

REVIEW ESSAY

Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

Reviewed by Constance M. Price, PhD
Archdiocese of Toronto

The two lenses through which I read Frank Macchia's book are: 1) as a Roman Catholic; and 2) as a student of the Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue, particularly the pneumatology of the Dialogue during its first twenty-five years. The Roman Catholic lens prompted me to read the book with the consciousness of the exhortation of Pope Paul VI, at the close of the Second Vatican Council that “the Christology and especially the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council should be followed by a new study and a new ‘cult of the Holy Spirit’, as an indispensable complement of the Conciliar teaching.”¹ Does Mac-

¹ Pope Paul VI, General Audience, 6 June 1973. The original Italian reads: “Anche questo sarà uno dei temi più impegnativi e fecondi della spiritualità propria dell’Anno Santo: alla Cristologia e specialmente alla Ecclesiologia del Concilio deve succedere uno studio nuovo ed un culto nuovo sullo Spirito Santo, proprio come complemento immancabile all’insegnamento conciliare.” See “Indizione dell’anno santo 1975: Udienza Generale di Paolo VI, Mercoledì, 6 giugno 1973,” Papal Archive (Pope Paul VI), <http://www.vatican.va>. [accessed 31 August 2007]. This passage has been widely quoted by theologians in their works on pneumatology and ecclesiology. See, for example, Yves Congar, in *Je crois en l’Esprit Saint*, tome 1: *L’Esprit Saint dans l’Économie, révélation et expérience dans*

chia's theology of Spirit baptism have something to contribute to the furtherance of the Catholic understanding of the Holy Spirit, and thus, to the ecumenical enterprise insofar as it relates to the discussion and work of Pentecostals and Roman Catholics to build *koinonia* and to reduce, within our context, what *Unitatis redintegratio* identifies as the "scandal of disunity" among Christians?

The other lens filters Macchia's proposal of a global Pentecostal theology through much of the same pneumatology that was presented in the many papers, responses, Agreed Accounts and Final Reports of the Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue, which was the topic of my recent doctoral dissertation. This response paper reflects the limitation of my knowledge of Pentecostalism to the consultations associated with my research, beginning with the works of David du Plessis and extending to those of Pentecostals such as Jerry Sandidge, Cecil Robeck, Howard Ervin, Robert McAlister, John McTernan, Vinson Synan, Donald Dayton, and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, to name a few.

Finally, I read Macchia's book strictly from the perspective of the contextualization provided by Andrew Gabriel in his proposal and abstract for this discussion session, namely, the "ecumenical potential" for Macchia's proposal of a Pentecostal expansion of the metaphor of Spirit Baptism to include the whole of the Christian life, and even the whole of the economy of salvation." I found Macchia's book to be at once an exciting, insightful and

l'Esprit, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1979): 235. The quotation concludes the chapter entitled "La pneumatologie de Vatican II."

thought-provoking integration of the areas for further study that were raised by Roman Catholics and Pentecostals in their official ecumenical discussions, which I have identified as follows:

1. The Individual Experience of the Holy Spirit and the Preservation of the Sovereignty and Freedom of the Spirit to Blow Where It Will;
2. The Ecclesial Experience of the Holy Spirit and the Action of the Spirit in Word and Sacrament;
3. The Presence and Action of the Holy Spirit in Church Ministry and Structures;
4. Theological Issues Related to Pneumatology:
 - The inseparability of pneumatology and Trinitarian theology, pneumatology and Christology;
 - Pneumatology (or Christology) done in a vacuum necessarily leads to error;
 - Pneumatology and eschatology, that is the eschatological nature of pneumatology;
5. The Action of the Holy Spirit Upon the Individual: Healing and Mission; from individual healing to work toward social justice;
6. The Holy Spirit and the Work of Ecumenism

These areas represent Pentecostal and Catholic “meeting points” in each other’s history. In recent decades, Pentecostals and Catholics have challenged one another to expand their pneumatological borders in many areas, for example: common witness and working to *maintain* the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4) that already exists.

Macchia rightly states in his first chapter that “the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be compartmentalized or separated out into neat theological categories. The Spirit

is a person, not a fragmented set of works or experiences” (p. 18). His expansion of the understanding of Spirit baptism as a Trinitarian act, understood eschatologically as the outpouring of divine love, weaves each of the above topics for further ecumenical study as threads in a tapestry. When an over-emphasis on religion or ritual occurs, we see only one of the threads. Macchia’s book impels the reader to view the entire tapestry in its richness.

Distractions, Observations and Gentle Questions

I was distracted, even disturbed, to read Macchia’s description of the waning of the identification of Spirit baptism as a central distinctive in Pentecostal theology. My reading of the documents of the first twenty-five years of the Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue revealed Spirit baptism to be one of the first things to be defined by the dialogue partners in 1972, remained one of the primary gifts on that ecumenical table, and, I suspect, would also be central in the broader ecumenical context. In the Roman Catholic - Pentecostal Dialogue, Catholics were called to listen closely to a movement whose theology begins with the experience of the Holy Spirit through Spirit baptism.

As an outsider to Pentecostalism, I found Macchia’s identification of the issues behind the theological fragmentation to be extremely clear and helpful. I was especially grateful for his location of contemporary Pentecostal theologians, and those who have influenced them, on the theological spectrum. Macchia’s systematic theology of Spirit baptism presents a possible resolution of the fragmentation. In it, he presents a pneumatology that re-

covers and preserves the historic central distinctive of Pentecostalism in a way that is dynamic, not static. He situates Spirit baptism in a *living relationship* with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in a *living relationship* with the already and not-yet nature of the Church through his eschatological reading of it; and in a *living relationship* with Scripture by his retrieval and integration of the Pauline, Lucan and Johannine characteristics of life in the Spirit and all that that means. These are terms and theological expressions that Roman Catholics would welcome and understand.

What a Roman Catholic might struggle with is the terminology. The term that comes so easily to Macchia and to Pentecostals, *Spirit baptism*, is not one that is readily associated in Catholic theology with ecclesiological, liturgical, sacramental, and yes, even pneumatological definitions and understandings. Macchia's association of the term *Spirit baptism* with theological concepts (and I mean this in a non-static sense) and language that are otherwise very "traditional" in Catholic theology might well cause the Catholic reader to read and re-read. The foundation of this is twofold: the notion of *baptism* which we know was, and still is, a source of division between Catholics and Pentecostals, and the association of *baptism in the Spirit* with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which carries a particular set of expressions and theological understandings related to the *charismata*. While a Catholic might initially struggle with the language, a thorough reading of Macchia's book is well worth it be-

cause of the invitation and challenge for Catholic theologians to expand their pneumatological borders and look at the work and action of the Holy Spirit in a different light. A change in language gets one's attention!

Conclusion

Let us return to the initial question: Does Macchia's systematic theology have ecumenical potential? The very asking of that question shows how far we have come since David du Plessis was "disfellowshipped", as Hollenweger reports, for his contacts with the World Council of Churches!² From a Catholic perspective, I appeal again to *Unitatis redintegratio*, which explicitly teaches that the discord among Christians "openly contradicts the will of Christ" and is a "stumbling block to the world."³ It exhorts Catholic bishops and clergy, laity and theologians to pray, study, and work publicly and privately for Christian unity in a spirit of repentance and openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Moreover, *Unitatis redintegratio* calls all Christians to unite and "bear witness to our common hope," and cooperate in social matters such as the relief of famine and poverty. Through such cooperation, the Council teaches, "all believers in Christ are able to learn easily how they can understand each other better and esteem each other more, and how the road to the unity

² See Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press), 7.

³ Vatican II, *Unitatis redintegratio* [Decree on Ecumenism], par. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, See Chapter II, "The Practice of Ecumenism," especially paragraphs. 7-10.

of Christians may be made smooth.”⁵ Finally, in this document the Church recognizes the great magnitude of the “holy task of reconciling all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ....It therefore places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁶ Quoting the letter to the Romans (5:5), it concludes, “And hope does not disappoint, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”⁷ Macchia’s theological exposition of Spirit baptism as essentially and primarily a participation in the charity of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit moves the Christian community one step closer.

⁵ Ibid., par. 12.

⁶ Ibid., par. 24.

⁷ Ibid.