoor facility. The 25,000 or more (estimates vary) people met for the first time in the Fighting Irish football stadium at the University of Notre Dame; both organizers and participants were obviously pleased by the size of their assembly. Also, the 1973 convention brought a relatively large European and South American contingency of participants. At one point during a general assembly, the non-North Americans were asked to rise and briefly identify themselves and their country. This ended with the assembly singing "he's got the whole world in his hands." Signs of success were everywhere.

The tone of the convention was dramatically set by the early speakers at the general session on Friday evening, June 1. A prominent Protestant pentecostal leader told the gathering:

I believe that this is just the beginning, I think we are ready to enter one of the greatest moves of the Spirit that the world has ever had and ever seen . . . I believe at this conference we are going to see some of the greatest and the mightiest things that we have ever beheld.

A later speaker reinforced this theme even more dramatically by saying:

this year the novena for Pentecost begins today, and this year of Pentecost begins a holy year proclaimed by our Holy Father Pope Paul VI, in which he expects the Spirit to move like a great wind over this whole land, so let us focus on Jesus . . . so he will fill us, not only us but the Church and the whole world with his Spirit like a living river.

This statement greatly moved the crowd, probably because it was interpreted to mean that the Pope's reference to the Holy Spirit was a signal to the movement to begin to change the face of the earth. After all, were they not the major church-related element to be placing primary stress on the Holy Spirit? The Holy Year was to be their year.

Later in the evening, the following prophecy was given:

Oh my beloved children, if thou didst know the love that I am pouring forth in the deepest part of your being this night, if you would open unto

me the door that only you can open, if you but understood that gentleness of my love, the sweetness of my anointing, the tenderness of the Shepherd's heart wouldst thou not open unto me this night to receive the love that I freely give unto thee? For in this very hour I am among you to love you, and caress you with a love that shall consume thee. For this love is everlasting. It takes not account of the past, but of the present moment. For here my people, in your presence, I dwell, to receive you, to renew you in the deepest part of your being.

Turn your hearts now that I might begin in you the bearing forth of fruit of such sweetness and such magnitude and variety that my Church shall proclaim from high and from low the renewing work of the Holy Spirit among you. For you, my people, have been called forth this night into a great work of renewal. Give me your heart, for there it shall begin, and there it shall end, in the glory that my Father has placed within you.¹

This prophecy, and the theme of all the events of the evening, was then clarified by one of the convention organizers: "This night, God has spoken a word to us . . . what central point shall I look at . . . there is going to be a great work, He is doing a mighty thing, a storm of his Holy Spirit." This prophecy, and another with the same general content (cited in part in chapter 5) were later printed in *New Covenant* magazine. The entire 1973 conference inspired the convention participants and those who later read and heard about these events to a belief that they were actually the mechanism chosen to bring about a genuine renewal in the Catholic Church. Past doubt and hesitancy was to be dissolved in a new confidence that the CCR was indeed God's tool to be used to reform the earth.

The 1973 conference also contained many cautions on potential pentecostal excesses and some vigorous reiteration of the CCR's loyalty to the church. The main speaker at the opening general assembly saw fit to warn participants:

Another call of the Lord to us today is obedience to his representatives. . . . Obedience to church authorities has always been one of the genuine tests of what is truly of the Holy Spirit. If we are humbly obedient to our local bishop that is a sign that we are being led by the Spirit.

This call to obedience was later "confirmed" by a Scripture reading by one of the CCR's more illustrious leaders. Later speakers talked about the

¹This verbatim transcript of our tapes differs slightly from the version printed in *New Covenant*, October 1973, p. 23, but this is word for word from our own tapes.

importance of reason and stressed that the Holy Spirit also works through the application of reason, is in addition to reason, and does not supplant it. Another addressed the assembly and told of the problems of "excessive enthusiasm" and "fanaticism."

Even though the 1973 convention had both optimistic and cautionary tones, later publications, like *New Covenant*, sought to stress the optimism. In order to help create a definition of reality that would encourage CCR participants, the triumphal elements of 1973 were stressed. This emphasis can be viewed as preparatory to the distinctive events of the 1974 convention.

Prophecy: The Triumphal Phase

The 1974 Notre Dame Conference was "a turning point," a move "from an apologetic phase to a prophetic phase" (Martin, cited in Jahr, 1974). The 1974 Eighth International Conference on the Charismatic Renewal featured an event that ordinarily would have generated horror in the Roman Catholic hierarchy. On the opening evening of the conference, under the direction of three priests, one nun, and a laywoman, an exceptionally dramatic and emotional healing service was conducted. The results of that service were viewed as ample confirmation of the biblical testimony that Christ made the blind to see and the lame to walk. One young woman, blind from birth, reported seeing those around her for the first time. Others reported healings of arthritis, cancer, blood problems, and kidney complications. Although this service aroused some concern among the more traditional Catholic laypeople and hierarchy, it was generally considered dramatic evidence that Christ was working in the modern world.

That this event could occur without an immediate negative reaction from the church hierarchy clearly indicated that the years of careful impression management had paid off. In 1974 the CCR unabashedly proclaimed its success and new self-confidence. During the main address, Ralph Martin decried the fragmentation of Christianity; announced that God was now in the process of uniting this ruptured edifice; told of witnessing Bishop McKinney giving a prophecy and of Cardinal Suenens singing in tongues; and then announced that "God is moving in an active, powerful way to renew the whole Catholic Church." Even more importantly, Martin (*New Covenant*, September 1974) essentially supported our main points concerning impression formation in the building phase when he said:

Over the last five years God has given us great wisdom about how to relate to our fellow Catholic laymen and our Catholic bishops so that we

can all move together as a church. God has spoken to us about loyalty as Catholics and commitments of obedience and submission to our bishops. That has been a very important thing. Now with that as a foundation, I believe that God is saying that it is time to speak for the Church and for the world through what we are experiencing. Renewal is too weak a word for what needs to happen in the Christian Church. "Renewal" can give us a sense that we will just polish something up a little bit. Rather, I think God is moving to *restore* New Testament Christianity to all his people—that is more than renewal.

Here, then, was an unequivocal public statement of victory. The CCR was not simply a movement whose purpose was to add new vigor to the Roman Catholic Church; it was to be considered the harbinger of a new Christian world. The days of bowing and scraping were over; the day of triumph had arrived.

Martin's address had a profound impact on its listeners. Written comments (*New Covenant*, September 1974:7-9) by respected CCR leaders reflected that impact. One cleric wrote:

I felt anointed during the whole of his talk. Is it renewal we are talking about or is it restoration. I know at times I go cold at the thought of what may lie ahead of us . . . Are we, like the sons of Abraham, too concerned with our roots, our Catholicity? Do we see union as others submitting to us, or can we envision it in wider terms, in the terms of God?

We are approaching a moment of decision; God's call is more radical than we first supposed.

Another noted cleric termed the charismatic renewal "a sovereign act of the Father, restoring the Lordship of Jesus in the love and power of the Holy Spirit, in individuals, in the church, in Christianity, and in the world." Cardinal Suenens expressed the "hope that Ralph's address will be fully published in the *New Covenant* and that it will be inspiration for all the Fathers at the Synod in Rome this coming autumn."

This triumphal mood, however, was relatively short-lived. In 1975 the Catholic Charismatics returned to Rome to hold the International Conference at the seat of Roman Catholicism. On the last day of that conference the Pope addressed the conference participants at an audience held in St. Peter's Basilica (*New Covenant*, July 1975). The Pope's words were generally warm and encouraging, but they retained elements of caution. The closing paragraph of his official text is particularly noteworthy: "Beloved sons and daughters, with the help of the Lord, strong in the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, with your Pastors, you will be sure of not deceiving yourselves. And thus you will contribute, for your part, to the renewal of the Church." The Pope explicitly draws

attention here to Marian devotion, which has never been an integral part of the CCR. He reminds his audience that they need pastoral counseling to avoid self-deception, and finally describes the group as partial contributors to church renewal. This could hardly be interpreted as a papal acceptance of the 1974 dicta that the CCR is out to restore "New Testament Christianity to all his (God's) people." In fact, the Pope's statement could be interpreted as almost condescending. Although his words were viewed as generally "warm, friendly, and clearly supportive" (Ghezzi, 1975), they revealed that he did not see the CCR in the same light as he apparently viewed traditional churchgoers.

Other trends became obvious in the period between 1974 and 1975. The CCR's rate of growth faltered for the first time. Obviously the bulk of Roman Catholicism was not going to embrace warmly the CCR. During this time the divorce rate for Roman Catholics approached that of the total population. Abortion was more accepted and had its share of Catholic supporters. If the CCR was indeed destined to restore the Church and the entire Christian world, it became manifestly obvious that it was not imminent. The euphoria generated by the signs, wonders, and speeches of the 1974 International Convention began to give way to some realistic pessimism.

So, although the 1975 convention at Rome was a joyful time which saw Cardinal Suenens concelebrating mass with almost 700 priests in St. Peter's basilica, it was also a period of tempering aspirations and a time to begin consolidating the faithful.

Prophecy: The Consolidation Phase

The following prophecy came out of the 1975 convention:

Because I love you, I want to show you what I am doing in the world today. I want to prepare you for what is to come. Days of darkness are coming on the world, days of tribulation . . . Buildings that are now standing will not be standing. Supports that are there for my people will not be there. I want you to be prepared, my people, to know only me and to cleave to me and to have me in a way deeper than ever before. I will lead you into the desert . . . I will strip you of everything that you are depending on now, so you depend just on me. A time of darkness is coming on the world, but a time of glory is coming for my church, a time of glory is coming for my people. I will pour out on you all the gifts of my Spirit. I will prepare you for spiritual combat; I will prepare you for a time of evangelism that the world has never seen . . . And when you have nothing but me, you will have everything (*New Covenant*, July 1975:26).

Again we think it is significant that of all the prophecies and messages originating out of the 1975 International Conference, the one cited above

and some with similar contents were viewed as important enough to reproduce and to discuss a number of times in subsequent issues of *New Covenant*. This theme of tribulation and disaster constituted the primary emphasis of the CCR from 1975 to the present. Even participants who returned from the 1977 National Conference on the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church (which featured some 50,000 people from more than a dozen denominations) were talking about a mood of gloom and doom that hung over an otherwise exciting event. Perhaps gloom and doom understates the situation. Some of these prophetic messages speak of persecution, of the shedding of blood, and of the necessity for militant preparation to meet successfully these future challenges.

The important question asks why the emphasis changed from the triumphant one of 1974 to the pessimistic vision in 1975 and continued to the present. If we are correct in assuming that the events of 1975 were a significant letdown after the 1974 peaks and that the CCR leadership was beginning to perceive a stabilizing trend in movement growth, then we can perceive the value of a strategy that focuses on a number of external threats. Social science has long been aware that feelings of external threat tend to make the threatened group more cohesive (see chapter 3 for a more complete discussion of this point). If the CCR was not destined to attract increasing numbers of Roman Catholics, then one way to ensure that it simply does not die a quiet death, as it is absorbed into church routine, is to generate a sense of militancy in its members. The movement's fear of being absorbed, and thereby rendered virtually impotent, will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

These gloom and doom prophecies excited sufficient attention to warrant a special *New Covenant* article, "How should we respond? An interview with Kevin Ranaghan," (February 1978), designed to guide the concerned faithful.

Ranaghan affirms that these dismal prophecies have met the standard criteria for acceptable prophecies. He feels they are scripturally sound, that they have come from Christians whose lives are exemplary and whose past record on prophecy has been commendable, and that their basic content has been reiterated in different places at different times. When asked how individuals should respond to these prophecies, his answer reflects the argument previously presented:

I think we have to realize that we're not, as individuals, in a position to deal with the collapse of, say, world-wide economic structures. But we are in a position to prepare ourselves. In these prophecies, the Lord consistently tells us to get our lives in good order, to grow in personal holiness, to strengthen our relationship with him. There is an urgent call to strengthen our relationships with other Christians. The Lord is warning

us because he wants us to begin preparations now, before the darkness is upon us (*New Covenant*, February 1978:13).

Ranaghan's advice to concerned charismatics is to become more intensely committed to movement goals and to surround themselves with close-knit circles of likeminded friends. It is a defensive posture, the circling of wagons to protect against the threats from without. It is a far cry from the expansiveness and optimism that characterized the mood of the CCR in 1974. It is a move designed to consolidate the faithful, not restore Christianity to the world. This defensive perspective was introduced almost solely via the mechanism of prophecy originating from the highest circles of CCR leadership. It thus appears to be an organizational directive designed to preserve a successful movement experiencing its first glimpse of what all movements must eventually face, dissolution and death. Further explanations of this stance will be offered in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter we have delineated the major types of impression management used by the CCR leadership to justify and legitimate their activities and organization. The leadership has demonstrated great talent in constructing definitions of reality that have appealed to a wide spectrum of both Catholics and non-Catholics, and have attracted the hierarchy and convinced many of them of the CCR's authentic prochurch orientation. These definitions have also guided members through the phases of movement flowering, growth, and recent stability. As in most things connected with the CCR, the leadership has acted with an uncommon working knowledge of human nature. However, even these talented individuals cannot meet all the exigencies necessary to preserve the movement within their desired goal structure. The mold of cooptation has already begun to collect on the fruit of the CCR. The shouts are turning to whispers, the exaltation and ecstasy to routine and drudgery. The eventual outcome of the CCR is our next subject.