The emergence of Catholic Charismatic Renewal ‘in a country’: Australia and transnational Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Journal Item

How to cite:


For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© 2019 Edinburgh University Press

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.3366/swc.2019.0268

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
The emergence of Catholic Charismatic Renewal ‘in a country’: Australia and transnational Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Global Catholic Charismatic Renewal [CCR] has been the subject of very few scholarly historical studies. Outside of the United States, Australia was one of the main early contexts for its emergence and expansion. This article assesses the historical origins and early development of CCR in Australia from a transnational perspective, exploring the relationships and flows between this country and the American upper Midwest ‘cockpit’ of early CCR – the university cities of South Bend, Indiana, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. These global linkages may be understood as part of a broader ‘drift’ towards US Christianity in Australia after 1945. Such connections were formative for much of Australian CCR in terms of the development of leadership structures and patterns of practice; in particular, the construction of charismatic communities, such as the Emmanuel Covenant Community, Brisbane, Queensland. The dynamics of these transnational relationships, however, also shaped the emergence of a national movement with a distinctively Australian identity and global sensibility. Increasingly during the 1970s Australians themselves became leading actors in CCR worldwide.

Key words: Catholic Charismatic Renewal; Spirit baptism; transnational Catholicism; Australia; United States; covenant community.

On Ascension Thursday 1973 a group of four Roman Catholics from Brisbane, Queensland, ‘took to the clouds’, as an Australian charismatic newsletter put it, to travel to the United States.¹ A crowd of fellow believers from the city were encouraged to gather at the airport to pray for the journey of three laypeople and a priest.² They first travelled to Sydney International Airport, where they assembled with eight others from that city, Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra. There was a time of prayer and planning in the VIP area. From Sydney they flew, ‘with expectant hearts’, on a PanAm Boeing 747 to Fiji, Hawaii, to Los Angeles and then O’Hare Airport, Chicago.³ Then it was only a short flight to South Bend.
In the early 1970s, this small city in the state of Indiana had only a declining population of under 126,000 inhabitants; nevertheless, it was home of America’s most prestigious Catholic university and the global center for a rapidly expanding religious movement. This was the first time a substantial Australian contingent had attended the annual International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference, at the University of Notre Dame. Shortly after their visit, the front cover of *New Covenant*, the leading, international magazine of Roman Catholic charismatic renewal [CCR], which was published in nearby Ann Arbor, Michigan, carried a picture of the twelve Australians walking, luggage in hand, on the tarmac of the airport at South Bend. This image was in many ways provides a visual motif of the global charismatic renewal movement in the early 1970s. Just as steamship had contributed to the expansion of earlier global religious networks, so in the second half of the twentieth century affordable air travel shaped the dynamics of an emerging religious culture of charismatic renewal, enabling rapid and frequent circulations of texts and audio recordings and transnational mobilities of laity, religious and clergy.

Charismatic spirituality in the Roman Catholic Church flourishes in many global locations. According to one estimate in 2000 over 44 million adults were active participants. The International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services has an office in Vatican City, and in 2017 – the year widely regarded as the 50th anniversary of the movement – celebrations in Rome included an ecumenical prayer vigil led by Pope Francis in the Circus Maximus and a Mass of Pentecost in St. Peter’s Square. The anthropological work of Thomas Csordas explores some of the global dimensions of CCR and more specifically the ‘geography of the Spirit’ established by global Roman Catholic charismatic communities; using the term ‘transnational transcendence’ to describe the relationship between religion and globalisation. However, scholarly historical studies of the global dynamics of CCR, and its settings outside of the United States, are extremely sparse. The popular historiography of CCR has largely been American-centric, beginning with the origins myth of the Pittsburgh ‘Duquesne weekend’ of 1967, and then emphasising the early leadership of upper Midwest Roman Catholics in South Bend and Ann Arbor.

This article also underlines the significance of these two cities in the global CCR ‘movement’. The American upper Midwest was a global cockpit for the early expansion of CCR, and this paper details the transnational mechanisms and mediations through which its influence expanded worldwide. In Australia, its influence in one sense confirmed a continued ‘drift’ in post-war Christianity towards America, a development mirroring political, economic and cultural developments. In 1959 the arrival Billy Graham in the Antipodes, and before
this Irish-American Fr. Patrick Peyton C.S.C and his ‘Family Rosary Crusade’ (which drew a remarkable 110,000 to Sydney’s rugby stadium in 1953), had brought a revivalist spirit to the country. The influence of South Bend and Notre Dame was a further example of American religious influence. However, what follows in this article also demonstrates the complex ways in which these linkages with America, and the strategies promoted by South Bend and Ann Arbor Roman Catholics for worldwide charismatic expansion, also contributed to the rapid development in Australian CCR of a national and pan-regional sense of identity and purpose as well as a wider global sensibility.

**Beginnings: CCR and its emergence in Australia**

The charismatic renewal was a fragmented, grassroots ecumenical ‘movement’ which emerged at the cusp of a period of religious resurgence and crisis in the Anglophone world and Western Europe during the ‘long 1960s’, which transcended traditional denominational boundaries - including between classical Pentecostal, mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic - and which was based on a definite experience of Spirit, usually, though not necessarily, accompanied by glossolalia. The language to describe this experience varied considerably, particularly where it was being integrated into existing, historic frameworks of Christian initiation. It was generally referred to as baptism in the Spirit (a phrase which underlines the important relational role of Pentecostals in the spread of the experience), however terms such as ‘fullness’ and ‘release’ were also utilised. Its first adherents were largely Protestant, but from the mid-1960s it gained traction amongst Roman Catholics. Charismatic renewal was essentially a broad Christian sub-culture which was based upon local prayer meetings and communities; regional, national and international conferences; and ‘service groups’ which provided media resources. Amongst both its Protestant and Roman Catholic varieties, it tended to display at least five emphases: experience (of Spirit baptism and the supernatural charisms); expression (oral and embodied acts of worship and spiritual creativity); the body (the renewal or restoration of the local Body of Christ through the every-member-ministry of men and women, often in new manifestations of Christian community); ecumenism (the breaking down of historic denominational barriers, notably of Protestant and Roman Catholic sectarianism); and Scripture (the use or even a ‘rediscovery’ of the Bible for teaching and devotions).

Like many other Christian ‘movements’, both the Protestant and Roman Catholic expressions of charismatic renewal have their own origins accounts. The Pittsburgh ‘Duquesne weekend’ of February 1967, when various Catholic
students received the baptism in the Spirit through the influence of Faculty members who had come into a Pentecostal experience the previous year, is conventionally regarded as marking the global inception of CCR. Similarly, the Protestant charismatic renewal had its own origins myth, of Passion Sunday 1960, when the Revd. Dennis Bennett revealed to the congregation of St Mark’s Episcopalian Church, Van Nuys, Los Angeles, his experience of Spirit baptism and glossolalia. Despite the importance of these events, contemporaries involved in charismatic renewal in its early period readily admitted antecedent developments in the United States. Individual Roman Catholics had experienced the baptism in the Spirit either prior to or entirely independently from ‘Duquesne’ networks. It appears Roman Catholic-led corporate gatherings also took place: one 1965 report by an English Anglican charismatic visitor to America mentions a house meeting organised by Spirit-baptised lay Catholics, with three Jesuit priests also present. Around the same time as ‘Duquesne’, Francis MacNutt, a Dominican priest, came into this experience of the Spirit separately and quickly developed a highly influential healing ministry. However, in America the spread of CCR as a movement came primarily as a result of the leadership and mediation of a network of Catholics, based particularly around the upper Midwest university cities of South Bend (Notre Dame) and Ann Arbor (University of Michigan) and East Lansing (Michigan State), and influenced by the news from Duquesne. Many had been involved in Cursillo, the lay-orientated movement which originated on the Spanish island of Mallorca in 1944 and was transplanted to North America by returning military. This spread rapidly in the mid-1960s and offered Roman Catholics a small group-based experience of Catholic piety, and in its emphasis on community, sharing and spontaneity had similarities in form with the charismatic prayer group.

Early CCR publications, such as Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan’s Catholic Pentecostals (1969), Jim Cavnar’s Prayer Meetings (1969) and Stephen Clark’s Confirmation and “Baptism in the Holy Spirit (1969) flowed from these Midwest centres and a conference at Notre Dame grew annually from 1967. In October of the same year a monthly Day of Renewal started in Michigan; then in 1969 Ann Arbor Catholics began to host a conference for leaders of communities and also developed a charismatic spiritual formation course known as Life in the Spirit, for which a manual was published in 1971. Meanwhile, Roman Catholic prayer groups formed on various university campuses, and groups and ‘Days of Renewal’ began in cities around the country. In 1970, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Committee (CCRSC, later called the National Service Committee) was formally established which consisted of upper Midwest leaders. Under the leadership of this group, South Bend had responsibility for the Notre
Dame conferences and a communication centre (established in 1969) while Ann Arbor coordinated *New Covenant* magazine and leaders conferences. The energies for North American CCR increasingly came from formalised covenant communities – The Word of God (1970) in Ann Arbor and True House (1971) and the People of Praise (1971) in South Bend. Soon the influence of these small upper Midwest cities would be felt internationally.

There are some limitations to a strictly American-centric account of Roman Catholic charismatic origins, and more research is required on other national contexts for charismatic or proto-charismatic antecedents. In France, for example, from the 1930s the influential Abbé Paul Couturier was arguably proto-charismatic in his emphasis on unity of Christians in the Holy Spirit; his Protestant friends included Thomas Roberts, a missionary of the Apostolic Church of Wales. In South America, for example, renewal amongst Roman Catholics seems to have begun in Bogotá, Columbia, independently from and at around the same time as ‘Duquesne’. In the case of Australia CCR was preceded by these events in the United States. Importantly, though, it did not appear primarily as the result from a strategy to transplant the movement, but rather through indirect and generally haphazard influences from the United States. These interplayed significantly with religious uncertainties and energies on the ground.

The Australian social and religious context, similar to the United States in many respects, was one of increasing uncertainties and divisive controversies from the mid-1960s, particularly over *Humanae Vitae* and growing Australian involvement in the Vietnam War. Students preparing for priesthood in Australia declined numerically from 1486 in 1961 to 977 in 1971. Other priests and religious began to ‘opt out’. One Australian priest in Hunter’s Hill, New South Wales, described how, as in other Western contexts, a ‘blight’ seemed apparent in Australian society and Church in the late 1960s. He recalled that by the beginning of the next decade, ‘All of us had friends who had left – many of them generous, gifted, hard-working people. Why had they left? A chill entered one’s soul with the next question: If they left will I last.’ Articles describing CCR in the United States was circulating in Australia by early 1968. In Canberra, Fr. Gus Kramer first heard of occurrences in America through the evangelical magazine *Christian Life*, whose publisher Robert Walker was sympathetic to charismatic renewal, and a story headlined “The Holy Spirit comes even upon Catholics”. Kramer could see how greater evidence of the work of the Spirit, manifestations, and impulse for enthusiasm and commitment might benefit the Church. In a 1968 Pentecost Sunday sermon he mentioned these developments, but at that time did not pursue charismatic renewal, instead assuming that ‘if that is the will of God,
to renew the whole Church in this way, He will surely bring this renewal here to Australia, I don’t have to do anything in this direction.”

CCR in Australia then had two initial emergences. The first was in Sydney, at St. Michael’s College, under the leadership of Alex Reichel. An academic, originally from Tamworth, New South Wales, Reichel had been undertaking research at the University of Colorado – one of the institutions where CCR had gathered support soon after ‘Duquesne’— and he began to attend a Friday night prayer meeting in Boulder, where he later experienced baptism in the Spirit. During his time in the United States, Reichel visited charismatic communities in South Bend and Ann Arbor, and the Benedictine Monastery at Bennett Lake, Wisconsin. He returned to Sydney in January 1969 when, in possession of a letter from a charismatic priest at Notre Dame, he met with Norman T. Gilroy, the Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney. With Gilroy’s encouragement, Reichel then received permission to start a prayer meeting at St Michael’s, which after a slow start (comically, if discouragingly, someone wrote the graffiti ‘Mission Impossible’ over an advertising poster), began to grow. Reichel was soon joined by another returning Australian – the Cistercian and former Abbot of our Lady of Guadalupe in Oregon, Fr. Gerald Hawkins, who was originally from Melbourne. Hawkins had been known to members of the American CCRSC; and, a friend of Cardinal Gilroy, he became his liaison with prayer groups in Sydney and also spread renewal to some other parts of the country.

The second city of emergence was Brisbane, where Fr. Vincent Hobbs, a curate in the parish suburb of Bardon, first heard of Roman Catholics experiencing baptism in the Spirit in a magazine article by Fr. Edward D. O’Connor, a theologian based at Notre Dame, early in 1970. Through his involvement in Cursillo, Hobbs came across an SVD priest, Fr. Frank Gerry, who had also recently returned from the United States, where he had witnessed the charismatic movement. Unaware of the prayer group in Sydney, Hobbs asked Fr. Gerry to testify to a group of Cursillo participants and others in the city. At this time American media, such as Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan’s Catholic Pentecostals and a tape recording by the former on the beginnings of CCR in America, was also being passed around some Brisbane Catholics. Hobbs then experienced baptism in the Spirit through a married couple in nearby Nambour who had been in correspondence with Alex Reichel. The group in Bardon started to grow and Spirit baptisms occurred, along with the manifestation of supernatural gifts. Although both Reichel and Hawkins visited Brisbane in 1971, CCR in Bardon largely developed independently, receiving significant early support from local pentecostal leaders and their congregations and the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI). The regular Friday night prayer meeting in Bardon was attended regularly by 200 by the end of 1972, and four home prayer groups in various city suburbs established. ‘Bardon’, as explained below, rather than Sydney, would actually become the flagship location for CCR in Australia.
In the period following these initial emergences prayer groups appeared in other parts of Australia. In Adelaide, a Sister of Mercy, Patricia Kenny, brought charismatic practice after being baptised in the Spirit in Sydney through Hawkins.\textsuperscript{31} In Canberra, two priests, Fr. Gus Kramer, mentioned above, and Fr Brian Murphy SJ, came into contact with Sydney charismatics; though the former actually experienced the Spirit (and healing from an ulcer) through a Canberra ecumenical prayer group in the home of an Anglican clergyman. It was to a group of \textit{cursillistas} that Kramer first spoke of these experiences. Here, too, American media, including the Ranagahans’ \textit{Catholic Pentecostals}, was available; but Kramer was also thankful to the leadership and congregation of the local ‘full gospel’ crusade, who he recalled, had showed the Roman Catholics ‘what openness to the Holy Spirit meant’ and provided instruction.\textsuperscript{32} In Melbourne, a prayer group began at the Redemptorist Seminary, Kew, in 1972 through the activities of Fr. Humphrey O’Leary and others. It first met in a parlor with around 25 attending, but the group soon expanded to around 180. Here, also, the teaching and ministry of local Pentecostals was influential in the establishment of CCR.\textsuperscript{33}

Overall then, \textit{indirect} American influence played an important role in the emergence of CCR; but it would be an over-simplification to suggest that CCR straightforwardly appeared in Australia as a branch from an American tree. Its emergence in Australian cities appears more ‘rhizomal’, with the United States was the ultimate source. It was established primarily through the witness of Australians returning from the United States – the global mobilities of Roman Catholic religious such as Fr. Hawkins (who in 1973 moved to join a monastery on the Island of Grenada in the Caribbean\textsuperscript{34}) was a factor in this - and also the availability of American newspaper articles and charismatic books and cassettes. These influences, however significant, were assisted by the situation on the ground. As the case in the United States only a few years earlier – there seemed to be fertile soil for CCR. The networks of Cursillo provided a ready context through which renewal could take hold. As in America, furthermore, there were many examples of convergences between Roman Catholics, denominational and independent Pentecostals, and mainline Protestants. The ecumenical impulse arising from Vatican II, of course, was a significant encouragement for inter-denominational engagement. However, another contributing factor to such contact was suburbanisation, and the linked development of declining connections with Roman Catholic Ireland: increasingly, Protestant and Catholic were rubbing shoulders, and the latter began to appear less ‘foreign’.\textsuperscript{35}

Pentecostals, in particular, had been known for their hostility towards Catholicism. However, in the United States there was already a strong precedent
for cooperation – in particular through the FGMBFI, a group which sought to promote Spirit baptism amongst non-Pentecostals. This group manifested the greater post-war social mobility of Pentecostals, and as already mentioned, had supported renewal amongst Roman Catholics in Brisbane, where a branch had recently been established. When a Brisbane Charismatic Minister’s Fellowship was established in 1973, it included both Pentecostals and Catholics – as well as various other mainline denominations – seeking to ‘promote the unity of the Body of Christ’. Queensland Assemblies of God Pastor Gerald Rowland was one to express a concern for a unity between Protestants and Catholics, arguing: ‘We need to break down the walls of isolation and come together for conversations in the spirit of Christian love.’ Similarly, in Sydney, Alex Reichel established links with the FGMBFI and various key Pentecostal leaders in New South Wales. In many cases, a natural affinity developed; such ecumenical relations, however, along with concerns about so-called excesses in charismatic practices, also led to some criticism from traditionalist Pentecostals and produced tensions in the Assemblies of God (AGA) in the early 1970s. Furthermore, there were some efforts by Pentecostal churches to draw Australian Catholics into their churches; and towards the end of the decade, and as neo-Pentecostal churches, such as the Christian Outreach Centre (founded in Brisbane in 1974) grew in strength, greater numbers of Catholics and other mainliners drifted towards them.

‘Here was the place to see it’: the upper Midwest cockpit and Australian CCR

From the early 1970s, the American CCRSC became increasingly aware of Roman Catholic renewal taking off in other national contexts, and its own growing sphere of influence internationally. By mid-decade, they were being encouraged by Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels, and the most influential member of the Catholic hierarchy to support CCR, in this leading role. Bobbie Cavnar, of the Community of God’s Delight, Texas, later recalled a conversation when the Cardinal informed American leaders that they “shouldn’t be self-conscious about the role that the Lord has placed [you] in” – suggesting that just as Europe’s religious orders had opened the West to evangelisation, so this was now happening in reverse, though this time with American leadership now set to influence the movement worldwide. South Bend and Ann Arbor were the key actors. As early as July 1971 New Covenant was sent to 26 countries worldwide. In the same year, the fifth annual Notre Dame conference had a particularly ‘international’ flavour, such was the attendance from other countries. By late 1972 the American CCRSC had taken responsibility ‘for formulating
International strategy and for supervising it’, with Ralph Martin, a lay leader at Ann Arbor, heading up what became the International Communications Office.42 In 1974, in a revised edition to a book published four years earlier, Edward O’Connor explained that since 1970, ‘The renewal has become solidly established in Australia, England, Ireland and, what is even more significant, in countries of other languages, notable Mexico, Brazil and France.’43

By late 1972 the CCRSC had identified Australian charismatic renewal as one of the most promising outside the United States.44 Around this time, direct and increasingly relational links between Australia and the upper Midwest strengthened considerably. Life in the Spirit seminars had come to be used widely and American tapes and literature were sought and disseminated. The group in Perth, Kevin Ranaghan was told in 1973, had ‘a library of just about every tape that we have ever put out.’45 Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan’s trip to New Zealand and Australia that year solidified links with the country; in particular with Roman Catholic renewal in Brisbane, based in Bardon. The American CCRSC already perceived that the renewal was most ‘stable’ in Brisbane; and in contrast the movement in Sydney seemed to lack unity.46 Ranaghan confirmed to American colleagues the next year that ‘The status of the charismatic renewal in Brisbane is just as wonderful as we all thought it was’, with three to four hundred Catholics involved. CCR in the city was ecumenical, with strong links with pentecostals, but distinctively Roman Catholic; there was a sense of community and mutual commitment; and there was unity and stable leadership under Fr. Vincent Hobbs and Brian Smith, a layman who had received baptism in the Spirit when the priest laid hands on him.47 Brisbane also clearly had the capacity to take a leading role in supporting CCR nationally. At around this time, a service center in Brisbane began to take a wider role in disseminating charismatic text and audio media across Australia. Ranaghan recommended that this Brisbane service center should become the agent for the distribution of American teaching – with reel to reel master tapes sent from South Bend which could be recorded onto cassette locally.48 Material sent from South Bend and Ann Arbor to Brisbane was distributed to Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia. New Covenant arrived by air freight and was then mailed out from the city.49 Music, too, began to arrive through Brisbane, with albums from The Word of God community and the Episcopalian Church of the Redeemer, Houston, Texas, increasingly available.50 A similar distribution centre arrangement was set up with a group in London, which carried CCRSC materials to the United Kingdom, Ireland and continental Europe.51 By determining the flows of media which were so crucial to the development of charismatic renewal and selecting suitable
regional agents, the global influence of the Notre Dame-Ann Arbor axis was consolidated.

At the same time, Australian leaders were visiting the United States. The annual international Notre Conference attracted a few visitors from Australia in 1972. In 1973, as the opening vignette described, twelve Australians – from five major cities – attended. At this point, CCR in Australia was yet to have its first national conference, and the scale of the gathering at Notre Dame impressed the visitors. For one, from Brisbane, the final Mass – celebrated by 600 priests – was ‘a tremendously moving experience.’ Fr. Tom White, from Sydney, reported the powerful memory of an open-air Mass at Our Lady’s Grotto, where the liturgy of the word was ‘gloriously spontaneous’; he described how an eleven year old girl had gone to the altar during thanksgiving prayers and spoke a prophecy calling all to follow Mary’s example by surrendering to the Holy Spirit. White’s report also communicated teaching emphases from the conference: the need to integrate prayer groups with the structural authority of the Church; the relationship between charismatic prayer and the Eucharist; the role of Mary in the experience of the Holy Spirit. The condensed version of the keynote address of Harold Cohen S. J., of Loyola University, was included in the Brisbane centre’s Newsletter.

The conference, however, was not the only attraction. The Australians spent time visiting the covenant communities in South Bend (the People of Praise and True House) and Ann Arbor (The Word of God). Again, these impressed – between eight hundred and one thousand regularly attended The Word of God meetings. The Australians reported the powerful experience of community love. ‘If one wanted proof of the validity of Charismatic Renewal’, said Marie Miscamble (from Brisbane) of True House, ‘then here was the place to see it.’ The experience of community living proved very enjoyable: ‘Cementing Australian-American relationships and having fun unexpectedly at the same time.’ After Ann Arbor, the group divided – with some heading to Houston, and the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, others to the Benedictine monastery of Pecos, New Mexico. Fr. Vincent Hobbs, from Brisbane, spent three months visiting different communities. These experiences were shared on return to Australia. In Brisbane, Miscamble gave teaching on her experiences of ‘God’s love in the Charismatic Community.’ John Sherwood, a solicitor from Sydney, brought home news of the trend of ‘powerful charismatic Christian communities which are springing up’.

In the following years there were further visits to the South Bend and Ann Arbor communities, with visits to other charismatic flagshipso on the Roman Catholic
and Protestant ‘pilgrimage’ circuit, such as the House of Prayer Experience (HOPE), Convent Station and Melodyland, Anaheim (with the Disneyland experience, also, taken in), becoming additions to the itinerary. The visits to covenant communities contributed to their emergence in Australia. Brisbane leader Brian Smith established a strong affinity with Ralph Martin (who also visited Australia in 1975), and the Ann Arbor community; and in 1975 the Brisbane Covenant Community – later the Emmanuel Covenant Community – was formed. This was largely modelled on American patterns, and close transnational pastoral connections were established with Ann Arbor. From 1976, Emmanuel participated in an Association of Communities, with Smith the only non-American on the Council. Emmanuel was now the leading community in Australia, soon assisting in the formation of similar communities in other cities.

The early 1970s, therefore, saw significant transnational engagement between Roman Catholic charismatics in Australia and the United States. Brisbane became particularly important point of connection – from 1974 taking bookings for the whole of Australia for the international conference – having been identified by CCRSC leaders as a kindred spirit. This solidified the influence of the upper Midwest American cockpit in Australia, allowing the inflow of its teaching and models for ministry.

“The Spirit is a-movin’”: national and global entanglements

This transnational interaction with the American upper Midwest had an important role in shaping both the national and global sensibilities of Australian CCR. One song popular with the Brisbane CCR was American Catholic Carey Landry’s ‘The Spirit is a-movin’ (1970); the lyrics rejoiced over the Spirit’s work across the nation, but also the rebirth of the world. Australian CCR, similarly, during this period began to juxtapose national identification with a global awareness.

October 1973 saw the establishment of a National Advisory Committee in Australia, with Brisbane’s Brian Smith as chairman, and the Brisbane communications centre formally given a national role (although it had this informally since earlier that year). Its purpose was to distribute charismatic media, including a Newsletter across Australia, and also beyond to the Pacific Islands and South East Asia. The structure of CCR in Australia was therefore very similar to that modelled in the United States. The Americans supported this development, as well as the emergence of Brisbane as a national hub for Roman Catholic renewal. Indeed, it was the twelve Australians’ experience of travelling
together in the upper Midwest earlier in 1973 through which a sense of a solidarity within Australian charismatic renewal had first emerged— and during the stay at Ann Arbor that a potential list of representatives for the National Advisory Committee was drawn up.

The Brisbane communications centre produced an Australian Dictionary of Prayer Groups (the CCRSC had one in North America). It sought to break the barriers of vast geographical separation within the country through instigating national prayer, each day at noon. ‘Though miles may separate us’, the Newsletter said, ‘our prayer will ascend to Heaven’. Prayer had a trans-local quality. Alongside the American text and audio media it distributed, the Brisbane centre had always made available recordings of the Bardon Friday night meetings, and was concerned to provide further indigenous instruction on renewal: ‘There is a need for more Australian teaching to be made available’, declared the Newsletter in 1974. Such endeavors contributed to a growing sense of Australian Catholic charismatic identity. On the Australians’ return from America in 1973, an article in the Brisbane Newsletter reported:

For the first time we worked in real love and unity in the Holy Spirit for our Land, for Australia, this great South Land of the Holy Spirit, not as Queenlanders or Victorians or New South Welshmen or West Australians or South Australians etc. etc. As Christians of Australia. Please pray that this is only the beginning of a real work of God uniting all Australia to the Praise and Glory of God.

The phrase, ‘great south land of the Holy Spirit’ became an important articulation of Australian identity. It perhaps carried particular significance for Catholics because it was claimed ‘Australiа del Espiritu Santo’ was the name to have been used by the seventeenth century Spanish explorer, Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, when he landed in the New Hebrides, seeking with King Phillip II’s backing to discover the unknown southern land. At the first national conference for CCR in Australia in 1974, Brian Smith asserted: ‘If this is not called the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit, then we aim to make it so and I believe that we need to listen to the whole of Australia.’ During this time, CCR was growing in all the major Australian cities. It was estimated in 1976 that some 7,000 Roman Catholics were involved in the renewal across the country. Australia, furthermore, was increasingly understood to have a wider global responsibility. The Newsletter sought donations to allow the delivery of literature by air to Pacific Islands; while news appeared from locations as far away as the Diocese of Sambalpur, India, and Tokyo, Japan. ‘It is to Australia that our brothers in Asia look’, argued the Newsletter in 1974. Later, from 1978, the Brisbane
community was sending teams to build CCR communities in Singapore, Malaysia and China. The country was becoming a global pan-regional hub for CCR.

Alongside the emergence of a national CCR movement, there was active participation in the inter-denominational scene at the national level. The Temple Trust, an ecumenical charismatic service agency, had been founded in 1971 by Alan Langstaff, a Methodist who was one of various Protestants to come into the renewal through the Reichel’s Catholic prayer group at St Michael’s College in Sydney. The organisation was based on the ecumenical model of the Fountain Trust in Britain, whose leading light, Michael Harper, a prominent proponent of charismatic loyalty to their denominations, had first visited Australia in 1967. Langstaff’s organisation ran national conferences which were attended by Catholics, displaying at a national level the kind of ecumenical interaction which was already becoming apparent in places such as Brisbane. Following the Temple Trust gathering in Canberra in early 1974, the Brisbane Newsletter reported how God had ‘brought about a real healing between Protestant and Catholic and dissolved feelings of enmity with His own boundless love and a new day is dawning and together we will walk and work, proclaiming that God is in our Land’. The Trust’s national magazine, Vision, from its beginning included articles by Roman Catholic leaders. The organisation laid particular emphasis on activism and intercession in response to national spiritual and moral decline (during the Canberra conference, for example, a telegram was sent to the Australian Prime Minister raising concerns). Involvement in the Temple Trust consolidated amongst Roman Catholics a sense of Australian charismatic identity.

At the same time, the connection with the American upper Midwest drew Australian Catholics into a global CCR milieu. The international meeting of the 1973 Notre Dame conference, Marie Miscamble reported, had been attended by 300 Roman Catholics from 25 nations, with all telling ‘of the progress of Charismatic Renewal in their respective countries’. The travel itineraries of Australian leaders expanded: in 1974 Brian Smith and others not only toured the United States, but also visited charismatics in Dublin, Belfast, England and Jerusalem. These travellers, along with the global reports of New Covenant, informed Australians of wider developments. A letter from Brian Smith that year described his travels, with Fr. Humphrey O’Leary of Melbourne, to Belfast, where he spoke at a meeting in the famous Clonard Street monastery on the peace line; and of England, where visits included the quiet rural ecumenical community at Post Green, Dorset. As their global horizons enlarged, by the mid-1970s Australian Catholic charismatics displayed a global sensibility alongside their national articulation of religious identity. Having visited a small ecumenical
gathering in Warwick, a small town one hundred miles from Brisbane, one leader offered a powerful articulation of this, saying: ‘Geography might separate us physically but certainly not spiritually and I think at times it is very reassuring to know we are all part of the one body whether it be Brisbane, Sydney, Northern Ireland, Ann Arbor USA, or Warwick.’\textsuperscript{83} Another Australian reflected on how the ‘simultaneous speaking of the Spirit to the Church “word-wide” must surely be a divine sign of the relevance of the message to our time’.\textsuperscript{84} The message of Christian love, he argued was the same ‘In America, in Australia, in Adelaide – and I believe in Rome, and Melbourne, in India and South Africa – and no doubt in the Assemblies of God, the Anglican Prayer Groups and the Episcopalian Communion.’\textsuperscript{85}

This articulation of this global imaginary – of a commonality with American charismatics, but also with co-practitioners on other continents – was cemented by organisational developments within the movement from 1973. The CCRSC, while clearly adopting a strategic role in global CCR, were not intent on monopolising their own authority. The International Communications Office in Ann Arbor sought to appoint an international advisory committee earlier that year, which included Brian Smith, who was also appointed as a contributing editor of \textit{New Covenant}.\textsuperscript{86} They looked for further integration of renewal within the Church, and with the assistance of Cardinal Suenens in October 1973 organised an International Leaders’ Conference, at Grottaferrata, Italy. The conference was not held in Rome, so as not to give the impression it had formal approval of the Church, but some of the participants – including some Australians – had an audience with the Pope. Those attending came from at least 25 different countries – as various as Ireland, Taiwan, Chile and South Africa – and three Australians, Smith, Tom White and Brian Murphy, were present.\textsuperscript{87} Smith, along with two members of the American CCRSC – Ranaghan of Notre Dame and Steve Clark of Ann Arbor – and the Mexican Fr. Salvador Carillo, was a keynote speaker. His topic was ‘The beginnings of the charismatic renewal in a country’. Although the talk included discussion on the connections with renewal in the United States, Smith offered a specifically Australian perspective on CCR to this international gathering.\textsuperscript{88} It confirmed his own leading role in CCR: a movement which after the Grottaferrata meeting would inevitably become increasingly ‘global’ in its orientation as the American CCRSC, with the assistance of Cardinal Suenens, continued to seek integration with central Church structures. In 1975, the annual Notre Dame conference, which had begun in 1967, was held in Rome itself, with various Australians attending. For Ralph Martin, of the ICO, writing in \textit{New Covenant}, this ‘left everyone with a deeper appreciation for the international dimensions of the charismatic renewal’. As Roman Catholics from...
different nations attended meetings and ate together, he found ‘a tremendous sense of unity [...] a sense that the work of the Spirit transcends national boundaries and language barriers, a sense of the universal nature of the church.’  

In 1976, at Cardinal Suenens’s invitation, the International Communications Office moved from Ann Arbor to Belgium. In 1981 it moved to Rome, where it became the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office (ICCRO). With such developments, the association of CCR with the global shape of the Catholic Church was further enhanced.

**Conclusion**

This article has explored the emergence of CCR ‘in a country’, but has argued that such was the early influence of South Bend, Indiana, and Ann Arbor, Michigan, a transnational perspective is required to understand charismatic developments in Australia. The initial American influence on the origins of CCR in Australia was substantial but indirect and needs to be seen in the context of mid-1960s anxieties over social, political and religious developments in the Australian Church, the influence of the Cursillo network in the country, and local interactions between Roman Catholics and both pentecostal and mainline Protestants. Increasingly, transnational connections with the American upper Midwest ‘cockpit’ intensified and became more direct through flows of literature and tapes, the arrival of high-profile speakers and from 1972 onwards the visits of Australians to the Notre Dame conferences and covenant communities in South Bend, Ann Arbor and elsewhere. These flows and mobilities had a significant impact on the shaping of CCR in Australia, including the formation of covenant communities, with Brisbane the junction box for these interactions. Suspicion of American Christianity - which as Glen O’Brien has shown, notwithstanding the religious ‘drift’ towards the United States, was still sometimes apparent in post-war Australian Protestantism - seems largely absent. In the case of charismatic renewal, it was links with the United States, rather than traditional connections which Ireland, which were now shaping the culture of Australian Catholicism.

However, transnational relations with the United States, and the American CCRSC, also contributed to complex entanglements and articulations of the national and global. The basic model of a national committee with oversight for CCR and a communications centre which appeared in Australia during 1973 – one which was broadly based on American structures – had the effect of producing a sense of national religious solidarity and identity. The description of the ‘great southland of the Holy Spirit’ had a key articulation of this. When Brian Murphy SJ, one of those mentioned in the opening vignette who visited Notre
Dame in 1973, visited England that same year, it was said he informed colleagues that while both countries ‘can learn much from the USA’ it was important to remember ‘the Holy Spirit works UNIQUELY in each country.’ Furthermore, although the Americans exercised a kind of patronage by identifying Brisbane as a suitable partner, they also empowered Brisbane to become a national hub with a sense of wider pan-regional leadership and responsibility. Simultaneously the role of the American CCRSC in creating an international CCR network, the centre of gravity for which gradually began to shift in 1973 from the United States upper Midwest towards Europe and then Rome, also contributed to a global imaginary amongst Australian Catholic charismatics. Further detailed research on other national and regional contexts may find similar patterns of the spread and development of CCR.

Despite this gradual shift towards Europe and the increasing centralisation of CCR within the Church, South Bend and Ann Arbor maintained a notable level of global influence. The People of Praise and The Word of God covenant communities drew large numbers of international visitors, and in 1976, as mentioned above, established the Association of Communities. However, following a split in the early 1980s, Emmanuel, along with the Community of God’s Delight, Houston, and others, formed the International Brotherhood of Communities (IBOC), of which the Australian Brian Smith was chairman. This came to establish closer relations with the Vatican - becoming the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Communities and Fellowships. It included communities in the United States, Canada, France, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur. Smith was the first President.92 In the 1970s transnational links with America had drawn Australia into the global milieu of CCR, and by the 1980s the country was well established as a leading participant within a worldwide movement in its own right.

Dr John Maiden is Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at The Open University in the United Kingdom. He is the author and editor of various books and articles on twentieth century evangelical and charismatic Christianity in a range of national and transnational contexts.

1 Newsletter (for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal). July 1973, p. 1, University of Notre Dame Archives [hereafter UNDA], Louis Rogge Collection (manuscripts) [hereafter CROG], box 8 folder 1, ‘Newsletter: Australia Catholic Charismatic Conference, 1974-1975’. Note: the Newsletter changed its name various times, and this is reflected in the citations below.

3 Marie Miscamble, ‘Impressions’, Newsletter (for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal), July 1973, pp. 2-6, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1. Miscamble lists the twelve Australians as: Neil and Beulah Hayter (Adelaide); Tony Ryan and Adrian Commadeur (Melbourne); John Sherwood, Ed Dearn and Fr Tom White (Sydney); Fr. Brian Murphy (Canberra); Fr. Vince Hobbs, Brian Smith, John Carroll, Marie Miscamble (Brisbane).


5 Three Australians – two from Sydney and one from Brisbane – had attended for the first time the previous year.

6 New Covenant, 3/1, July 1973, front cover.


14 For example, Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan wrote in 1969: ‘Our suspicion that this experience of renewal, now widespread, was not new to American Catholics was confirmed as we heard of, or received letters from, individuals and groups of Catholics around the land. From Florida, California, Texas, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, we learn of the quiet work of the Holy Spirit over the years.’ *Catholic Pentecostals* (Paramus: Paulist Press, 1969), p. 49.


17 On Cursillo, see: Kristy Nabham-Warren, “‘We are the church’; the Cursillo movement and the reinvention of Catholic identities in postwar America and beyond”, *US Catholic Historian*, 33/1 (2015), 81-98.

18 Jim Manney, ‘Before Duquesne: sources of renewal’, *New Covenant*, pp. 12-17. Furthermore, Ralph Martin and Steve Clark, who became leading figures in CCR, were both on the National Cursillo Secretariat.


26 Fr. Gus Kramer, ‘Blackfriars, Canberra’, *Newsletter (Serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific)*, June 1974, pp. 21-23, quote at p. 21, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


28 The biographical detail on Reichel, and also Hawkins, is drawn from Mark Hutchinson, ‘Reichel, Álex (1927-?)’, *Australasian dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements*, online. On Hawkins links with the CCRSC see UNDA, James E. Byrne papers [hereafter JEB], Service committee correspondence 1970-1973, Kevin Ranaghan, ‘The Ranaghan’s trip to New Zealand and Australia’. It is not known for sure how Hawkins became involved in CCR. However, a possible link was his role as Abbot of Our Lady of Guadalupe priory from 1951. This had been situated in Pecos, New Mexico, and although it relocated to Oregon in the 1950s, the original monastery was later reorganised by monks influenced by CCR. See: Connelly, ‘The Charismatic Movement 1967-1970’, p. 218.
The information on Brisbane in this paragraph is taken from three sources, except where otherwise indicated. These are: The little church on the hill: memories of early years of Bardon Catholic Charismatic Renewal (Compiled by Vince and Norma Kearney and Kathleen Cosgrove, n.d.), 5-9; Smith, Streams of living water, 9-17; Brian Smith, ‘The beginnings of charismatic renewal in a country’, presentation to First International Leader’s Conference, Grottaferrata, Italy, October 9-11, 1973, Donald Gee Research Centre, Fountain Trust collection, Box 1.


Fr H. O’Leary, ‘Priests and prayer groups’, Newsletter (Serving the charismatic renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), June 1974, pp. 9-12, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.

Newsletter (for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal), August 1973, p. 8, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


Hutchinson, ‘Reichel’.

When the Ranaghans visited Brisbane in 1973, they found there was some pressure from Pentecostals, but that Catholics remained loyal to their denomination. See UNDA, James E. Byrne papers, Service committee correspondence 1970-1973, Kevin Ranaghan, ‘The Ranaghan’s trip to New Zealand and Australia’, p. 19. On Pentecostal tensions concerning relations with charismatics, and also the drift from the mid-1970s of Catholics and other mainliner churchgoers towards neo-Pentecostal groups, see Shane Clifton, ‘Australian Pentecostalism: origins, developments and trends’ in Vinson Synan and Amos Young, Global renewal Christianity: Spirit-empowered movements (Orlando: Charisma House Publishing, 2015), pp. 301-5.


SoS, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Committee (NSC) minutes, 6-7 July 1971.

SoS, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Committee (NSC) minutes, 28 October 1972.


SoS, CCRSC committee minutes, 28 October 1972.

Kevin Ranaghan, ‘The Ranaghan’s trip to New Zealand and Australia’, p. 22.

SoS, CCRSC committee minutes, 28 October 1972.


Newsletter (Serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), May 1974, p. 16, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


Fr. Tom White, ‘Extracts from the report by Fr T.A. White on the National Charismatic Conference at Notre Dame, South Bend held in June this year.’, August 1973, pp. 9-11, at p. 9. UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.

Fr. Tom White, ‘Extracts from the report by Fr T.A. White on the National Charismatic Conference at Notre Dame, South Bend held in June this year.’, August 1973, pp. 9-11, at pp. 10-11. UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


Smith, Streams of renewal, p. 33-34.


‘Centre news’, Newsletter (serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), July 1974, p. 9-10, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


Smith, Streams of renewal, p. 47; p. 90.

Smith, Streams of renewal, p. 34.

Miscamble, ‘Impressions’, p. 5

Smith, Streams of renewal, p. 33.

Newsletter (Bardon Catholic Charismatic Renewal), March 1973, p. 5, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.

Newsletter (serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), December 1974, p. 4, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


On this apparent connection, see Commadeur, The Spirit in the Church, p. 21.


Letter from Sister Mary Andrew Law (Good Samaritan Convent, Tokyo), Newsletter (serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), July 1974, pp. 5-6. UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1. Letter from Fr Edgar Blain (SVD), National News (serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), January 1975, pp. 3-4, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.


Smith, Streams of Renewal, pp. 73; p. 75.


‘Centre line’, Newsletter (serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific), February 1974, pp. 6-7, at p. 6.

See Sherwood, ‘Reflections on community’.

Miscamble, ‘Impressions’, p. 3.


Shayne Bennett, ‘Holy Spirit leads to Church Unity’, *Newsletter (Serving the Charismatic Renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific)*, December 1974, p. 2, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.

Bob McGowan, ‘The message is the same: “Show your love”’, *Newsletter (Serving the charismatic renewal throughout Australasia and the Pacific)*, March 1975, pp. 9-11, at p. 9, UNDA, CROG, box 8 folder 1.

McGowan, ‘The message is the same: “Show your love”’, p. 11.


List of leaders who attended First International Leader’s Conference, Donald Gee Research Centre, Fountain Trust collection, Box 1.

Brian Smith, ‘The beginnings of charismatic renewal in a country’, presentation to First International Leader’s Conference, Grottaferrata, Italy, October 9-11, 1973, Donald Gee Research Centre, Fountain Trust collection, Box 1.


