

Personal Experience Of The Holy Spirit According To The Greek Fathers

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*The Holy Spirit supplies all things:
He causes prophecies to spring up,
He sanctifies priests,
To the uninitiated He taught wisdom,
The fishermen He turned into theologians.
He holds in unity the whole structure of the Church.*

-- From an Orthodox hymn on the Feast of Pentecost

Solovetsk and Sunderland

Around the year 1890 an Anglican traveller from Sunderland, the Revd Alexander Boddy, Vicar of All Saints, Monkwearmouth, came as a pilgrim to the great Solovetsky Monastery on the White Sea in the far north of Russia. One thing in particular impressed him. It was a depiction of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost:

'In the dome of the great cathedral and the monastery of Solovetsk is a striking representation of the first Christians gathered on the first Whitsunday, looking up with glorified faces as the flaming baptism of the Holy Ghost falls upon the infant Church. In the centre of the foreground is the mother of our Lord also receiving the gift.'¹

When, nearly two decades later, on the occasion of a famous visit from T.B. Barratt, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Boddy's Sunderland parish on 31 August 1907, is it not likely that this 'striking representation' of Pentecost that he had seen in Russia was still vividly present in his memory? A formative event in the history of British Pentecostalism turns out in this way to have, as one of its sources, the iconography of an Orthodox monastic church.

This unexpected connection between Orthodox Christianity and the origins of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement in Britain naturally leads us to ask: can we discover other links, on a more specifically theological level, between Orthodoxy and Pentecostalism? How far is the Christian East sympathetic to a 'charismatic' understanding of the spiritual life? At first sight it might appear that there is but little affinity. Orthodoxy, it might be said, is liturgical and hierarchic, whereas Pentecostalism is grounded upon the free and spontaneous action of the Spirit; Orthodoxy appeals to Holy Tradition, whereas Pentecostalism assigns primacy to personal experience.

Anyone, however, who searches more deeply will soon realize that stark contrasts of this kind are one-sided and misleading. In actual fact, many of the Greek Fathers insist with great emphasis upon the need for all baptized Christians to attain in their own personal experience a direct and conscious awareness of the Holy Spirit. No one can be a Christian at second-hand: such is the frequently repeated teaching of the Fathers. Holy Tradition does not signify merely the mechanical and exterior acceptance of truths formulated in the distant past, but it is in the words of the Russian theologian Vladimir Lossky - nothing else than 'the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church'² here and now, at this present moment.

"The worst of all heresies"

The vital significance of the Holy Spirit for the Christian East will be apparent if we consider one of the outstanding mystical authors of the Middle Byzantine period, St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022). Each of us, he maintains, is called by God to experience the indwelling presence of the Spirit 'in a conscious and perceptible way', with what he describes as the 'sensation of the heart'. It is not enough for us to possess the Spirit merely in an implicit manner:

*Do not say, It is impossible to receive the Holy Spirit;
Do not say, It is possible to be saved without Him.
Do not say that one can possess Him without knowing it.
Do not say, God does not appear to us.
Do not say, People do not see the divine light,
Or else, It is impossible in these present times.
This is a thing never impossible, my friends,
But on the contrary altogether possible for those who wish.³*

All the *charismata* available to Christians in the apostolic age, Symeon is passionately convinced, are equally available to Christians in our own day. To suggest otherwise is for Symeon the worst of all possible heresies, implying as it does that God has somehow deserted the Church. If the Gifts of the Spirit are not as evident in the Christian community of our own time as they are in the Book of Acts, there can be only one reason for this: the weakness of our faith.

Symeon goes on to draw some startling conclusions from this. When asked, for example, whether lay monks, not ordained to the priesthood, have the power to 'bind and loose' that is to say, to hear confessions and to pronounce absolution he answers that there is one essential qualification, and one only, which empowers a person to act as confessor and to bestow forgiveness of sins; and that is the conscious awareness of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Monks who possess such awareness, even though not in holy orders, may confer absolution upon others; but anyone who lacks such awareness - even though he may be bishop or patriarch - should not attempt to do this.⁴

Symeon speaks also of a 'second baptism', the baptism of tears, which is conferred on those who are 'born from above' through the Holy Spirit:

'When someone suddenly lifts up his gaze and contemplates the nature of existing things in a way that he had never done before, then he is filled with amazement and sheds spontaneous tears without any sense of anguish. These tears purify him and wash him in a second baptism, that baptism of which our Lord speaks in the Gospels when He says, 'if someone is not born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' Again He says, 'If someone is not born from above' (cf. John 3:5,7). When He said 'from above', He signified being born from the Spirit.'

Symeon even seems to consider the second baptism more important than the first; for he regards the first baptism - sacramental baptism through water - as no more than a type' or foreshadowing, whereas the second baptism is to be seen as the truth' or full reality: 'The second baptism is no longer a type of the truth, but it is the truth itself.'⁵

How far is Symeon's standpoint typical of Eastern Christendom? He himself warns his readers that he is a 'frenzied' or 'manic zealot':⁶ are his remarks, then, to be discounted as the ravings of an extremist? Let us compare Symeon with three other writers, all of whom emphasize the Holy Spirit, and all of whom are held in high esteem within the Orthodox spiritual Tradition: with St. Mark the Monk (late fourth or early fifth century), alias Mark the Hermit or Mark the Ascetic; with the author or authors of the *Homilies* attributed to St. Macarius of Egypt, but in fact of Syriac origin (late fourth century); and with St. John Climacus (c.570-c.649), author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, a work which Orthodox monks are supposed to reread each Lent.

Three Questions

In assessing how these different writers understand baptism 'with the Holy Spirit and fire' (Luke 3:16), let us ask three more specific questions:

(i) Must the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit be always a conscious indwelling, or can there be an indwelling of the Paraclete which is unconscious yet nonetheless real?

(ii) What is the relationship between sacramental baptism that is to say, water baptism - and 'baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire'? Is the 'second baptism' in the Spirit to be seen as something radically new, conferring a fresh grace distinct from that of water baptism, or is the 'second baptism' essentially the reaffirmation and fulfilment of the first - not a fresh grace but the realization and manifestation of the grace already received in our sacramental baptism with water?

(iii) What outward experiences - tongues, tears and the like - accompany and express our attainment of a conscious awareness of the Spirit?

Any answers that we propose need to be offered with diffidence and humility, for it is hard to contain within verbal formulae the living dynamism of the Spirit. Pointing as He does always to Christ and not to Himself (John 15:26; 16:13-14), He remains elusive and hidden so far as His own personhood is concerned. He is 'everywhere present and filling all things', to use the words of a familiar Orthodox prayer, but we do not see His face. Symeon the New Theologian emphasizes this mysterious character of the Paraclete in an *Invocation to the Holy Spirit* which precedes the collection of his *Hymns*. 'Hidden mystery', he calls the Spirit, treasure without name ... reality beyond all words ... person beyond all understanding'; and he continues: 'Come, for Your name fills our hearts with longing and is ever on our lips; yet who You are and what Your nature is, we cannot say or know.'⁷

Let us display, then, an apophatic reticence in all that we assert concerning the free and sovereign Spirit, who is like the wind that 'blows where it chooses: and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where goes' (John 3:8).

St. Mark the Monk: from 'secret' to 'active' presence

Little known in the West, Mark's writings have always been popular in the Christian East. They are included in the first volume of that classic collection of Orthodox spiritual texts The *Philokalia*; in the Byzantine period there was even a monastic adage, 'Sell everything and buy Mark'. Reacting against the Messalians (an ascetic movement originating in fourth-century Syria), Mark insists in trenchant terms upon the completeness of baptism. He is speaking, of course, about *sacramental* baptism:

'However far someone may advance in faith, however great the good he has attained ... he never discovers, nor can he ever discover, anything more than what he has already received secretly through .baptism.... Christ, being perfect God, has bestowed upon the baptized the perfect grace of the Spirit. We for our part cannot possibly add to that grace, but it is revealed and manifests itself increasingly, the more we fulfil the commandments Whatever, then, we offer to Christ after our regeneration was already hidden within us and came originally from Him.'

Mark ends - for he is strongly Pauline in spirit - with a quotation from Romans 11:35 - 36: 'Who has first given a gift to God, so as to receive a gift in return? For from Him... are all things.'⁸

Baptism, according to the Monk's teaching, confers upon us a total purification from all sin, both original and personal; it liberates us from all 'slavery', restoring the primal integrity of our free will as creatures formed in God's image; and at the same time, through our immersion in the baptismal font, Christ and Holy Spirit take up their abode within us, entering into what Mark terms 'the innermost and uncontaminated chamber of the heart', the innermost and untroubled shrine of the heart where the winds of evil spirits so not blow'.⁹

At this point Mark makes a crucial distinction, summed up in the two Greek adverbs *m u s t i k v V* meaning 'mystically' or 'secretly', and *e n e r g u v V*, meaning 'actively'. Initially, at sacramental baptism -and Mark seems to envisage primarily the situation of infant baptism - the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is given to us 'secretly', in such a way that we are not at first consciously aware of it. We only become 'actively' conscious of this presence if we acquire a living faith, expressed through our practice of the divine commandments. In this way baptism plants within us a hidden seed of perfection, but it rests with us - assisted always by God's grace - to make that seed grow, so that it bears conscious and palpable fruit. While we cannot "add" to the completeness of baptism, God nevertheless awaits a response on our part; and if we fail to make that response, although the Spirit will still continue to be present 'secretly' in our heart, we shall not feel His presence 'actively' within us, nor experience His fruits with full conscious awareness.

Such is Mark's map of the Christian pilgrimage. Our starting-point is the presence of baptismal grace within us 'secretly' and unconsciously; our end-point is the revelation of that grace 'actively', with what he terms 'full assurance (*p l h r o j o r i a*) and sensation (*a i s q h s i V*)'. As he states:

'Everyone baptized in the Orthodox manner has received secretly the fullness of grace; but he gains assurance of this grace only to the extent that he actively observes the commandments.'¹⁰

Our spiritual programme can therefore be summed up in the maxim 'Become what you are'. We are already, from the moment of our sacramental baptism as infants, 'Spirit-bearers' in an implicit and unconscious manner. Our aim is therefore to acquire conscious experience - several times Mark uses the Greek term *p e i r a* - of Him who already dwells within us:

'All these mysteries we have received at our baptism, but we are not aware of them. When, however, we condemn ourselves for our lack of faith, and sincerely express our belief in Christ by performing all the commandments, then we shall acquire experience within ourselves of all the things that I have mentioned; and we shall confess that holy baptism is indeed complete and that the grace of Christ is invisibly hidden within us; but it awaits our obedience and our fulfilment of the commandments.'¹¹

We are now in position to assess the answers which Mark offers to our three questions.

(i) It is abundantly clear that Mark allows for an indwelling presence of the Spirit that is unconscious yet nonetheless real. Such, in his view, is precisely the position of those who have been baptized in infancy. They

receive a genuine indwelling of the Paraclete, and this 'secret' indwelling will never be altogether lost, however careless or sinful their subsequent lives may be; as Mark puts it, 'Grace never ceases to help us in a secret way.'¹² At the same time Mark regards this 'secret' presence as no more than an initial starting-point; and he clearly affirms that the vocation of every baptised Christian without exception is to advance from this to a conscious awareness of the Spirit.

(ii) In Mark's view, this conscious awareness of Spirit experienced 'actively' and 'with full assurance and sensation' is in no sense a new grace, distinct from the grace conferred in water baptism, but it is nothing else than the full 'revelation' of the baptismal grace conferred upon us at the outset. The baptized Christian 'never discovers, nor can he ever discover, anything more than what he has already received secretly through baptism'. Everything is contained implicitly in the initial *charisma* of baptism.

(iii) As to the outward experiences which accompany this conscious awareness of the indwelling Spirit, Mark is reticent. He does not speak about visions, dreams, trances and ecstasy.

Nowhere have I found in his writings anything that could be interpreted as a reference to speaking with tongues. His allusions to tears are infrequent; so far from exalting the gift of tears, he warns us, 'Do not grow conceited if you shed tears when you pray.'¹³ He does indeed believe that our aim is to experience consciously the energies of the Spirit' and to reach the state above nature', where the intellect (n o u V) 'discovers the fruits of the Holy Spirit of which the Apostle spoke: love, joy, peace and the rest' (cf. Gal. 5:22).¹⁴ But he does not specify what precise form these 'energies' and 'fruits' are to take.

When interpreting an author such as Mark, it is helpful to make a distinction between 'experience' (in the singular) and 'experiences' (in the plural). There are surely many Christians who feel able to say in all humility, 'I know God personally', without being able to point to any single event such as a vision, a voice, or a concentrated 'conversion crisis' of the kind undergone by St. Paul, St. Augustine, Pascal or John Wesley. Personal experience of the Spirit permeates their whole life, existing as a total awareness, without necessarily being crystallized in the form of particular 'experiences'. When Mark and other Greek Fathers refer to our conscious awareness of the 'energies' or 'fruits' of the Spirit, they may well have in view an all-embracing 'experience' of this kind, rather than any specific and separate 'experiences'.

The Macarian Homilies: light, tears and ecstasy

The *Homilies* attributed to Macarius are better known in the West than are the writings of Mark the Monk: John Wesley, for example, was an enthusiastic reader of the *Homilies*, characteristically observing in his diary for 30 July 1736, 'I read Macarius and sang.' Whereas Mark is evidently an opponent of Messalianism, the *Homilies* are commonly regarded as a Messalian or semi-Messalian work. But in fact, when Mark and the *Homilies* are carefully compared, their respective theologies of baptism turn out to be not so very different. It is true that the best-known group of Macarian texts, the collection of the *Fifty Spiritual Homilies* (known as Collection II or Collection H), is largely silent about sacramental baptism; but there are a number of important references to it in the other main groups, Collection I (B) and III (C).

In agreement with Mark, the Macarian *Homilies* see sacramental baptism as the foundation of all Christian life: 'Our baptism is true for us and valid, and it is the source from which we receive the life of the Spirit.'¹⁵

The *Homilies* concur with Mark in insisting furthermore upon the completeness of baptism: 'In possessing the pledge of baptism, you possess the talent' in its completeness, but if you fail to work with it, you yourself will remain incomplete; and not only that, but you will be deprived of it.'¹⁶

Mark would not have said, 'you will be deprived of if, for he believes that the gift of baptismal grace can never be wholly lost. But otherwise the two authors agree: baptism is 'complete' or 'perfect', but in order to experience the full effects of the sacrament, we need to 'work' with the initial *charisma* of baptism by fulfilling the commandments.

Once more in agreement with Mark, the Macarian writings state that the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred 'from the Moment of baptism'.¹⁷ Just as Mark envisages a progress from baptismal grace present 'secretly' to baptismal grace experienced 'actively', so likewise the *Homilies* maintain that the indwelling presence of the Spirit, conferred at baptism, is something of which we are initially unconscious. The Spirit's working is at first so slight that the baptized person is ignorant of His activity:

'Initially divine grace exists within a person in such a subtle way that he is unaware of its presence and does not understand [that it is within him].... But if we persist and advance in all the virtues, struggling with full exertion, then baptism will increase in power and will be revealed in us, making us perfect through its own grace.' ¹⁸

This, as we have noted, is exactly Mark's teaching: through our fulfilment of the commandments and our ascetic struggles, the hidden grace of baptism is gradually 'revealed' in its full power.

At the outset, then, so the *Homilies* affirm, the Spirit is present 'invisibly', but if we persevere on the path of Christian obedience we shall gradually come to experience His presence with power and assurance':

'In His own wisdom the heavenly Physician bestows the heavenly bread - that is to say, the power of the Spirit invisibly through the holy mystery of the "washing of rebirth" (Titus 3:5) and of the Body of Christ; and through the "word of consolation" (Heb. 13:22) in the Scriptures He nourishes and warms the damaged soul that is still subject to the passions and that is not yet capable of experiencing the energy of the Spirit with power and assurance, whether on account of its childishness or because of its lack of faith and its carelessness. Every soul, on receiving the remission of sins in holy baptism according to the measure of its faith, participates in the energy of grace: one receives it with power and assurance, another with weaker energy of grace Thus the grace of the Spirit bestowed in baptism seeks to overshadow each person in abundance and to grant to each more speedily the perfection of divine power, but the degree to which someone shares in this grace depends on the measure of that person's faith and piety.' ¹⁹

This is less clear and coherent than the treatment that we find in Mark; also the *Homilies* seem to envisage adult baptism whereas Mark thinks primarily in terms of infant baptism. But there is no fundamental discrepancy between the two authors. Both agree that there is a progressive advance from an unconscious presence of the baptismal gift of the Spirit to a conscious awareness of the baptismal gift "with full assurance and sensation" (a phrase used by the *Homilies* as well as by Mark).

How, then, do the Macarian *Homilies* answer our three questions?

(i) The *Homilies* clearly assert that, in certain cases at any rate, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit conferred at baptism is at first unconscious: He is present within us 'invisibly, in such a way that we are 'unaware' of Him. At the same time, however, it is the vocation of every baptized Christian to advance from unconsciousness to conscious awareness, so that we experience this gift of the Spirit 'with full assurance and sensation'. Here the *Homilies*, like Mark the Monk, rely heavily upon the language of feeling. Sometimes the *Homilies* describe this higher stage of conscious awareness as 'baptism with fire and the Spirit',²⁰ a phrase nowhere found in Mark's writings.

(ii) This 'baptism with fire and the Spirit' does not, however, connote a new and distinct gift of the Spirit, but according to the *Homilies* it is nothing else than the developed and conscious awareness of the gift of the Spirit inherent in water baptism. As with Mark, it is water baptism that constitutes the 'source' of all our life in the Spirit.

(iii) If the *Homilies* and Mark prove thus far to be in substantial agreement, in their respective answers to the third question there is a significant difference between them. The *Homilies* emphasize various outward experiences that accompany the conscious awareness of the Spirit, in a way that Mark does not. Macarius speaks, for example, about a vision of divine light received by the spiritual aspirant,²¹ and about his illumination by 'non-material and divine fire'.²² These Macarian texts concerning light and fire had an important influence upon the mystical theology of the fourteenth-century Byzantine Hesychasts, and they were taken up in particular by St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). The *Homilies* also attach more importance than Mark does to the gift of tears. Only if we 'weep' shall we experience the 'power' of the Spirit:

'If anyone is naked because he lacks the divine and heavenly garment which is the power of the Spirit... let him weep and beseech the Lord that he may receive the spiritual garment from heaven.' ²³

Unlike Mark, the *Homilies* speak explicitly about trance-like and ecstatic experiences:

'Sometimes a person when praying has fallen into a kind of trance (ecstasy) and has found himself standing in church before the sanctuary; and three loaves of bread were offered to him, leavened with oil...'

There have been other occasions, Macarius continues, when the impact of a vision of inner light has proved so devastating that a person loses normal self-control:

'Swallowed up in the sweetness of contemplation, he was no longer master of himself, but became like a fool and a barbarian towards this world, so overwhelmed was he by the excessive love and sweetness of the hidden mysteries that were being revealed to him.'²⁴

There is no parallel in Mark's writings to this kind of language.

There is even a possible allusion in one Homily to speaking with tongues. Recalling the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Macarius says: As for the apostles, they cried out willy-nilly. Just as a flute, when air is blown through it, gives out the sound that the flute-player wants, so it is also with the apostles and those who resemble them. When they were 'born from above' (John 3:3,7) and received the Paraclete Spirit, the Spirit spoke in them as He wanted.²⁵

The reference here to those who 'resemble' the apostles suggests that the speaking with tongues on the day of Pentecost has been continued in later ages of the Church. But this is an isolated passage which has no exact parallel elsewhere in Macarian corpus, and so it would be unwise to base too much upon it.

Counterbalancing this passage on Pentecost, there are other occasions when the Homilies condemn the use of 'unseemly and confused cries' during times of prayer. Probably the author has in mind certain 'enthusiasts' among the more extreme Messalians:

'Those who draw near to the Lord ought to make their prayers in quietness and peace and great tranquillity, not with unseemly and confused cries There are some who during prayer make use of unseemly cries, as if relying on their own bodily strength, not realizing how their thoughts deceive them, and thinking that they can achieve perfect success by their own strength.'²⁶

Yet even if the *Homilies* do not in fact provide clear support for *glossolalia*, it is evident that their author (or authors) expected the conscious experience of the Spirit to be marked by other external expressions, such as tears and ecstatic visions.

St. John Climacus: the baptism of tears

The Ladder of Divine Ascent by St. John Climacus, abbot of Sinai, provides relatively little material to help us in answering our questions. Although *The Ladder* contains a few (but not very many) references to baptism, and also a few (but not very many) references to the Holy Spirit, nowhere are these two themes - the gift of baptism and the grace of the Spirit - mentioned together in the same passage. It is clear from numerous statements in *The Ladder* that Climacus attaches great importance to personal experience, but he does not develop the point in explicit detail.

There are, however, two passages in *The Ladder* that are significant for our present purpose. First, Climacus indicates that there is a direct connection between the gift of the Spirit and obedience to a spiritual father or mother:

'If you are constantly upbraided by your director and yet acquire greater faith in him and love for him, then you may be sure that the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in your soul and the power of the Most High has overshadowed you.'²⁷

To some contemporary Christians there might seem to be a contradiction between, on the one hand, strict obedience to a spiritual guide and, on the other, the personal experience of freedom in the Holy Spirit. But this is not the way in which Orthodoxy views the matter. On the contrary, it is precisely through obedience that we learn freedom. The role of the spiritual guide or 'soul friend' (Celtic *amchara*) is not to act as a substitute for the Spirit, but it is specifically through our relationship with our guide that we are helped to attain personal awareness of the Spirit's presence. So far from discouraging a direct contact with the Spirit, our guide seeks to open the door for us; to vary the metaphor, he or she aims to be transparent.

The second and more important passage in *The Ladder* concerns the gift of tears. Climacus, as Symeon the New Theologian was later to do, regards this as a second baptism, which is to be placed on an even higher level than the first baptism in sacramental water:

The tears that come after baptism are greater than baptism itself, though it may seem rash to say so. Baptism washes off those evils that were previously within us, whereas the sins committed after baptism are washed away by tears. The baptism received by us as children we have all defiled, but we cleanse it anew with our tears. If God in His love for the human race had not given us tears, those being saved would be few indeed and hard to find.²⁸

This is relevant to the third of our questions. What outward signs accompany direct experience of the Spirit? Climacus says nothing about speaking with tongues, but he attaches deep value to the *charisma* of spiritual tears. The gift of tears is also strongly emphasized by Climacus's contemporary, St. Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian).²⁹

St. Symeon the New Theologian: 'he cries and shouts'

Let us now return to the author with whom we started, St. Symeon the New Theologian. How far do his answers to our three questions correspond to those found in Mark the Monk and the Macarian Homilies?

(i) It might seem at first sight that Symeon excludes the possibility of an inner presence of the Spirit that is unconscious yet real; for) in a passage already cited, he states unambiguously, 'Do not say that one can possess Him without knowing it.³⁰ Taken literally, these words suggest that Symeon identifies the *reality* of grace with the *conscious awareness* of it. This is often regarded as a typically 'Messalian' deviation (although what the Messalians actually believed is notoriously difficult to establish). In fact, however, there are other passages in Symeon which imply that he did not in fact endorse such an extreme position. More than once he definitely allows for an unconscious working of grace:

'Let us seek Christ, with whom we have been clothed through holy baptism (cf. Gal. 3:27). Yet we have been stripped of Him through our evil deeds; for, although in our infancy we were sanctified *without being aware of it* (α ν α ι σ χ η τ υ V), yet in our youth we defiled ourselves.'³¹

'As it is written, 'He who endures to the end will be saved' (Matt. 10:22). Not only will he be saved, but he will receive help - at first, *without being aware of it*, then with conscious awareness, and soon afterwards with the illumination that comes from Almighty God.'³²

'When the fear of God leads someone to cut off his own will, God grants him His will, *without the person knowing it, in a way that he does not perceive*.'³³

Symeon - more than Mark the Monk, more even than the Macarian *Homilies* - attaches crucial importance to the attainment, by every Christian without exception, of a direct, conscious awareness of the Spirit; and this may sometimes lead him to exaggerated statements. But, as the passages quoted above clearly indicate, he does not altogether exclude an unconscious presence of Christ and the Spirit. He too, in common with Mark and Macarius, envisages a progress from a 'secret' to an 'active' indwelling.

(ii) Does Symeon also agree with Mark and Macarius in regarding 'baptism with the Holy Spirit', not as a new grace, but as the 'revelation' and fulfilment of water baptism? It has to be admitted that his answer is less clear than that of his two predecessors. As we have seen, he asserts that water baptism is no more than a type', while the second baptism of tears is the truth'.³⁴ He even suggests, in words that I find disturbing, that not all the baptized receive Christ:

Let no one say, 'I have received and I possess Christ from the moment of holy baptism.' Such a person should recognize that it is not all the baptized that receive Christ through baptism, but only those who are strong in faith and in perfect knowledge.³⁵

Perhaps Symeon's point here is that none of us should rest satisfied with a purely external and mechanical appeal to our baptism; we have to *live out* its effects. But in that case it would have been clearer if he had said, as Mark does: 'We receive Christ in baptism, but we only *become aware* of Him if we fulfil the commandments.'

In general, however, Symeon affirms categorically that baptism confers forgiveness of sins, total liberation from tyranny, and the indwelling presence of the Spirit. To use his own words:

'Descending from on high our Master through His own death destroyed the sentence of death against us. He entirely destroyed the condemnation that we inherited from the transgression of our first father, and through holy baptism He

completely delivers us from it, regenerating and refashioning us; and He places us in this' world altogether free and no longer subject to the tyranny of the enemy, honouring us with our original power of voluntary choice.' ³⁶

'You renewed me through the holy baptism that fashioned me anew, adorning me with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁷

'Through divine baptism we become children and heirs of God, we are clothed with God Himself, we become His limbs, and we receive the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within us, which is the royal seal.... All these things, and other things yet greater than these, are given to the baptized immediately from the moment of divine baptism.' ³⁸

After a careful assessment of the evidence, Archimandrite Athanasios Hatzopoulos concludes:

' When Symeon speaks of Baptism in the Spirit, he means the grace of the renewal of sacramental Baptism. It is the same grace of the Spirit that makes water-Baptism a sacrament, which in turn makes possible the gradual renewal of the image.... The grace man receives in Baptism, which promotes his spiritual growth, acts as a starting-point in which the end is present in the beginning.' ³⁹

In the last resort, then, Symeon concurs with Mark and Macarius in regarding 'baptism with the Holy Spirit' - the second baptism of tears - as the full realization of sacramental baptism, not as a new and different grace. But it has to be confessed that here Symeon constitutes a borderline case.

(iii) Like Macarius, but unlike Mark, the New Theologian speaks in some detail about the outward experiences that accompany a full conscious awareness of the Spirit. First of all, he lays great emphasis upon the gift of tears: the second baptism is precisely 'a baptism of tears'. Here he appeals explicitly to John Climacus. Secondly, he assigns a central place in his mystical theology to the vision of divine light. This light, so he believes, is God Himself; Christ may sometimes speak to us from the light, although His bodily form is not seen in the vision. Thirdly, he describes ecstatic phenomena which have obvious parallels in modern Pentecostalism:

'A person who has within him the light of the most Holy Spirit, unable to endure it, falls prostrate upon the ground; and he cries out and shouts in terror and great fear, for he sees and experiences something that surpasses nature, thought and imagination. He becomes as one whose entrails have been set ablaze: devoured by fire and unable to bear the scorching flame, he is beside himself, and he cannot control himself at all. And though he sheds unceasing tears that bring him some relief, the fire of his longing is kindled to yet fiercer flames. Then he weeps more abundantly and, washed by the flood of his tears, he shines as lightning with an- ever-increasing brilliance. When he is entirely aflame and becomes as light, then is fulfilled the saying, 'God is joined in unity with gods and is known by them.' ⁴⁰

It is not surprising that Symeon's writings are popular among contemporary Orthodox who have come under the influence of the charismatic movement.

In conclusion, then, we may claim to have found a large measure of convergence between our Patristic witnesses:

(i) All agree that it is possible to possess the Holy Spirit within oneself, without being conscious of His presence.

(ii) All agree that the 'second baptism' - the baptism of tears or 'baptism with the Holy Spirit' - is *an extension and fulfilment of the first baptism bestowed sacramentally with water*. 'Spirit baptism' is not to be seen as conferring an entirely new grace, different from that conferred through "water baptism".

(iii) Some Eastern Christian authors, such as Mark the Monk, are reticent in describing the outward signs that may accompany conscious awareness of the Spirit. Others, such as Macarius and Symeon, enter into much fuller detail, referring in particular to the gift of tears, the vision of divine light and even on occasion to something that resembles the modern experience of speaking with tongues. But their allusions to this last are very infrequent.

Of these three points, the second will surely prove of crucial importance in any future Orthodox-Pentecostal dialogue.

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Footnotes

1. Alexander A. Boddy, *With Russian Pilgrims: being an account of a sojourn in the White See Monastery and a journey by the old trade route from the Arctic See to Moscow* (London, no date [ca.1931], p.181.1 am grateful to Dr. David N. Collins, of the University of Leeds, for drawing my attention to this passage.
2. *In the Image and Likeness of God* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood 1974), p.152.
3. *Hymn 27:125-32*.
4. See Kallistos Ware, 'Tradition and Personal Experience in Later Byzantine Theology', *Eastern Churches Review* 3:2 (1970), pp.131-41, especially pp. 135-9.
5. *Practical and Theological Chapters* 1:35-36.
6. *Catechesis 21:139-40*.
7. *Sources Chretiennes* 156 (Paris 1969), p. 151.
8. On *Baptism* (PG [= J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*] 65:1028BC). It is somewhat surprising that Mark, while speaking at length about baptism, says very little about the eucharist.
9. On *Baptism* (PG 65:996C, 1016D).
10. On *those who think that they are made righteous by works* 85 (PG 65:944A).
11. On *Baptism* (PG 65:993C).
12. On *those who think that they are made righteous by works* 56 (PG 65:937D).
13. On *the Spiritual Law* 12 (PG 65:908A).
14. On *those who think that they are made righteous by works* 57, 83 (PG 65:940A, 941 CD).
15. B43:6.
16. C28:3.
17. *Great Letter* (ed. Wemer Jaeger), p.236, line 8.
18. B43:6.
19. B 25:2, §§2-4.
20. H 26:23; 27:17; 32:4; 47:1; etc. •
21. See, for example, H 1-8,10.
22. H 25:9-10.
23. H20:1.
24. H 8:3.
25. C 15:4.
26. H 6:4.
27. *Ladder*, Step 4 (PG 88:725D).
28. *Ladder*, Step 7 (PG 88-.804B).
29. See his *Ascetical Homilies* 14 and 37 (35), tr. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston 1984), pp.82-83, 174: cited in Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood 1995), p.101.

30. See note 3.

31. *Catechesis* 2:139-42.

32. *Catechesis* 26:63-66.

33. *Practical and Theological Chapters* 3:76.

34. See note 5.

35. *Ethical Discourse* 10:323-6.

36. *Catechesis* 5:381-6.

37. *Thanksgiving* 2:17-18.

38. *Letter on Confession* 3 (ed. Kari Holl), p.111, line 26 - p.112, line 6.

39. Athanasios Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases in Byzantine Spirituality* (Thessaloniki 1991), pp.135,137.

40. *Practical and Theological Chapters* 3:21. The final phrase is from St. Gregory of Nazianzus.