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**In this issue:** *A report by Kees Slijkerman on the international ecumenical congress 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', March 7th-10th 2013 in Switzerland.*

## BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT TO FULFILL THE CHURCH

**What we today call 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' can be seen in the context of a long tradition of revival movements on the way to the accomplishment of the Church. And the practice of the sacrament of confirmation doesn't look like the way we officially describe this sacrament in the Catechesis of the Catholic Church (CCC 1302-1303).**

This are just some insights I took from the colloquium in Switzerland, organized together by the Community Chemin Neuf and the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), March 2013. Over 270 participants took part, including bishops, theologians and a lot of young students of the Chemin Neuf training programs. Participants were mainly coming from Europe and Africa, but we had also some participants from the rest of the world.

### Ecumenical

Up till now ICCRS did a lot of research on 'baptism in the Spirit as it has been manifested in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal' (see EUCCRIL 253). Now the Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS presented the result of this research in an ecumenical - mainly French speaking - setting. Speakers from different Church backgrounds told us the 'family stories' of the Churches and streams they represented. Neal Blough, a Mennonite professor Church history from Paris, said that the first person who used the expression 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' was revival preacher Charles Finney (1792 - 1875). This expression is based on the promise of Jesus: 'You will be baptized in the Holy Spirit' (Acts 1:5).

### Pentecostals

At the beginning of the 20th century people started to experience this promise, accompanied by the charism of speaking in tongues, on a wide scale. This new phenomenon was called the Pentecostal movement. Both people who had already been converted to Christ, and people who were converted at the same time they experienced baptism in the Spirit became part of the Pentecostal Movement. Cecil Mel Robeck, a

Pentecostal professor of Church history from California, told us the 'family story' of the Pentecostal Movement, including different views on the link between conversion, salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit and sanctification. Is baptism in the Holy Spirit part of a process in two steps or three steps? 'There are different 'pentecostalisms' (plural) with different views', Robeck explained. But in practice no Pentecostal pastor will have a problem with people who do all the steps at once.

### Catholics

The different Catholic views were also presented and developed further. Mary Healy, chair of the Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS, described 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' as an *interior revelation* of the love of God the Father and the lordship of the risen Jesus, leading to a transformed life in the power of the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Laurent Fabre, the founder of Chemin Neuf, raised the question when Paul of Tarsus was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Fabre thought it was on the way to Damascus. So, before Ananias laid hands on him and before he was baptized with water. Not all French speaking Catholics prefer the expression 'effusion de l'Esprit'. Laurent Fabre prefers 'baptême dans l'Esprit Saint'. The French word 'effusion' is hard to translate in English and in French is nearly only used to express that one becomes full of joy. Mgr. Dr. Peter Hocken, the other member of the Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS, stated at the end of the colloquium that we as Catholics have passed the stage of speaking in an apologetic way about baptism in the Holy Spirit. 'In the early years of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal the concern was more to produce an account that would help the Church

authorities to accept the Renewal rather than a focus on a full understanding of the spiritual reality and its significance', he said. 'A trans-denominational and potentially ecumenical phenomenon such as the Renewal requires for an adequate understanding, a trans-denominational and ecumenical reflection and analysis. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an inter-denominational ecumenical phenomenon to prepare the fulfillment of the Church and the coming of the Lord.'

### **Orthodox**

In Western Churches we are not used to thinking in terms of deification (2 Peter 1:4). So it was good to have Michel Stavrou as a speaker. He is professor of Orthodox theology in Paris. The Orthodox tradition did not neglect the Holy Spirit in the same way as western theology, but knows little of the charismatic renewal. Deification is a lifelong ongoing process. Stavrou spoke about christification and our way to transfiguration.

### **Thomas Aquinas**

Very interesting was the talk of Dr. Etienne Vetö ccn on 'The Gift of the Holy Spirit and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit according to Thomas Aquinas. I cannot summarize this talk. Most surprising was the statement of Thomas that also non-Christians can receive charisms. But it is in line with Vatican II, where it speaks about the possible work of the Spirit outside Christianity.

### **Amazing ecumenism**

Amazing statements on ecumenism were also given by Gottfried Locher, Cecil Mel Robeck and Laurent Fabre.

*Lochner* is a Reformed pastor, doctor in theology and president of the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches. He said that the keyword on the way to Christian unity is 'Wandlung', a German word 'that is hard to translate'. It means something like 'change' and even 'transubstantiation'.

'I guess that many church leaders are happy that there is little change', Lochner said, 'because the consequences, also financially, are so big'.

*Cecil Mel Robeck* started his first speech with the question how the religious world map will look like over 300 years. Not long ago

somebody had said to Robeck: 'In the year 2300 only the Roman Catholic Church and Islam are left over. It will be a charismatic reformed Roman Catholic Church, including the Eastern and Western churches and all Christians.' Robeck started to think a lot about this statement. He is co-chair of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue, a dialogue in which the Pontifical council for Christian Unity now is speaking about the charisms of the Holy Spirit.

*Laurent Fabre*, who met a cardinal in the Philippines short before the colloquium, suggested to have a new council. 'Why not in Jerusalem? Maybe the new pope can call all Christian leaders together to come before the Lord to listen to Him.'

### **Pope and archbishop of Canterbury**

We did not know who would be the new pope, but we knew who would be the new archbishop of Canterbury: bishop Justin Welby (enthroned March 21th, 2013). He was with us in the colloquium, led one of the sessions and gave an impressive testimony. He knelt down before the cross and we all prayed for him.

Three days after the colloquium Cardinal Bergoglio was elected as the new pope. As Peter Hocken wrote in *Eucril 255*: 'Pope Francis understands the ecumenical inter-church character of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our days.'

We are living in a very special period of the Church.

### **Data**

The talks of this colloquium will be published in French in a book. Hopefully also in English. You can order the audio of the talks on cd in several languages. See <http://www.chemin-neuf.fr/formations-chretiennes-en/colloque-oecumenique-international-bapteme-dans-lesprit-saint/lapres-colloque-retrouver-les-enregistrements-des-conferences-et-les-reactions>

This colloquium was March 7th-10th 2013 in Gästehaus Kloster Bethanien St. Niklausen, Switzerland. Chemin Neuf was asked to take over this monastery and did so in August 2012. It's a very good place to be.

Kees Slijkerman, secretary  
of the European subcommittee of ICCRS

**More:**

Watch Net For God documentary films in 22 languages ([http://www.chemin-neuf.org/formations-chretiennes-en/net-for-god/voir-les-films-nfg?set\\_language=en&cl=en](http://www.chemin-neuf.org/formations-chretiennes-en/net-for-god/voir-les-films-nfg?set_language=en&cl=en)), with this films on baptism in the Holy Spirit: "You will receive a power", a film with Mary Healy - 36 minutes (see <http://www.chemin-neuf.org/dossier-des-films-net-for-god-en/vous-allez-recevoir-une-force>) and "Do not be afraid of the Holy Spirit!" Baptism in the Holy Spirit, with Father Raniero Cantalamessa (see <http://www.chemin->

[neuf.org/dossier-des-films-net-for-god-en/nayez-pas-peur-du-saint-esprit](http://www.chemin-neuf.org/dossier-des-films-net-for-god-en/nayez-pas-peur-du-saint-esprit)).

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