

DR. NORBERT BAUMERT ON 'CHARISMA' AND 'BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT'  
His lectures in The Netherlands, September 2009  
*Kees Slijkerman*

**The National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) in the Netherlands and the Charismatische Werkgemeenschap Nederland organised together three exciting days with Fr. Prof. Dr. Norbert Baumert SJ from Vienna.**

**His topic was 'charisma' and 'baptism in the Spirit'. He explained these keywords both from a sound knowledge of the Greek text of the New Testament and from his personal experiences with the Spirit and the charismas.**

**Kees Slijkerman reports and gives a summary of the teachings of fr. Baumert, including information on good literature and free downloads .**

Fr. Baumert clearly distinguished two things: (1) the meaning of the words 'charisma' and 'baptism' in the New Testament; and (2) what we now-a-days have in mind when we use these words. To explain the key terms of charismatic renewal to the whole Church it is important to think clearly and explain clearly what we mean when we use the words 'charisma' and 'baptism in the Spirit'. Fr. Baumert said that in the history of theology the word 'charisma' has about twenty-five different meanings.

**- Ad 1. What means 'Being baptised in the Spirit' in NT**

What did John the Baptist (in Luke 3:16) and Jesus (reported by Luke in Acts 1:5) have in mind when they used the words 'will be baptised in (or with) the Holy Spirit'?

The meaning of 'baptise' at that time in that Jewish context was something like 'to dip in', 'to cover with' and 'to soak'. It was not yet a fixed technical term and the word 'sacrament' did not yet exist. So, we cannot say that Luke in Acts 1:5 made a link with our now-a-days understanding of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

What Jesus meant with 'be baptised in the Spirit' becomes clear in Acts 2:1-3. Here the apostles and the 120 faithful were baptised with the Spirit (and started to speak in tongues), like Jesus promised several days before in Acts 1:5.

Was this promise for everybody? Should everybody experience the Spirit in this same way? For some reason Luke did not report that the 3000 who were baptised in Acts 2:41 also had the same experience as the 120 and also spoke in tongues. Fr. Baumert told that Luke only mentions the speaking in tongues when a

new barrier was taken: to the Samaritans, to the gentiles (Cornelius and his house), to the followers of John the Baptist, etc.

**- Ad 2. What means 'Being baptised in the Spirit' in 20th century**

The Pentecostal and charismatic renewal had a beginning in Topeka, January 1st, 1901. Some people started to speak in tongues and - to describe their new experience - they called it 'baptised in the Spirit'. In fact it was one specific way of experiencing the Holy Spirit. During the 20th century millions of people received in a comparable way a fresh outpouring of the Spirit. They met each other in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements and used the words 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' to describe their experience. But these words are not always understood in the same way, because today - as Catholics - we cannot think about 'baptism' without thinking of a sacrament.

**Not normative like sacraments are normative**

Receiving the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and first communion) is normal and available for everybody who wants to receive them. And in these sacraments we receive the Holy Spirit. But experiencing the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we - in the Pentecostal and charismatic renewal - experience this in 'the baptism in the Holy Spirit' is not normative to everybody in the same way as the sacraments are. The fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit is always again a free initiative and grace from the Holy Spirit. Those who received it can testify of it to the honour of God. Those who long for it can ask the Lord for it and we can pray with them. But

it is up to the Lord how to answer this prayer. We do not have to say: 'this outpouring of the Spirit is the unfolding of what you already received in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation'.

Another thing - that surely should be done - is to help all the baptised and confirmed people to embrace the grace they have received in the sacraments, to 'renew their baptism and confirmation' or to renew their baptismal vows. But if we call this a 'baptism in the Spirit' we can create confusion.

Fr. Baumert made a drawing with in the basis a horizontal line for the ongoing work of the Spirit in history. This started in Genesis 1 and 2. In this line the Church passes on the Word of God and ministers the sacraments. This horizontal line is like a riverbed.

From above it is raining in this riverbed, many times. The vertical lines - in this drawing of Baumert - show the free initiatives of God, who pours out his Spirit like rain, many times in history. See Numeri 11:25; Ezekiel 11:5; John 7:39, 16:7; Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12; etc. Among these vertical lines - these raindrops - are experiences of 'being filled with the Spirit', manifestations of charismas (simple ones and extraordinary ones), mystical experiences, special callings, revival movements, religious orders and spiritual movements. All these graces are workings of the Holy Spirit, who is doing this like He wants.

Only the Holy Spirit can tell us the differences between (a) his presence in a person from water-baptism on and (b) his presence when somebody is 'baptised in the Spirit' like we experience this in the charismatic renewal, with manifestations like a deep inner joy and/or speaking in tongues.

From the writings of fr. Killian McDonnell we know that in the early Church it was not strange at all to experience the Holy Spirit and receive charismas during the initiation rites of adults. However, according to dr. Baumert this combination is not normative to everybody. July 2009 the Vatican published a Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue-report with two Catholic schools of theological interpretation of baptism in the Spirit. (See 0228uk and 0228fr on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl))

### **Baumert, a pioneer of CCR**

Fr. Baumert has been professor in the Philosophisch-Theologischen Hochschule St. Georgen in Frankfurt am Main. He was twenty-five years old when he had an experience with God (in 1957) that gave him the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a new way, until that point unknown to him. His spiritual director (who was a professor in spirituality and in the mystical tradition of the Church) was able to see that this experience was from God but was different from mystical experiences. It was fifteen years later that fr. Baumert met for the first time people who testified they had had the same experience and who used the words 'baptism in the Spirit' to describe their experience. Soon after that fr. Baumert became one of the pioneers of CCR in Berlin and in the whole of Germany.

### **The word 'charisma'**

He also started to study the history of the meaning of the word 'charisma'. In the letters of Paul 'charisma' means 'present' or 'gift' ('Gabe' or 'Geschenk' in German). In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul speaks about words and healings, given by God; not about a God-given capacity to speak prophetically or to heal other persons. The charisma of prophecy is the prophetic word itself, received by the person who hears that God is speaking this word to him/her.

For example: 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 is on *Some God-given Spirit manifestations* and Dr. Baumert translated it like this: 8 For to one person is being given (by God) through the Spirit a word of wisdom, but to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; 9 to someone else a strong trust and authority in the same Spirit, but to someone else (are being given) in the Spirit gifts of remedies, 10 and to another effects / workings of a power; to someone else a prophecy, to another interpretations / applications of spirit / Spirit manifestations; to someone further ways of praying in tongues, but to someone else interpretation of prayers in tongues. 11 But the one and same Spirit works all of this, giving to each as he wants to.

It was 1000 years after Paul that people started to link 'charisma' with capacity (Be-gabung in German). We cannot turn back this history but when we read the letters of Paul and use the word 'charisma' we must be aware of it.

His "proposal as to how to use the word today" is: "Charisma is an ability that proceeds from the grace of God, given by God the Holy Spirit, specifically and personally in each case that is allotted for the life and service in the church as community of salvation, and in the world." (See 0274uk on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl))

### University

The first two days of his visit to the Netherlands fr. Baumert gave lectures in the Free University in Amsterdam for students, pastors and professors of different denominations. CCR and the ecumenical Charismatische Werkgemeenschap Nederland have an extraordinary chair *Theology of the Charismatic Renewal* at this university since 1992. This chair is a help to reflect academically on what happens in charismatic renewal. (See [www.stucom.nl/leerstoel](http://www.stucom.nl/leerstoel).)

The third day with Prof. Baumert, September 19th 2009, was in Houten with leaders of CCR and of charismatic renewal in other denominations.

### Books

Fr. Baumert published in 2001 the whole story of 'charisma' and 'baptism in the Spirit' in two books, unfortunately only in German:

- Norbert Baumert - *Charisma - Taufe*
- *Geisttaufe* Band 1: Entflechtung einer semantischen Verwirrung, 320 pages,

ISBN 3-429-02319-X (on charisma) (16,80 euro, plus porto).

- Norbert Baumert - *Charisma - Taufe* - *Geisttaufe* Band 2: Normativität und persönliche Berufung, 400 pages, ISBN 3-429-02317-3 (on baptism in the Spirit) (16,80 euro, plus porto).

Dr. Baumert is now writing a new series of books in German, *Paulus neu gelesen* (Paul read anew), with his own new German translation of the letters of Paul and with his commentary verse by verse. The books on 1 and 2 Corinthians are available; the book on Philippians and Galatians will in October 2009 be available.

- *Sorgen des Seelsorgers* (is on 1 Corinthians), N. Baumert, Echter, 2007, Würzburg, ISBN 978-3-429-02893-0, 448 pages (16,80 euro, plus porto).

- Beiheft (Small booklet with only the German translation of 1 Cor. by Baumert) 3 euro, ISBN 978-3-429-02894-7.

- *Mit dem Rücken zur Wand* (is on 2 Corinthians), ISBN 978-3-429-02974-6

- Beiheft (Small booklet, only the German translation of 2 Cor.) 3 euro, ISBN 978-3-429-02975-3,

- *Der Weg des Trauens* (is on Galatians and Philippians), ISBN 978-3-429-03156-5.

- Beiheft (Small booklet, only the German translation of Gal.+Phil.) 3 euro, ISBN 978-3-429-03157-2.

You can order these books from the publisher, Echter-Verlag, or from [www.erneuerung.de](http://www.erneuerung.de).

## Free downloads on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl) for further study

0274uk "**Charism**" and "**Spirit-baptism**", N. Baumert, English translation of 0274de [German original text]  
0274de "**Charisma**" und "**Geisttaufe**", N. Baumert, Präsentation einer Analyse

0227uk **Baptism in the Holy Spirit** As it was discussed in 5th phase of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue and published by the Vatican in August 2009. [15 pages, a longer section from the whole report of 99 pages, document 0203uk]

0228uk **Baptism in the Holy Spirit - Two Catholic Schools of Theological Interpretation** As it was discussed in 5th phase of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue and published by the Vatican in August 2009. [Four pages, a section from the whole report of 99 pages, document 0203uk]

1st interpretation: its an unfolding of the graces of Christian initiation.

2nd interpretation: it's a new outpouring of the Spirit.

"Thus, the two different approaches or positions do not appear to be irreconcilable. However, they clearly disagree on the understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, especially concerning whether this

term should be used to specify a particular spiritual experience in the Pentecostal Movement and in the Charismatic Renewal, or whether this should be understood as normative for Christian initiation". (nr. 234 of the report).

(In French translation:) 0228fr [Deux écoles d'interprétation théologique - le baptême dans l'Esprit-Saint](#).

0236uk [Theological and Pastoral Orientations on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal - Malines Document 1 \(1974\)](#) Cardinal Suenens, Kilian McDonnell and others and theological consultants as Josef Ratzinger and others. From: The Holy Spirit, Life-Breath of the Church.

(In French) 0236fr [Le Renouveau charismatique: orientations théologiques et pastorales](#) (1974)

(In Dutch:) 0236 [Katholieke Charismatische Vernieuwing: Theologische verklaring en pastorale toelichting](#) Door kardinaal Suenens en een internationaal team van theologen (o.a. Joseph Ratzinger)

0277uk [The Basic Experience of the Renewal - Cardinal Suenens \(1982\)](#) From: Malines Document IV in The Holy Spirit, Life-Breath of the Church.

Including this quote of Cardinal Suenens: "Let me begin by describing the basic experience which is the soul of the Renewal. Progressing beyond superficial analogies, we have to understand the Renewal as a grace that re-actualises baptism and confirmation, as a kind of personal Pentecost involving conversion, a re-acknowledgement of Jesus Christ, a new openness to the Holy Spirit. Inevitably, most definitions are incomplete, and it is up to the theologians to look for the best formulation. The danger of the term 'baptism in the Spirit' is that it may cause us to overlook the one Baptism which incorporates us into the life of Christ; in the same way, the term 'personal Pentecost' must never allow us to forget that Pentecost, the day on which the Church was founded, remains a unique event.

But whatever expressions we use, the fact is that an experience of conversion to a new life is clearly seen in the Church. It is sweeping through the five continents like a breath of profound rechristianisation, like a wind fanning the smouldering embers and rekindling them into a blazing fire."

(In French) 0277fr [L'expérience de base du Renouveau](#) (Original French text of 0277uk)

(In Dutch:) 0277 [De grondervaring van de Vernieuwing](#)

0232 [Baptism in the Holy Spirit and charisms discussed in Rome](#) (EUCCRIL 204) and a list of very good literature on baptism in the Holy Spirit - report by Kees Slijkerman

### Book

*Christian initiation and baptism in the Holy Spirit* - Evidence from the first eight centuries, Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, 1990, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, ISBN 0-8146-5009-0.

Let us pray for our theologians.

Kees Slijkerman,  
CCR in the Netherlands, September 28th, 2009

Footnote:

In the preamble of the ICCRS-statutes are written this first two central goals:

1. To foster mature and continuous personal conversion to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.
2. To foster a decisive personal receptivity to the person, presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

These two spiritual graces are often experienced together in what is called in different parts of the world a *baptism in the Holy Spirit*, or a *release of the Holy Spirit*, or a *renewal of the Holy Spirit*. They are most often understood as a personal acceptance of the graces of Christian initiation and as an empowering for personal Christian service in the Church and in the world.

(See [www.iccrs.org](http://www.iccrs.org) or 0073uk on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl))

---

This article is based on ISSUE 221 (September 28th, 2009) of THE EUROPEAN CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL INFO-LETTER (Eucril). This Info-Letter Eucril is free to everybody who wants it. They can sent to [kees@stucom.nl](mailto:kees@stucom.nl) and e-mail with the subject Eucril and this message: yes, put me on the mailing-list of Eucril-English or/and Eucril-Français.

This Info-letter started in 1999 and is issued by the European sub-committee of ICCRS,

European web-site, including old ISSUES of Eucril: [www.iccrs.org/europe](http://www.iccrs.org/europe)

---

This is document 0290 on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)