

## CYBERJOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL CHARISMATIC RESEARCH

### “WATER BAPTISM IN THE CHURCH FATHERS”

By Martin Parmentier

Following the lead of Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement has adopted the expression “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” as a term describing the renewing experience of the breakthrough of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. This most common expression, “Baptism in the Spirit”, is a source of many misunderstandings. Classical Pentecostalism used it in a sense which is highly uncommon until the eighteenth century. It means that a second blessing must follow after conversion or rebirth, which is marked by water baptism. This second blessing is a baptism in or by the Spirit which in its turn evokes the charisms. In our time this two-course rotation lies under heavy attack as unbiblical and untraditional<sup>1</sup>, or it is at best seen as the dogmatization of an experience determined by the lack at a specific time of church history of the experience of the Spirit which ought to be normal in the Christian Church. The latter judgement at least implies that the theological theory of the second blessing is based on a very important fact of experience, namely that people experienced the traditional practice of initiation in the churches as facilitating too little actual initiation into the life of the Spirit. However, the New Testament does not know the term “baptism in the Spirit” as a substantive referring to Christian experience; only the verbal expression “to baptize in the Holy Spirit (and fire)” occurs in all four Gospels to denote the baptism of Jesus in contrast to the water baptism of John the Baptist. But within the practice of Christian initiation there is no separate water baptism and a Spirit baptism, except for two places in Acts that must be seen as exceptions to the rule that water baptism and Spirit baptism go together, although they are discreet features.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, we have no information that Jesus ever baptized anybody with his own hands (John 4:2 says so), so the promise “he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” is not realized in an

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<sup>1</sup>Cp. F.D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, London 1971; J.W. Maris, *Geloof en ervaring van Wesley tot de Pinksterbeweging*, Leiden 1992.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 8:4-25 and 19:1-12. Cp. J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, London 1970.

observable way in the Gospels. Do we have to take John the Baptist's prophecy with a grain of salt then? Well, at least we do know that at Jesus' command (Matthew 28:29) his followers as a rule administered a baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit. Therefore it seems safe to say that in the New Testament there is no separation between water baptism and Spirit baptism: they are two sides of the same coin, namely Christian initiation.

The book by McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*<sup>3</sup>, contains a treasure of early Christian texts, from which it becomes clear that for centuries the link between Christian initiation and the reception of the charismata was commonly experienced in the Church. The small book, *Fanning the Flame* is an informative pamphlet, even in its summarized form. However, a number of critical remarks could be made about the translations and sometimes also the interpretations of the patristic texts that are quoted. I will give one or two examples later on. But first of all, let us hasten to emphasize that the authors have written a very valuable book. McDonnell has unearthed many patristic texts that make us think that the early Church knew something of an organic coherence between Christian initiation and the appearance of the charismata. But perhaps he was just a little too keen to prove his point (which indeed he has).

#### 1. **Texts must be read without an agenda**

To begin with: texts don't always say what we would like them to say. For example, the translation of the passage from *On Baptism* that is quoted by McDonnell<sup>4</sup> is not entirely correct. *Petite de domino peculia gratiae distributiones charismatum subiaccere* does not mean "Ask your Lord for the special gift of his inheritance, the distributed charisms, which form an additional, underlying feature [of baptism]". Such an explicit formulation of an intrinsic connection between water baptism and the

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<sup>3</sup>Second Edition, Collegeville 1994.

<sup>4</sup>*Christian Initiation*, p. 108; *Fanning the Flame* p. 16.

charismata as separate items would be too good to be true. Evans<sup>5</sup> translates correctly: “Ask of your Lord that special grants of grace and appointments of spiritual gifts be yours”. The *peculia gratiae* are “pledges of grace” and may allude to the Spirit itself as “pledge” in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5 and Eph. 1:14; the *distributiones charismatum* are the “varieties of gifts” of 1 Cor. 12:4 and the verb *subiacere* must not be applied to the baptism, but to the baptized, who may now pray that the charisms “are at their disposition”.<sup>6</sup> Thus Tertullian is not talking about charisms as “an additional, underlying feature [of baptism]” but he is simply exhorting his hearers: “Ask the Lord for the pledges of grace, (i.e.) the varieties of charisms, to become available”.

Then there are two matters to which we must draw attention. **First there is the question of the nature of such a coherence between Christian initiation and charismatic life and the question whether charisms only occur in connection with baptism. Secondly, if there was such a coherence, when and where did it get lost, if indeed it did?**

## 2. **Martyrdom especially linked with charisms.**

It is our conviction that baptism was not the only context in which charisms were generated. For example, we may point at the important fact that charismatic phenomena play an important role in the life of candidates for martyrdom. Polycarp

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<sup>5</sup>E. Evans, *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism*, London 1964, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup>A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire Latin-Français des auteurs chrétiens*, Turnhout 1954, p. 781: “être au pouvoir de”, “être à la disposition de”. The Dutch translation of C. Mohrmann, in *Monumenta Christiana III*, Utrecht 1951, p. 271 has: “vraagt... dat... de verscheidenheid der genadegaven met den doop verbonden zij = “ask... that the variety of the gifts of grace be connected with the baptism”. But since Tertullian’s text does not say what precisely the gifts should be connected with, I venture to say, with Evans, that it is better to apply the verb to the being available of the gifts to the baptized. Also, the text as a whole becomes less obscure in this way. Moreover, the verb has a similar meaning in other works of Tertullian: cp. *Ad nationes I*, 10; *Apologeticum XV*, *De Patientia VII* and the statements that God created from nothing and not from “available matter” in *Adversus Marcionem* and *Adversus Hermogenem*. In any case, Mohrmann’s translation of *De Baptismo XX* is less tendentious than McDonnell’s.

gets a vision of the manner of his own martyrdom.<sup>7</sup> The jailed Perpetua and her companions receive “remarkable visions”<sup>8</sup> and moreover a charismatic freedom of speech which causes the guarding officer to become disturbed and grow red<sup>9</sup> and the director of the prison to be converted, because he senses the great power within the prisoners.<sup>10</sup> The Phrygian doctor Alexander is explicitly said to share in “apostolic charisma”, because he urges the martyrs in Lyons in A.D. 177 prophetically to make their confession, which prophetic performance consequently costs him his own life.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, martyrdom itself can be seen as a charisma. Around 300, Methodius of Olympus, who links the martyrdom of Christ with that of the Christian, writes: “Martyrdom is so admirable and desirable, that the Lord Christ himself, the Son of God, honouring it, testified that ‘he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped’<sup>12</sup>, so that he might crown the human to whom he descended, with this charisma”.<sup>13</sup> After the martyrdoms in the Roman Empire had completely ceased in 323 with the last persecution by Constantine’s last surviving colleague Licinius, they only began in the Persian Empire. In the last document written by the emperor Constantine which has been handed down to us, he wrote to King Shapur II of Persia to exhort him to take good care of the Christians in his land.<sup>14</sup> This was well after Constantine had eliminated Licinius and Christianity was the sole religion of an empire with a sole emperor. But since the Roman Empire was the main enemy of the Persian Empire, Christians as

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<sup>7</sup>The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp 12, in : H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford 1972, p. 12/13.

<sup>8</sup>The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas 7 - 14, Musurillo p. 114/115-122/123.

<sup>9</sup>Idem 16, Musurillo p. 124/125.

<sup>10</sup>Idem 9 and 21, Musurillo p. 116/117 and 130/131.

<sup>11</sup>The Martyrs of Lyons 1.49-51, Mursillo 76/77-78/79.

<sup>12</sup>Phil 2:6.

<sup>13</sup>*Discourse concerning martyrs*, as quoted by Theodoret of Cyrus, *Eranistes*, ed. G.H. Ettliger, Oxford 1975, p. 100, line 1-5.

<sup>14</sup>Eusebius of Caesarea, *De Vita Constantini* IV, 9-13, GCS Eusebius I, 1, p. 123-125.

coreligionists of the enemy were in for a hard time. It seems likely, that Constantine's letter did more harm than good to the Christian cause in Persia. The acts of the Persian martyrs do not recount many specific charismatic deeds, but lay great emphasis on the freedom of speech and steadfastness of the martyrs at their trial and during their torture.

In the mid-fifth century, Anahid, the only daughter of a Zoroastrian priest called Adurhormizd, who was "sore tried by an evil spirit" is exorcised and healed through the prayers of Pethion, a Christian holy man, gets converted and receives baptism. There is no mentioning of any charismatic events at the time of her baptism. But her pagan father Adurhormizd, who throws Pethion in prison, gets a good beating in a nightly vision, which causes real pain the next morning. He sends for Pethion, who heals him and converts him too, after which Adurhormizd has to walk his own way of martyrdom. Then it is Anahid's turn. She has a remarkable freedom of speech when she is put to trial, gets badly beaten and thrown in prison, but all her wounds are healed and not a scar is visible on her body after an angel has laid hands on her, as she sees it. Even so, she undergoes more extreme tortures and finally dies. The most important Spirit-filled element here is that Anahid is able to stand such heavy tortures and remains constant and outspoken until the end.<sup>15</sup>

What is important, is that normally, the necessary charisms are freely given to the martyrs, but that no clear connection is made with their baptized or unbaptized state. Martyrdom is a charismatic opportunity by itself.

### **3. Asceticism especially linked with charisms.**

Then there are the self-confessed successors of the martyrs, the ascetics, who strive after an "unbloody martyrdom". Again, their charismatic works may be based on their baptism, but charisms usually do not appear until after life long ascetic endeavours.

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<sup>15</sup>S.P. Brock and S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, Berkeley 1987, p. 82-99.

Much emphasis is laid on the fact that the ascetics have to be careful not to take pride in their charismatic abilities at any time. It was even possible to receive a charism that was useless in the light of one's vocation and sanctification. "It was said of a certain old man", a saying of the desert fathers goes, "that he beseeched God for seven years to receive a certain charism and that it was given to him. Thereupon he went to a certain grand old man and told him about the charism. But when he heard it, the other was very sad and said: 'A great burden?' And he said to the old man: 'Go, make your supplication to God another seven years that it is taken away from you, for it is of no use to you.' And he went away and did so, until it was taken away from him."<sup>16</sup> One has to be careful with charisms, for they can lead to a pride that goes before the proverbial fall. Thus when the monastic reformer Symeon of Mesopotamia is asked about the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 ("If I have all knowledge and all prophecy, and if I speak with the tongues of angels, but I have not love, I am nothing"), he answers: "... I tell you that I have seen people who had reached all the charisms and partook of the Spirit, who nevertheless fell because they did not reach perfect love. There was a nobleman who disposed of all his possessions and sold them, he freed his slaves and he was a knowledgeable and clever person. Now he was famous with everybody for his exalted lifestyle. But at some stage he got a very high opinion of himself and became blinded, so he finally fell into licentiousness and impurity and tens of thousands of evils. Another gave his body to be persecuted and became a confessor. After that, when peace had been established he was set free and became famous. His eyelids had been damaged, because he had been roasted. This man then who was praised and mentioned in the prayers, took some of the bread which had been exposed for sale and gave it to his son. So his mind was as if it had never heard the word of God. Another gave his body to be persecuted and was hung, exposed and then thrown into prison. A religious sister served him faithfully, but she had intercourse with him in the prison and so he fell into fornication. See how the rich man fell who sold his possessions, and also he who gave his body for martyrdom. Yet another experienced ascetic, who lived in the same hours with me and prayed with me, was so

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<sup>16</sup>Paulos Evergetinos, *Synagoge...III*, p. 4-5 1 nr. 15, Athens 1976.

rich in grace, that the charism of healing was given to him. He did not only expel demons, but also cured those whose hands and feet were bound and had severe sufferings by the laying on of hands. But he became so careless and praised to the skies by the world and he rejoiced so much in those things, that he became puffed up and fell to the bottom depths of sin. See, the man who had the 'charisms of healing' also fell; you see how before reaching the fullness of love, they fall. He who has reached love however, is bound and intoxicated. He is sunk and captive to another dimension of the divine and heavenly nature."<sup>17</sup> Symeon knows very well that people quickly attribute spiritual authority to the charismatic, but he warns that no one must boast about his charismatic talents. Healings, revelations and prophecy were used as a basis for spiritual authority, but the temptation for self-inflation and carelessness which led to a fall, was always present. This is why Symeon warns his readers not to exalt themselves above the others and say: "Look, I possess a spiritual charism".<sup>18</sup>

The milieu of the desert fathers provides many examples that emphasize the necessity of a very long preparation before someone may be counted worthy of a specific charism. Almost always the theme of the necessary humility comes with it, but references to baptism are absent. Thus Palladius in his *Lausiac History* tells us the exemplary story of Benjamin, "who at the age of eighty years having reached the perfection of asceticism was counted worthy of the gift of healing, so that every one on whom he laid his hands or to whom he gave oil after blessing, was cured of every ailment. Now this man who was accounted worthy of such a gift, eight months before his death developed dropsy, and his body swelled so greatly that he seemed a second Job... His body [was] so greatly swollen that another man's fingers could not get found one finger of his hand... Then that blessed Benjamin said to us: 'Pray, children, that my inner man may not become dropsical. For my outer man neither benefited me when it was well, nor harmed me when it was ill.' During these eight months a seat was arranged for him, very wide, in which he sat continually, being no longer able to lie

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<sup>17</sup>Makarios/Symeon, *Reden und Briefe*, Logos Z', 14, GCS I, Berlin 1973, p. 107-108.

<sup>18</sup>H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Göttingen 1978, p. 290.

down owing to the other requirements of his body. But while he was in this state of affliction he healed others. I have felt bound to describe this affliction, lest we should be surprised when some untoward fate befalls righteous men. When he died, the lintels and doorposts were removed, that his body might be carried out of the house, so great was the swelling.”<sup>19</sup>

## 5. Charismatic congregations in the early days of Christianity.

So martyrs and monks were special charismatics, but what of the ordinary Christians? The only testimonies we have of truly charismatic congregations antedate the third century. In the second century, we have Hermas who knows a full scale of congregational process of discernment of spirits.<sup>20</sup> The true prophet is recognized as such because the congregation at prayer that tests him activates the Holy Spirit in him. The false prophet however is exposed because the congregation at prayer causes the earthly spirit that dwells in him to flee, with the result that he is unable to utter a word. And there is also Irenaeus who tells us about sundry gifts working in his congregation. As a concrete argument in his struggle with the Gnostics he adduces the evidence that in order to prove that Jesus is God, “those who are in truth his disciples, receiving grace from him, do in his name perform miracles, so as to further the well being of other people, according to the gift that each one has received from him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe and join the church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions and utter prophecies. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Indeed, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what more shall I say? Innumerable are the gifts that the church throughout the whole world has received

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<sup>19</sup>C. Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, Cambridge 1898, p. 35-36; ET W.K. Lowther Clarke, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, ch. 12, London 1918, p. 66-67.

<sup>20</sup>J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy. A Study of the Eleventh Mandate*, Leiden 1973.



from God, in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and that she exercises day by day for the benefit of the gentiles, neither deceiving anyone, nor cheating them. For that which she has received freely from God, she hands out freely". In what follows, Irenaeus contrasts pagan and Christian miracles: "Neither does the church do anything by invoking spirits, or by incantations or any other wicked art. But, directing her prayers to the Lord who made all things, in a pure, sincere and straightforward spirit and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been accustomed to perform miracles for the advantage of humankind, and not to lead them into error".<sup>21</sup> But after the time of this testimony the charisms seem to become a characteristic of increasingly isolated loners and no longer of the congregation as a whole. Was all this the result of the deterring effect of Montanism? It seems unlikely.

First, there is the question of the martyrs. In times of persecution, arbitrary ordinary Christians could be called to testify to their faith, and whether they liked it or not, seal their faith with their blood. The monks, the unbloody martyrs, voluntarily took up their kind of martyrdom. They accepted their vocation as a conscious choice, not as one to which they were forced to show what they were worth. In times of persecution everyone was a potential martyr, but monks took up their state because they chose to. In times of persecution, the decision to be taken came *before* the Christian life: when you became a Christian, it could cost you your life. Later on, a decision had to be taken *inside* the Christian life: if you became a monk, you had to devote your whole life to it. If you did not become a monk, you could take things a little easier as a Christian, after the persecutions. This could lead to a certain relaxation, which in its turn had its effects on the charismatic plain.

## 6. Charisms and eschatology.

But there was more. The passing of the martyrdoms must also have had its effect on the expectation of the imminent end of the world, which is still visible in the New

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<sup>21</sup>*Adversus haereses* II, 32, 4-5; cp. 31,2; SC 294, p. 328-330; ET ANF I, p. 409.

Testament in different forms of intensity, but had already been waning for a long time anyway. In fact, the very first signs of a delay of the end are already visible in Paul's lifetime. In the second century, the problem was sometimes solved by postulating an in-between period which God had inserted in order to give to as many people as possible an opportunity to convert. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin, making a connection between the gifts of Christ as listed in Isaiah and the charismata of the Christians as listed by Paul, write: "Therefore, just as God did not inflict his anger on account of those seven thousand men (1 King 19:14, 18), even so He had now neither yet inflicted judgement, nor does inflict it, knowing that daily some are becoming disciples in the name of Christ, and leaving the path of error; who are also receiving gifts each as he is worthy, illumined through the name of Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding, another counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God."<sup>22</sup> Charisms and crisis, charisms and eschatology always go together; if you start catering for a long period of (Church) history, High Voltage Christianity can easily lose some of its intensity. Moreover, enthusiasts who have to wait too long, often turn into moralists, as the history of e.g. Montanism seems to show.<sup>23</sup>

In McDonnell's concept, Montanism plays a quite different role. The devastating effect of Montanism is the one ground he suggests for the loss of the coherence between initiation and charisms. After its rise in the middle of the second century, this movement of the "new prophets" supposedly had such an off-putting effect on large groups in the Church that the charism of prophecy and in its trail all other more exceptional charisms became unacceptable. The fact that Tertullian, a first crown witness of McDonnell's main thesis, became a montanist later in life, could have seemed to be a complicating factor. But fortunately Tertullian's most important work for their argument, *On Baptism*, originated in his pre-Montanist period. This should at least

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<sup>22</sup>*Dialogue with Trypho* 39,2, Goodspeed p. 135-136.; ET ANF I p. 214.

<sup>23</sup>Cp. M. Parmentier, "Two Early Charismatic Movements: Montanism and Messalianism", in: *Theological Renewal* 3, June/July 1976, p. 14-22.

have raised the question of Tertullian's spiritual development. Surely he did not become a Montanist overnight by a sudden and total conversion, but his spiritual rigorism is there from the beginning. Moreover, there are many things we do not know about the different historical forms of Montanism. It is hard to believe that Montanism was a monolith that was precisely the same in mid second century Asia Minor and in North Africa at the end of that century. McDonnell realizes this when he remarks that "the character of Montanism was not universally the same"<sup>24</sup>, but this possible pluriformity is not explored any further. In any case, it seems to us that the cause of the recession or disappearance of charismatic phenomena in the period of the early Church is insufficiently identified by merely referring to the bogeyman Montanus. There must be more that we can say.

## 7. **Charisma and ministry.**

A very important factor must have been the rise of the Church's ministry. In the Latin West, but also in the Greek East and then also with the Syrians, where once were very many special charismatics, the Church's ministry began to monopolize the charisms. This never worked altogether, for there were always holy spoilsports who had to be hedged in ecclesiastically, or denounced as heretics. But it is a fact that already in the fourth century at least Western fathers have no doubt that charisms belong with the ministers and not with the lay people. Ambrosiaster in his influential commentary on 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, connects the charisms almost exclusively to ministries. Spiritual gifts like prophecy, exorcism and miracles receive a modest place as officia... ecclesiae ad confusionem gentium et dei honorificentiam protestandam, "offices of the Church for the confusion of the pagans and for witnessing to the honour of God".<sup>25</sup> The fact that he expresses the opinion potest... aliquis non esse episcopus et habere in se donum virtutis sanitarum, that "it is possible that someone is not a bishop and has the

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<sup>24</sup>*Christian Initiation*, p. 119.

<sup>25</sup>CSEL 81,2, p. 144,6 etc.

gift of healing in him”<sup>26</sup> speaks volumes about the “normal” course of events. Ambrosiaster also witnesses to an ever increasing tendency in his own time to make the early Christian charisms harmless and to take them away from the laity by applying dispensationalist arguments. He writes *et quare nunc non ita fit, ut habeant homines gratiam dei? Inter initia fieri oportuit, fundamenta fidei acciperent firmitatem. Nunc autem non opus est quia populus populum adducit ad fidem, cum videntur eorum bona opera et praedicatio simplex.* I propose to translate this as follows: “Why does it not happen today that people have the grace of God in this manner? It was fitting that this happened at the beginning, when the foundations of the faith received firmness. But today it is no longer necessary that the laity conducts the laity to the faith, because their good works are seen and simple preaching exists.”<sup>27</sup> In the beginning, charisms were there for all to promote the Christian faith. Now that the whole world has been converted and everybody does good Christian works, it is sufficient to pay attention to the prophecy of the sermon. Of course, Ambrosiaster is just one voice in a chorus still quite diverse. But he reflects a tendency that has the future. Dispensationalism served three purposes: 1<sup>st</sup>. it refuted free charismatic groups that held that the charisms still occurred freely and were kind of proof of authentic Christianity (a line of reasoning still used by Irenaeus<sup>28</sup> and Tertullian<sup>29</sup>); 2<sup>nd</sup>. it swept charismatic remainders under the authority of the Church’s ministry; and finally 3<sup>rd</sup>. it explained the fact that the charisms of the laity were on the retreat.

## **8. The role of infant baptism.**

Naturally , whatever connection there was between Christian initiation and charismatic

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<sup>26</sup>Idem, p. 142,4 etc.

<sup>27</sup>Idem, p. 144-14 etc.

<sup>28</sup>See above note 21.

<sup>29</sup>*Adversus Marcionem* V, 8, 12; Evans p. 560-562, ET p. 561-563.

life cannot have been furthered by infant baptism gradually becoming the rule rather than the exception. Babes and sucklings cannot normally be expected to show sundry gifts of the Spirit, in spite of Psalm 8 verse 3. In order to meet this challenge, confirmation was developed, either as a sacrament or later, after the Reformation, as a public declaration. Without any doubt this landed Christian initiation with a two-phase structure. But when and where did infant baptism begin, how did it develop and when precisely did it become the rule? How was the development in the different regions of the Roman empire and how did the local practice influence baptismal theology?

It is perhaps not without significance, that the very tractate on baptism (ch. 18<sup>30</sup>) by Tertullian which plays such an important role in McDonnell's argumentation (cp. §1) explicitly opposes infant baptism. This means both that around 200 infant baptism was already a reality in North Africa and that Tertullian's tractate must possibly be read in polemical context. Thus he may not just be describing the baptismal practice of his community, but also prescribing it.<sup>31</sup> In 216, Hippolytus, in his *Apostolic Tradition*, decrees that at the baptismal service, infants must be baptized first, before those who can answer for themselves.<sup>32</sup> Since the Roman empire was not converted quickly, the baptism of infants and adults in one service must have been the practice for a long time. What effect did this have on the visible connection between baptism and the reception of the charisms? McDonnell's theory requires a kind of observable charismatic division between baptized infants and baptized adults, either immediately or after some time. But I do not know of any ancient text which addresses this. There are many questions here, but infant baptism is mentioned only four times in the book.

## 9. The postponement of baptism as a further problem.

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<sup>30</sup>Quoted by McDonnell p. 108 note 16, but without raising the question to what extent this fact may have coloured Tertullian's description of baptism.

<sup>31</sup>Cp. E. Schlink, "Die Lehre von der Taufe", in: K.F. Müller, W. Blankenburg, *Leiturgia: Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes: Fünfter Band: Der Taufgottesdienst*, Kassel 1970, p. 746.

<sup>32</sup>*Apostolic Tradition* XVI, 4f.; cp. Schlink p. 746.

A further problem is the practice to postpone baptism. In the early Church, ethical requirements made on the baptized were often so severe, that prospective Christians often put off their baptism until their death-bed. In the fourth century, this had become so much of a problem that fathers like Gregory of Nyssa<sup>33</sup> started to write to exhort those who were postponing their baptism.<sup>34</sup> Thus the congregations must have consisted of a good deal of people who were unbaptized, but yet participated in the church's life. In fact, the unbaptized members of the congregation must have been in the majority for a long time.<sup>35</sup> What was the significance of this for the life in the Spirit? Is it reasonable to assume that only the baptized showed spiritual gifts and that unbaptized members of the congregation had nothing? Were the unbaptized indeed non-charismatic and the baptized charismatic? Or was the reality less clear and clear? Finally this: is it not precisely the practice of infant baptism which has saved the church from a division of Christianity into two groups, the baptized minority and the unbaptized majority?<sup>36</sup>

#### 10. **Christian versus pagan gifts.**

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<sup>33</sup>*Adversus eos qui differunt baptismum*, Opera Vol. X, 2, p. 357-370.

<sup>34</sup>E. Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, Middlegreen 1971, p. 3, 7, 127.

<sup>35</sup>G. Kretschman, "Die Geschichte des Taufgottesdienstes in der alten Kirche", in: *Leiturgia* p. 147 etc.

<sup>36</sup>Idem, p. 148, 280.

And was this connection between baptism and the gifts always so stringent? McDonnell brings many beautiful texts to convince us. But I think they need to be re-examined. Not only are some of the references imprecise, I also have my doubt about the translations and interpretations, as I said before. To give one more example of the latter, the reference to John Apamea<sup>37</sup>. He is introduced as a supporter of a bipartite structure of Christian initiation, but Sebastian Brock, who is referred to as a supporter of this theory, actually offers a quite different picture. The important thing with John is not that he speaks of two baptisms, as he does perhaps in imitation of Philoxenus of Mabbug<sup>38</sup>, but that he speaks of three stages in the Christian life, corresponding to body, soul and spirit. "Growth in the Christian life is seen by John as a gradual process of liberation from the evil passions, and in this process the three levels simply represent three main successive states in what is really a continuum."<sup>39</sup> McDonnell makes much of John of Apamea's emphasis on the fact that there are no charismatic phenomena before baptism to prove their own theory. But it seems to me that this must be interpreted in the context of the struggle between Christianity and paganism. To my opinion, the link between baptism and the charisms serves to discredit whatever paranormal phenomena occurred outside the Christian context. As I have tried to show elsewhere<sup>40</sup>, the charismatic life of the early Christians was constructed in conscious opposition to similar phenomena in other religions. Miracles outside the Christian context were nothing to the Christians. Yet it was not so much the phenomena themselves that differed from religion to religion, but it was the Spirit in which they were performed which made the difference. When we look at the texts, all religions have their own charismatic phenomena. Indeed, all the gifts of the Spirit have their parallels in other religions. The difference between them lies in the god or gods to whom they refer. The main difference is a religious difference, not predominantly one of

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<sup>37</sup>*Fanning the Flame* p. 19, *Christian Initiation* p. 328.

<sup>38</sup>*Christian Initiation* p. 321 etc., 336 etc.

<sup>39</sup>S. Brock, *The Syrian Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, Kalamazoo 1987, p. 79.

<sup>40</sup>"De gaven van de Geest in het vroege christendom", *Bulletin voor charismatische theologie* 37, 1996, p. 10-24, ET "The Gifts of the Spirit in Early Christianity", forthcoming.

phenomenology. This means that in our present context, the question how paranormal activities relate to the Christian charismatic life ought to be on top of the agenda of charismatic theologians. To begin this debate, I would like to propose that the extraordinary gifts which correspond to the phenomenon which in our (post-)modern world is usually designated as “paranormal gifts” was wholeheartedly accepted in the early church if they were used in holiness and if they led those who allowed themselves to be influenced by them to God in the church. In his *Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus pleads for the recognition of members of the congregation with a healing ministry: “If anyone says, ‘I have received a gift of healing by a revelation’, hands shall not be laid on him, for the facts themselves will show whether he has spoken the truth”.<sup>41</sup> Now it is striking how this text varies in its diverse adaptations, especially with regards to the caution required for the church to incorporate such a personal gift. Even so all these versions may reflect a greater or lesser readiness at least to incorporate a personal ability as a Christian charism.<sup>42</sup> Even if the person who comes is a baptized believer (which we do not know), what matters is that his gift is transferred from the personal to the ecclesial level. Water baptism is not a magic rite that automatically erases all non-Christian influence. So a gifted person had to be tested. But as soon as such a “natural” talent came into conflict with the behavioural code, the doctrine and the representatives of the Christian church and seemed to seduce those who allowed themselves to be influenced by him, to adopt other systems of signification, they were regarded as pernicious and demonic. A very important strategy to make sure that pre-Christian gifts were christianized precisely was baptism, both visible as indeed invisible.<sup>43</sup> It was visible baptism that was the outward mark of admittance to the church, but an inward baptism was needed to bring about the actual liberation from the spirits of the old religion.

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<sup>41</sup>Hs. 14 (Dix 15); ed. B. Botte 1963, p. 32; ET G.J. Cuming, *Hippolytus: A Text for Students*, Grove Books, Bramcote Notts. 1976, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup>Cp. M. Parmentier, “Wat is genezing? Gedachten naar aanleiding van een tekst van Hippolytus”, BCT 14, 1984, p. 5-17.

<sup>43</sup>Using the terminology of Philoxenus, cp. *Christian Initiation* p. 322-323.



## 11. Pre-Pentecostal charisms?

However, the Church fathers do not always count pre-baptismal gifts as nothing. At times they express the opinion that the Holy Spirit is also at work outside the baptismal context. Along this line of reasoning, pre-baptismal and pre-Pentecostal gifts cannot just be disregarded. That there is a charismatic presence of the Spirit in Old Testament times and among people who are not yet Christians is attested to in the New Testament, and confirmed by the Church fathers. For example, Origen (as translated into Latin by Jerome) begins his *Homilies on Luke* by ascribing a very important charisma to the whole of the people of Israel (i.e. not just to holy individuals), saying:

“In the past, many claimed to prophesy among the Jewish people. Some were false prophets; among these was Hananiah, son of Azzur (cp. Jer. 28:1-17). Others were true prophets. The people, like ‘well-trained money-changers’<sup>44</sup>, had the gift of the discernment of spirits. Through this gift they accepted some as prophets and rejected others”.<sup>45</sup>

Augustine draws our attention to the fact that the good robber who was crucified with Jesus went to Paradise without being baptized, that Cornelius and his household spoke in tongues before they were baptized, and that Elisabeth and Zacharias, Anna and Simeon prophesied before Pentecost:

“On that which is written in the Gospel: ‘That Jesus baptized more people than John, although he himself did not baptize, but only his disciples’ (cp. John 4:1-2).

The question is asked whether those who have been baptized in the time of which it is written that the Lord baptized more people than John, received the Holy Spirit. For in another place of the Gospel it says: ‘For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because

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<sup>44</sup>An *agraphon*, unwritten saying of Jesus: “Be ye competent money-changers”.

<sup>45</sup>I, 1, SC 87, p. 98; ET J.T. Lienhard, *The Fathers of the Church 94*, Washington 1996, p. 5.

Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:39).

This can be answered easily: the Lord Jesus, who also raised the dead, could make sure that none of them died until after his glorification, that is his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, they received the Holy Spirit. But that robber comes to mind, to whom it was said: 'Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise' (Lk. 23:43), who had not even received the baptism - although Cornelius and those pagans who had come to believe even received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. So I do not see how without the Holy Spirit that robber could have said: 'Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom' (cp. Lk. 23:42), for 'no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3). The Lord himself also showed the fruit of that man's faith when he said: 'Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise'. Therefore, just as by the ineffable power and justice of the God who reigns, baptism has been imputed to the believing robber and that which he could not receive with his crucified body was held to be accepted with his free mind. Thus the Holy Spirit was also given to him in a hidden way before the glorification of the Lord, but it was given in a more manifest way after the manifestation of his divinity. And that it is said that 'as yet the Spirit had not been given' means that the Spirit had not yet appeared in such a way that all people declared that he had been given, just as the Lord also had not yet been glorified among humans, and yet his glorification never ceased to be eternal, as also his showing in mortal flesh is called his advent, for he came there where he was, because 'he came to his own' and 'he was in this world, and the world was made through him' (John 1:11,10) - therefore just as the advent of the Lord is understood as a corporeal showing and yet before this showing he himself spoke through all the holy prophets as the Word of God and the Wisdom of God, thus also the advent of the Holy Spirit is a showing of the Holy Spirit to carnal eyes, when he is seen as fire divided among them and they started to speak in tongues. For if the Holy Spirit was not in human beings before the visible glorification of the Lord, how then could David say: 'And take not they Holy Spirit from me' (Ps. 50:13 = 51:11), or how was Elisabeth filled to prophesy and Zacharias her husband, and Anna and Simeon, about all of whom it is written that they were filled with the Holy Spirit and said the things that

we read in the Gospel? But that God does some things in a hidden way and other things by the visible creation, belongs to the government of providence. By this all divine actions and orderings of places and times are done by most beautiful distinction, although the Godhead herself neither stays nor moves from place to place, nor is she directed or changed by the times. And just as the Lord himself of course had the Holy Spirit with him in the man whom he carried, when he came to John to be baptized, and yet after he had been baptized the Holy Spirit was seen to descend on him in the form of a dove, thus also we must understand that certain saints could have the Holy Spirit in a hidden way before his visible advent. We have spoken in this way, that we might understand that by the visible showing of the Holy Spirit which is called his advent, his fullness is infused more lavishly into the heart of human beings in a manner ineffable and unthought of".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 62, CCSL 44A, p. 132-135. Latin: Ad id quot scriptum est in euangelio: quod baptizabat iesus plures quam iohannes, quamuis ipse non baptizaret sed discipuli eius.

quaeritur utrum qui baptizati sunt illo tempore, quo scriptum est dominum per discipulos suos baptizasse plures quam iohannes, acceperint spiritum sanctum; alio enim loco euangelii sic dicitur: spiritus enim nondum erat datus, quia iesus nondum erat clarificatus. et facillime quidem ita respondetur, quod dominus iesus, qui etiam mortuos suscitabat, poterat neminem illorum mori sinere, donec post eius clarificationem, id est resurrectionem a mortuis et ascensionem in caelum, acciperent spiritum sanctum. sed occurrit animo latro ille, cui dictum est: amen dico tibi, hodie me cum eris in paradiso, qui nec ipsum baptismum acceperat - quamquam cornelius et qui cum eo ex gentibus crediderant spiritum sanctum etiam priusquam baptizarentur acceperint; non tamen uideo, quomodo et ille latro sine spiritu sancto dicere potuerit: domine, memento mei, cum ueneris in regnum tuum; nemo enim dicit dominus iesus, ait apostolus, nisi in spiritu sancto. quomodo ergo ineffabili potestate dominantis dei atque iustitia deputatum est etiam baptismum credenti latroni, et pro accepto habitum in animo libero quod in corpore crucifixo accipi non poterat, sic etiam spiritus sanctus latenter dabatur ante domini clarificationem; post manifestationem autem diuinitatis eius manifestius datus est. et hoc dictum est: spiritus autem nondum erat datus, id est nondum sick apparuerat, ut omnes eum datum esse faterentur, sicut etiam dominus nondum erat clarificatus inter homines, sed tamen clarificatio eius aeterna numquam esse destitit; sicut et aduentus eius ea ipsa dicitur demonstratio in carne mortali, nam illuc uenit ubi erat, quia in sua propria uenit, et in hoc mundo erat, et mundus per eum factus est - sicut ergo domini aduentus intellegitur demonstratio corporalis, et tamen ante hanc demonstrationem ipse in omnibus prophetis sanctis tamquam dei uerbum et dei sapientia locutus est, sic et aduentus spiritus sancti demonstratio spiritus sancti est ipsis etiam oculis carnis, quando uisus est ignis diuisus super eos et coeperunt linguis loqui. nam si non erat in hominibus spiritus sanctus ante domini uisibilem clarificationem, quomodo potuit dicere dauid: et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me; aut quomodo impleta est elisabeth et zacharias uir

Augustine also wants to emphasize the special manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and it may be significant that he does not explicitly mention Cornelius' speaking in tongues but in this text only connects speaking in tongues with Pentecost. But the message is clear: baptism and Pentecost cannot monopolize the Holy Spirit and the charism.

In other words, *if* McDonnell claims that the charisms *only* come after the baptism, he ignores the gifts of the Spirit in the Old Testament.

## 12. Extra-baptismal charisms?

If he is actually claiming that the charisms and baptism always go together, McDonnell presents a too specific and limited polemical theological theory (implying that unbaptized gifts are nothing because they do not refer to the true God) as an empirical fact (that there are no gifts outside baptism). This is evidently untrue. There are gifts outside Christianity also, because all religions have their gifts, or rather, they make use of, and develop, the special abilities with which human beings are created.

Origen, quoted in support of the McDonnell-Montague thesis in the second edition of their book<sup>47</sup>, does in fact on more than one occasion explicitly say that to some extent,

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eius ut prophetarent, et anna et simeon, de quibus omnibus scriptum est quod impleti spiritu sancto illa quae in euangelio legimus dixerint? ut autem quaedam latenter, quaedam uero per uisibilem creaturam uisibiliter deus operetur, pertinet ad gubernationem providentiae, qua omnes diuinae actiones locorum temporum que ordines distinctione pulcherrima peraguntur, cum ipsa diuinitas nec teneatur nec migret locis, nec tendatur uarietur ue temporibus. quomodo autem ipse dominus se cum habebat utique spiritum sanctum in ipso homine quem gerebat, quando ut baptizaretur uenit ad iohannem, et tamen, posteaquam baptizatus est, descendere in eum columbae specie spiritus sanctus uisus est, sic intellegendum est ante manifestum et uisibilem aduentum spiritus sancti quoscumque sanctos eum latenter habere potuisse. ita sane hoc diximus, ut intellegamus etiam ipsa uisibili demonstratione spiritus sancti, qui aduentus eius dicitur, ineffabili uel etiam incogitabili modo largius in hominum corda plenitudinem eius infusam.

<sup>47</sup>p. 133 etc.

the Holy Spirit works in all humankind, not just in those who have been baptized.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, baptism is not the only source of the charisms: the Holy Spirit can also give the charisms directly. Proposing a possible explanation Luke 12:42-46, Origen says in his *On First Principles* (according to Rufinus' Latin translation):

“... the saying in the Gospel about unjust stewards, who must be ‘cut asunder’ and ‘their portion placed with the unbelievers’, as if the portion which was not theirs were to be sent somewhere else, undoubtedly alludes to some sort of punishment, as it seems to me, which falls on those whose spirit has to be separated from their soul. Now if we are to understand this spirit as belonging to the divine nature, that is, as being the Holy Spirit, we shall perceive that the passage relates to the gift of the Holy Spirit. It tells us that when, **whether through baptism or through the grace of the Spirit**, the ‘word of wisdom’ or the ‘word of knowledge’ or of any other endowment has been given [to a human being] as a gift and not rightly used, that is to say, either ‘hidden in the earth’ or ‘bound up in a napkin’, the gift of the Spirit will surely be withdrawn from his soul...”<sup>49</sup>

### 13. **Charisms may vary according to socio-cultural needs.**

And there is more. There is no reason why the charisms should not change in form and content in the course of church history because people and their needs change. The desire for an authentic primitive Christian charismatic experience has sometimes led to a kind of fundamentalist clinging to the list of 1 Corinthians 12. To a certain extent, everyone likes to do this: to identify later experience with the original apostolic experience. McDonnell e.g. does something similar, when they all too quickly identify

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<sup>48</sup>Cp. The commentary on the passage which follows below in SC 253, note 35, p. 237-238.

<sup>49</sup>II, 10, 7, SC 252, p. 390; ET G.W. Butterworth, New York 1966, p. 144. Latin: Qui spiritus si quidem divinae naturae, id est spiritus sanctus intellegendus est, sentiemus hoc dictum de dono spiritus sancti; quod sive per baptismum sive per gratiam spiritus, cum alicui ‘sermo spientiae’ vel ‘sermo scientiae’ vel alterius cuiusque datus est dono et non recte administratus, id est aut ‘in terram’ defossus est aut ‘in sudario’ conligatus, auferetur profecto ab anima donum spiritus...

expressions used by Joseph Hazzaya with the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>50</sup> In this way also, certain fathers of the Church whom we would certainly not call lacking in Spirit, embraced dispensationalism because they were too fixed on the list of 1 Corinthians 12 and the demands which this seemed to make on spiritual life in the Church of their own time. But the Spirit adapts Himself to our weakness (cp. Romans 8:26) and there is no reason why He should not give to every time and place charisms appropriate to the specific needs of that time and place. There is no definitive list of charisms and there never will be. In the monastic tradition, the gift of discerning the spirits could evolve to the discernment of thoughts or discernment full stop, even if it always remained a key gift.<sup>51</sup>

Conversely, the misunderstanding of the nature of an apostolic charism can actually obscure our awareness that something like it is still around. The fathers commonly explained speaking in tongues not as glossolalia (speaking in incomprehensible or angelic languages) but as xenoglossy (speaking in foreign languages that one had not learned), a phenomenon that we now know must always have been rare. Augustine, thinking that speaking in tongues as exercising miraculous linguistic abilities has died out, discovers that wordless praise of God, which he calls “jubilation” is still very much alive in the Church, and the phenomenon is also known outside the Church as a general human possibility.<sup>52</sup> And the gift of healing, which he had almost explained away with the help of dispensationalism, appeared to be exercised amply in his diocese.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the adagium that the pessimist asks: “Where is the sun?” and the optimist says: “There is the sun”, may perhaps be paraphrased as: The dispensationalist ask: “Where are the gifts of the Spirit?” and the non-dispensationalist

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<sup>50</sup>*Fanning the Flame* p. 19, *Christian Initiation* p. 335.

<sup>51</sup>J.T. Lienhard, “On ‘Discernment of Spirits’ in the Early Church”, in: *Theological Studies* 41, 1980, p. 505-529.

<sup>52</sup>For the references, cp. My “Das Zungenreden bei den Kirchenvätern”, in: *Bijdragen, International Journal in Theology and Philosophy*, 55, 1994, p. 376-398.

<sup>53</sup>*De civitate Dei* XXII, 8,9, CCSL 48, p. 815 etc.

says: “There are the gifts of the Spirit!”

#### 14. **McDonnell versus Sullivan.**

Even if it is not the only context for charisms, water baptism and Spirit baptism nevertheless may yet seem to be the most important context for the ordinary believer in ordinary times and in any case their mutual relationship needs further investigation.

Though not entirely unknown even in patristic times, the terminology of two baptism is unusual and in any case not very helpful for theology today. It could seem to reduce water baptism to an ablution marking conversion, as distinct from the reception of the Holy Spirit in a ‘second blessing’. This model, based on the experience of the poor operation of Christian initiation in the last few centuries, is insufficient because it lacks a sufficient basis in Scripture and tradition. Indeed it may lead to the theologically incorrect division of Christianity in Spirit-filled and Spirit-empty Christians and to division and separation in the Church. We may positively speak of Spirit-filled Christians, but we cannot identify the exact opposite other than in purely experiential terms. And giving voice to such experiences may not be a very charitable thing to do.

McDonnell offers a second model. He defines his vision as one that “relates the baptism in the Spirit to water-baptism or to the rites of initiation (water-baptism, sign for the imparting of the Spirit, Eucharist)”.<sup>54</sup> These are the three elements of early Christian initiation that have been preserved in catholic tradition as baptism, confirmation and first communion. According to McDonnell, “the baptism in the Spirit... is a bringing to awareness and a new actuality the graces of initiation already received”. He expressly adds: “In no way does this imply that the original act of baptism was deficient or inadequate. Nor is it just a psychological moment. Rather it is the sovereign act of Christ now actualized in a new way in the new subjective dispositions and openness. The sacraments are acts of Christ; Jesus is the one who baptizes in the

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<sup>54</sup>*Christian Initiation*, p. 94.

Holy Spirit". Then the authors substantiate this proposition by passages from the New Testament and the Church fathers. Henry Lederle called this model the "time bomb theory":<sup>55</sup> The Spirit is given in (infant) baptism and does not start to manifest his power until later in life.

McDonnell in his turn mentions a third model, that has been proposed by Francis Sullivan. They define it as a model in which baptism in the Holy Spirit is "regarded as a special grace, a new imparting of the Spirit unrelated to any immediate sacramental context".<sup>56</sup> For this, Sullivan refers not to the Church fathers, but to the thirteenth century theologian Thomas Aquinas. In an article published in 1974, Sullivan begins to define baptism in the Holy Spirit as "a religious experience that initiates a decisively new sense of the powerful presence and working of God in one's life, which working usually involves one or more charismatic gifts".<sup>57</sup> It is his opinion also that this experience must be understood in its correct relationship to baptism and confirmation. But he opposes the "time bomb theory" with the help of Thomas Aquinas who in the First Part of his *Summa Theologiae* speaks about the possibility of several *missiones Spiritus Sancti*, "missions of the Holy Spirit" in human life. Thomas himself does not use the expression "baptism in the Holy Spirit" here, but reserves the expression *baptismus flaminis sive Spiritus sancti* for the "baptism of desire", of which he speaks in the case of someone who dies before he has been able to fulfil his desire to be baptized.<sup>58</sup> So when Sullivan identifies Thomas's *missio* or *donum Spiritus Sancti* with "baptism of the Holy Spirit", this is his own interpretation. However, McDonnell does the same, for the expression "baptism in the Holy Spirit" in his definition does not occur in the writings of the fathers

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<sup>55</sup>Treasures Old and New. *Interpretations of "Spirit-Baptism" in the Charismatic Renewal Movement*, Peabody 1981, p. 109-223.

<sup>56</sup>*Christian Initiation*, p. 93.

<sup>57</sup>"Baptism in the Holy Spirit': A Catholic Interpretation of the Pentecostal Experience", in: *Gregorianum* 55, 1974, p. 49-66. Cp. The chapter on "Baptism in the Spirit" in his *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal. A Biblical and Theological Study*, Ann Arbor 1982, p. 59-75.

<sup>58</sup>*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 66, art. 11.



at all except perhaps just once (in the verbal form) in the work of the Byzantine author Symeon the New Theologian.<sup>59</sup> However that may be, Sullivan's point is that it is not necessary to link baptism in the Holy Spirit directly to baptism and confirmation, as an actualization, breakthrough, manifestation or renewal of gifts already received in those sacraments. He does not believe in a complete endowment at baptism with all the grace of the Holy Spirit, with every appropriate charism. He opts for continually new missions of the Spirit, by which the Spirit comes to dwell in the human person in a continually new way. Each mission of the Spirit brings more and different grace to the person.<sup>60</sup> An obvious way forward in this dispute would be to study the use of earlier fathers by Thomas Aquinas. He must have known at least some of the fathers whom McDonnell quotes, though certainly not all, for the patristic material available in the Medieval West was much more limited than today. At any rate, all texts were in Latin.

## 15. **Conclusions.**

In short, I wonder whether in spite of their meritorious collecting patristic gems, McDonnell is not fixed too much on passages from Church fathers that confirm, or seem to confirm, his opinion. The book does however offer a dynamic view of the sacraments of initiation. Like the Church fathers, their concern is to make sure that baptism remains relevant for the entire further life of the person baptized, so that baptism is not reduced to a short and formal rite for a baby, but that it is something for the whole life. The difficulty of their vision is however, that a diverse dossier of texts is forced into a straightjacket, into a form which seems to be too programmed. Yes the charisms are often given through baptism, but not exclusively so. The Spirit blows where He wills, that is, also outside baptism.

Moreover, the "time bomb theory", just like that of the "second blessing", can be seen as a theological theory oriented too much towards the experience of the poor operation

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<sup>59</sup>*Catechesis XXIV; Sources Chrétiennes* 113, p. 42 line 112.

<sup>60</sup>*Gregorianum*, p. 65-66.

of Christian initiation in the last few centuries. Both models labour under the temptation to make this situation normative for the interpretation of Christian initiation at all times and all places. It seems to me that Sullivan's view is less coercive. He can connect the charisms with baptism, but does not need to. With Thomas Aquinas he has an eye for new gifts which the Church may receive. In his vision, the Spirit has a better chance to adapt to changes and new challenges in history and in human life. On the other hand, this may imply that Sullivan has a less dynamic view of Christian initiation.

McDonnell does not address the question of infant baptism, but he does have a problem here: it is unclear which of his proof texts in fact refer to the initiation of adults. He makes no provision for this when he applies these texts to the situation today in which infant baptism is still the rule in several churches. As far as this is concerned, we must note that in the time of Thomas Aquinas, infant baptism was the rule; it is therefore self evident that he does not have so much to say about the connection between baptism and the gifts of the Spirit. His tractate in the *Summa Theologiae* about the gifts of the Spirit<sup>61</sup> deals with the gift of prophecy most of all and it is surprising that Sullivan does not even mention the existence of this tractate. In the same way, the fourth century problem of the postponement of baptism, which led to a majority of unbaptized Christians in the church, needs to be taken into account for its effect on the charismatic life.

The models sketched by McDonnell on the one hand and Sullivan on the other also strike us as very individualistic, in spite of the quotation of such very ecclesial texts from Church fathers and Thomas Aquinas. The role of the communion of the faithful is hardly taken into account. Another striking feature is one that we find in a lot of charismatic literature, namely that the concept "experience" is not defined at all. But bad and manipulated experiences are also experiences and it is important to distinguish between these and good and legitimate experience. In other words: not all experience can be put to good Christian use. The individualism of the charismatic renewal does

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<sup>61</sup>*Summa Theologiae* II, qu. 171 etc.

not help here. The need for the Spirit-filled community as our testing agency and context stays out of sight.

Finally, we can say that McDonnell's thesis that baptism and the charismatic life belong together, stands but needs qualification. The baptismal context, though fundamental for Christian life and therefore for life in the Spirit, is not the only context which the early Church knew for generating charisms. Martyrdom and asceticism are other Christian contexts that in a special way need and elicit charisms. Moreover, the link between baptism and charisms is not just an empirical fact, but also serves the polemics between Christianity and other religions. But another empirical fact is that extraordinary gifts occur outside the baptismal context and outside Christianity. We need to discern the spirit(s) here; it is not helpful or realistic to try and explain those gifts away.

As to the recession of charismatic phenomena, a rather more nuanced picture emerges. The lack of evidence after the second century may mean that congregational charismatic life has waned after that time, perhaps under the influence of developing specialized ministries and the relaxation of eschatological tension in the Church. The rise of infant baptism would seem to be another important factor in the loss of the coherence between Christian initiation and the appearance of the charisms. But the martyrs are succeeded by the ascetics, some charisms which are extant get overlooked and new charismatic forms take the place of the old ones.

McDonnell quotes a florilegium of beautiful and powerful patristic texts to serve as a basis for his not entirely indisputable view of baptism in the Holy Spirit as a delayed sacramental event. His dissentient Sullivan, with whom he does not really argue in their book, offers leads for a view of baptism in the Holy Spirit which can both be sacramental and non-sacramental and which offers more room for the "ever new" of the Holy Spirit. Less sacramentally oriented Christians can also find something here. Thus two representatives of the catholic tradition offer different models, one of which brings a dynamic view of the sacraments, while the other emphasizes the freedom of the divine and the human (S)pirit. That these two rather different opinions can coexist in one

communion is therefore “truly and properly catholic”.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Cp. Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* II, 5, CCSL 64, p. 149, line 26.