

## CONNECTING VATICAN II'S CALL TO HOLINESS WITH PUBLIC LIFE

### I. THE PUBLIC

"The public" or "public life" is a much more complex kind of idea than appears at first sight. I have looked at the subject from many different angles and, like those in the Gospels who fished all night, feel I have caught nothing. "The public," obviously, is a construct; it lives off of our predications of it; it has no reality independently of our constructs. It needs a noun to give it substance like public rest room, public nuisance, public policy or public institution. But what about public life? If its reality comes from its contrast with private, I wonder when is life private? Whose life is private? Even more germane: is faith private? It is of its very nature public, is it not? Faith was not meant to be hidden under a bushel basket but set upon a lampstand for all to see. The same can be said for theology. Public is a natural descriptor for theology.

But it's precisely my theology that wants down this wall between public and, by implication, private. Our Catholic ecclesiology sees an "us" and an us-to-be where "public" would have us see a "them." It was for the big public, if you will, that the little public that is church came to be. I don't like the notion of public or of public life. Like Robert Frost I say:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down. . . .

This fence, this public fence, doesn't make good neighbors (contrary to Frost's farmer friend from over the hill with whom he mended their partitioning-off fences every spring).

To concretize this point: take your city. Is it the public the way you think about it and speak of it? If it is, should it be so characterized? When did the city become an "it" in the mind of its citizens rather than an "us"? In Paul's mind every city was a potential "us" that the Body of Christ was meant to leaven, so that God would eventually become all in all. This was also the case with the early church as its early stationary liturgies can attest.<sup>1</sup> We, therefore, have to be circumspect when we

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. John F. Baldovin, S.J. on this subject of "The City as Church, the Church as City" in his *City, Church, and Renewal* (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1995) esp. chaps. 1-2.

buy the concept "the public" or public life since the construct will take up as much room as we give it and we may find we are unwittingly walling out what was meant to be walled in. Whatever it is that we imagine or predicate as public, it should be our task as theologians not to valorize it by reifying it with a theological reality it isn't meant to have. If anything, it seems that our task is to critique the category so as to diminish its scope, not enhance it.

Its history is the main reason why I distrust the category "the public." We can actually trace when and how, like its opposite, the area of the private, the public emerged and came to be accepted. Its history will show that it has been the product of a deformed imagination. Its emergence, I want to contend, derives from four formative moments between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

First, in the aftermath of the Reformation, the competing faith communities sought to form their members not for having social responsibilities in their cities and towns but for membership in their faith communities. This thickened the us-versus-them mindset with the result that there was a parochialization of social life. Formation for contributing to the public good or the common good or the good of the community took a distant place to formation for membership in one's faith community. The common good was narrowed to "our" particular community's good. The clearest, sorriest evidence of this was the seventeenth century's religious wars.

A second moment in the emergence of this public/private dichotomy was the Enlightenment. Though the Enlightenment took many forms, it was fomented by the fragmenting of the communalities Christendom had known. Constitutional governments began to establish the procedures necessary for a minimum of societal harmony since faith-based communities had proven themselves incapable of doing so. The Enlightenment produced the myth of, and an insatiable appetite for, a universal, ahistorical rationality. Instrumental reason soon came into an ascendancy as reasoning from traditions fell into disfavor, a condition from which reason has never sufficiently recovered.

A third moment was the anthropology of political liberalism (Hobbes and Locke), which led us to think that the starting point and basic building block of any social whole was the individual. This deeply affected our imaginations about ourselves as autonomous, leaving us with the social "ideal" we are still beset with of how autonomous individuals might best aggregate so as to extend the range of their private freedoms and interests. Once citizens' imaginations were deformed by parochialism, it was easy to conclude that the best government was that which governed least.

And the fourth and final moment was the emergence of the market economy. It served to make whatever social wholes that preceded capitalism, already riven by the three moments just cited, even more fragmented by the law of competition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>I found much light on this history in *Religion, Theology, and American Public Life* by Linnell Cady (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

I know that this is very broad-brushed and that with all historical generalizations like these, exceptions abound. Nonetheless, I believe the general outlines of these four moments continue to deform the imaginations and privatize the interests of most moderns, who take in the reifications or constructs of public/private uncritically. The linguistic construct of "the public" would come less easily to our lips if we kept two of the mysteries of faith front and center: the objective salvation of all peoples by Christ's death and resurrection and the objective holiness that has been won for all peoples by him. This public must be seen as a constitutive part of God's plan that all may be one, an "us," if you will.

If "the public" and its offspring "the private" are reifications, as I am contending here, and as this brief historical review suggests, then we must work for their deconstruction not their legitimation, as our theological sources call us to do. Our philosophical sources wouldn't, since they inherited the history I have just sketched. So a Kierkegaard, a Nietzsche and a Heidegger, all of whom expatiated brilliantly on the subject of the public, treated that subject as if it constituted what was predominantly an externality, a quantitative or numerical reality, in contrast to seeing the public as internal to Christ's reality and to the us whom Christ has saved.<sup>3</sup>

I think Catholic social doctrine has tended to be more descriptive and therefore more helpful in the terms it has preferred to use to speak of public, two in particular: the temporal order and the common good. The common good was the ethical principle or norm that guided the church's understanding of its own mission in society, its policies and institutions. The "temporal order" was a partial description of the area for the church and its theology to be at work on. I say partial because the church saw the temporal order as needing to be completed by the spiritual leaven of the Gospel to be made whole. The temporal order is the inexorable order of *time and its events* that we live and move and have our being in, together with all other created reality. As the Second Vatican Council sees it "Christ's redemptive work, while itself directed towards the salvation of all, involves also the renewal of the temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is . . . to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the Gospel" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* no. 5). What exactly is entailed in this penetration and perfection of the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel? Although it has been the perennial conviction of Christianity that the destination of all things in the temporal order is that Christ is their *telos*, "this destination not only does not deprive the temporal order of its independence, its proper goals, laws, resources, and significance for human welfare but rather perfects the temporal in its own intrinsic strength and excellence and raises it to the level of man's [*sic*] total vocation upon earth" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* no. 7). Therefore, "It is the task of the whole Church to labor vigorously so that all may become capable of

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<sup>3</sup>A good overview of this philosophical treatment can be found in *The Crowd Is Untruth* by Howard N. Tuttle (New York: Peter Lang Publisher, 1996).

constructing the temporal order rightly and directing it to God through Christ" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* no. 7). The Council is inviting a transcendence of the deformations of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries already cited.

## II. CHARISM

As is so often mentioned, one of the great contributions of the Second Vatican Council was to put the church squarely back into the world, and committed to assisting the world in making each of its systems and institutions function according to the ethical principle of the common good. If public life in all its complex political, economic and institutional life was operating according to the criterion of the common good, that is, "the good of all and of each individual, because we are responsible for all,"<sup>4</sup> it would be as holy as it could be or was meant to be. It is incumbent, then, on followers of Christ and their communities to assist in perfecting "the temporal order in its own intrinsic strength and excellence" insofar as they are able. The Council calls this our "total vocation upon earth." Those are grand terms, but how does each citizen who is Christian/Catholic go about taking some degree of responsibility for the temporal order and the common good it is capable of attaining? This is the great unknown, I believe, for most Christians. I want to address this unknown, this theological lacuna, by reexamining one of the least noticed concepts in scripture and tradition: charism. I think that largely overlooked idea, overlooked by church and theology, has left most people, including ourselves, ignorant of what is entailed in our "total vocation upon earth."

Charisms, like the theme of holiness, seemed to enter the aula of the Council by the back door, meaning that neither holiness nor charism were given systematic treatment or sustained attention by the Council. In chapter 5 of *Lumen Gentium* entitled "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness," the faithful are instructed that "by God's gifts they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness which they have received" (no. 40). What are these gifts by which they are to hold on to and complete their received holiness? Vaguely the Council instructed that the completion of the holiness begun by Christ's justifying us will happen by our seeking to "live the fullness of the Christian life," and to strive for "the perfection of charity" (no. 40). It is slightly more specific in the next section when it instructs: "Every person should walk unhesitatingly according to his [*sic*] own personal gifts and duties in the path of a living faith which arouses hopes and works through charity" (no. 41). Again what are these gifts? There isn't more of an answer by changing "gifts" to "ways." For example: although it is "one and the same holiness that is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God," each is moved differently so that holiness "is expressed in multiple ways by those individuals who, in their walk of life, strive for the perfection of charity and thereby help others to grow" (no. 39). Nor is there much more clarity in saying that the holiness

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<sup>4</sup>From John Paul's *Sollicitudo rei socialis* no 38, in *Catholic Social Thought*, ed. David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

of God was to be manifested "through the fruits of grace that the Spirit produces in the faithful" (no. 39). The Council, therefore, in its exhortation that we complete the holiness we have received, marshalls many different realities: the movements of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit, gifts, graces, as if these were all one and the same.

I want to argue that these are not the same and that the holiness the members of the People of God already have in common and are called to complete and make manifest to the public, if you will, can be better understood by trying to develop a greater clarity about the Pauline category of charism. The Council isn't much of a help in developing this clarity. It spoke of the charisms fourteen times but not with any great consistency.

Perhaps we can't blame the Council. It only continued the very diffuse, undifferentiated understanding of charism in the history of the Church and theology. To exemplify, in *Lumen Gentium* (no. 12) the Spirit is described as distributing "special graces among the faithful of every rank." It goes on: "by these gifts [the Spirit] makes them [the faithful] fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church." The text then proceeds to describe further these special graces or gifts as "charismatic gifts" which are "exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church." (N.B.: *not* the world.) In the background of this smudging together of graces, gifts, charisms is the hoary old distinction between those graces that make the recipient more pleasing to God (*gratia gratum faciens*) and those graces that are meant for others through their exercise by the charismed recipient (*gratia gratis datae*). But that important distinction stays in the background. An even more ambiguous aspect of the charisms is the question of who or what they are meant to effect or build up: the church only or the church and the world, that is, public life, to take our theme? Were it not for the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, one would have had to conclude that in Vatican Council II, the charisms bestowed by the Spirit "on the faithful of every rank" were meant only for the Church since every other mention of them at the Council is intraecclesial with the exception of no. 3 in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, where we read: "From the reception of these charisms or gifts, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and the upbuilding of the Church."

Rather than continuing to spell out the unsystematic, undifferentiated way the Council employed the term "charism," which is something I have done elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> I would like to zero in more specifically on the issue of how God's holiness becomes manifest in public life or assists in perfecting the temporal order through the charisms.

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<sup>5</sup>John C. Haughey, "Charisms: An Ecclesiological Exploration," chap. 1 of *Retrieving Charisms for the Twentieth-First Century*, ed. Doris Donnelly, 1-16 (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

As long as a greater precision is lacking in the ways God works with us and in us, there will be an unclarity about the theological identity, import, and role of the charisms and therefore about any further specification of the call each has in assisting in the perfecting and transformation of the temporal order. Personal charisms, I contend, are the point at which the *chronos* of the temporal order is transformed by the *kairos* of the charism's exercise. In brief, the point I would like to make is that God's holiness makes its impress on the temporal order through the charisms.

But to do so, one must look at some of our sources about the charisms in the Church. I begin with what is still the *locus classicus* of charisms (1 Cor 12). From this text we know several important things about charisms. First, it is obvious that Paul was concerned to preserve both the unity of the nascent Christian community of Corinth and, at the same time, to show it that its unity was being constantly enriched by the diversity of these God-authored charisms as these manifested themselves at the assemblies in which these were exercised. Recall the nascent Pauline Trinitarianism in this chapter, 12:1-3. It sees the multiplicity of charisms as coming from one source, the Holy Spirit. Looked at as different services done for the community he sees them coming from one source, the Lord Jesus. Looked at as different works, he sees them coming from one source, God, whom he and they had come to name *Abba*, "Father."

Our concern at this conference about how theology and, therefore, God's holiness reaches out to the public is clarified considerably by understanding charism. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). The charisms are given to the individual, not for their own sakes but for the sake of the community. It was for the little public of Corinth's Christian community and its "common good" that they were bestowed. At this early stage in Paul's evolving ecclesiology, he was putting the onus of unity on those who were charismed; eventually he, or whoever was the author of the pastoral epistles, would create the category of overseer of the unity of the gifts as itself a charism.

A further thing to note is that the charisms are God's way of ministering to and enriching the community through the members who, having received them, recognize, develop, and exercise them. The community needs the enrichment their bestowal is intended to contribute, just as surely as it needs their exercise to be a ministering to its members and an upbuilding of their unity with one another. Hints at the infinite fecundity of God are given by the exercise of each charism, but ensuring the unity of their source is Paul's particular concern here. As Paul normed it, the Body of Christ in each of its local instantiations was a little public that existed for the sake of the bigger public beyond the Body of Christ. If the bigger public dictated its mores to the little public, as 1 Cor 11:17-34 complains, the mission was over. Paul was sure that "if it hasn't got it there"—that is, at the moments of the Body's coming together—"it hasn't got it" for the larger public. He believed that God's way of loving the world, the public if you will, that his Son was sent to save, was to be through the mediation of these little publics. But if the Body isn't enriched with the charisms of the members while remaining one in the

course of its existence, then the whole Christian enterprise would become unintelligible, he feared.

What especially intrigued Paul about the charisms was their particularity. One charism to this person and a completely different one to that. Paul became aware that neither the initiative nor the character of their charisms lay with the members. "They are apportioned to each one individually as the Spirit wills" (1 Cor 12:11). This idiosyncratic character of charisms is easily overlooked. In the few times they have been treated in theology, Paul's listings of charisms like prophecy, tongues, miracles, discernment of spirits, and so forth, are taken to be an exhaustive listing or the final word on the subject or the only ones to be expected. Rather, these were only the beginnings of what he saw and what they were. It also seems that Paul eventually interpreted them to be much more connected to the vocational identity of the charisms' bearers than with a particular action they could perform, like healing. Paul implies as much when he begins a different kind of elaboration by describing the charisms as identifying the way the whole life of the person would serve the common good, like "apostles, prophets, teachers, etc." (1 Cor 12:29) rather than particular acts. I also believe that Paul can be interpreted as implying that the charisms are as ubiquitous and unique as are the persons in the Body of Christ. We know that this locus was not meant by Paul to be a systematic treatment of the charisms but only a corrective of their misuse. Where there was no abuse, he made no comment. This is an important point because interpreting 1 Corinthians as if it were a full treatment of them has made it seem that any subsequent understandings would have to be proven or established by being confined to this one treatment.

The public and vocational character of a charism as well as the scope of their significance comes out more clearly in the Letter to the Ephesians. That text connects the need Christians have "to live in a manner worthy of their calling" and goes on to specify their calling in both its communal and individual sense by the particular gift each has been given by the Risen Christ. Ephesians also becomes cosmic in scope by envisioning the day when "the universe, everything in heaven and on earth, [will be] brought into a unity in Christ" (Eph 1:10). And how will this day come about? Christians, the author suggests, will be the key to this final unity through the unique gifts each has received over and above the gift of their redemption. It is the glorified Christ who "ascended far above the heavens, that he might fill all things," that is, the universe. How will he do this? He will bestow particular gifts on the members of his Body so that this unity of all things and peoples might be realized. "Each of us was given a special gift, a particular share in the bounty of Christ," or—another translation—each gift was given "according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4:7). These gifts were for the Body and beyond it, not for the recipients themselves. They were a responsibility, a public office, so to speak, that they held by reason of their baptism. These gifts were given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, until we all as a whole perfectly attain to the unity of the faith and of the thorough

knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature stature that belongs to Christ's fullness . . ." (Eph 4:12-13).

### III. WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

I am making much of these charisms, but I suspect most of us have seldom heard of or read about them in our theological texts or in the pastoral settings of the Church. (Sadly, I believe that the liturgical ceremony in which a naming of the charisms usually takes place is the time of the person's eulogy. I say sadly because they are not named charisms, and it is too late for the affirmation the charismed person needed to see how he or she has been uniquely gifted by God for the common good.) So it is fair to ask: what happened to these charisms that had been so central to Paul's ecclesiology after the New Testament period? Why have they been so undernoticed in much of the subsequent history of the church and in the field of theology? We all appreciate how complex and obscure early church history is, but one of the best treatments I have come across about the period when charisms went from being expected to unexpected is found in a masterful piece of research done by Kilian McDonnell and George Montague in their *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. Taking their data largely from the patristic era, they find a radical shift had taken place in the expectations Christians had about the import of the sacrament of baptism after approximately 400 C.E.

In the course of the first three centuries it was expected that charisms would be conferred on the baptized at the time of the sacrament's conferral, which included the laying on of hands and invoking the Spirit. The scriptural paradigm that was ordinarily used at these (mostly adult) baptisms in these early centuries was Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan. Christians were to mirror in their lives what happened to Jesus after his Jordan event. They were expected to live their lives under the guidance of the Spirit and equipped with new powers, including the gifts of the Spirit and charisms. Christians were now seen as being on mission with Christ and his church to continue the work begun by Jesus in the Spirit. McDonnell and Montague describe how explicit the expectation and experience of the charisms were in the *baptizati* in these early centuries, for example in the writings of Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers, Cyril of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> But soon a gradual standardization and domestication of the charisms developed in the course of these centuries. In the Apostolic Constitution (380), for example, the charisms "are incorporated into the structures of authority."<sup>7</sup> And by the time of John Chrysostom (347-407) we find out that the death and resurrection of Jesus has become the favored baptismal narrative, replacing the Jordan paradigm. Furthermore, the charisms begin to be spiritualized by Chrysostom and others, possibly as a way of

<sup>6</sup>Cf. esp. chaps. 8-15 in *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, by Kilian McDonnell and George Montague (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 223.



accounting for their virtual disappearance in the ecclesial experience of his day.<sup>8</sup> For example, if you stay the hand that would strike another in anger by exhorting them to patience, you have cured the withered hand with your charism of healing. Gradually, they go from being spiritualized to being neither expected nor experienced after that, for the most part.

But what happened to cause this virtual disappearance? There were four moments, in particular, that occurred during this early history that changed the understanding of and expectations about baptism and therefore the charisms in the course of these early centuries.

First, adoptionism, which had many different forms, but all seeing Jesus as only human, no different than the rest of us. One of the earliest and easiest explanations of his exceptionality was that after his baptism in the river Jordan God adopted him and, as they say, the rest is history. The adoptionists used the baptism of Jesus to establish their adoptionist Christology. This spoiled the use of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan as the key narrative for understanding and celebrating Christian baptism and, as a result, it was employed less and less as the narrational paradigm for conveying the meaning of the sacrament for the newly initiated.

The second event was Montanism, or as it was called, "the New Prophecy." This late-second-century phenomenon had the Spirit experienced with such display, especially through the charisms of prophecy and healing, that the charisms began to appear to be the major source of authority in the places where Montanus and his followers preached. The charismed became the real leaders and driving force in those congregations. When episcopal or presbyteral authority sought to bring order or control to the exercise of the charisms, they were resisted so as to give the charisms priority and authority. This brought about a strong reaction from Church authority, as you would expect, leaving those claiming to be bearers of charisms suspect from then on.

The third historical event was the Constantinianization of the church. As a result of the legitimation by Emperor Constantine of Christianity, the Christian community's acceptance by the larger public lessened the cost of discipleship, the now unpersecuted Church flourished in quantity and infant baptism became *de rigueur*. The preferred understanding of the transformation brought about by baptism now was that the baptized were brought into Christ's death and resurrection and made members of the new people of God in the new creation. Membership in the church and transformation through the sacraments rather than mission to the world, having being equipped to undertake the mission of the Church with Christ in the world—these were the changes.

The fourth event took place in 411 when Pope Innocent I decreed that the bishops were to reserve to themselves the laying on of hands and invoking of the Holy Spirit (DZ no. 215). This separated the two initiation rites that had been baptism and eucharist up till then into three rites/sacraments. What before had been

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 258.

a continuum in which justification, sanctification, and invoking the Spirit so that the baptised would be equipped for mission with the charisms now became discontinuous. Warrant for the Pope's decree came from several incidents in the Acts of the Apostles, where there appeared to be a disconnect between baptism and receiving the Spirit (e.g., Acts 8:14-17). It also came about because the growing numbers who were becoming Christian in effect was distancing the people from their bishops. While the sacrament of confirmation, as it came to be called, might have helped to consolidate the faithful around the bishop, it does not appear to have done much for their sense of being charismated and missioned by Christ. After 400 C.E., a virtual silence comes down on the subject of charisms.

In subsequent centuries charisms appear to coagulate and become associated with the *virtuosi*, the few and distinguished, the saints if you will. The perception of their infrequency is compounded by the fact that these exceptionals are usually popes, priests, or religious. Sainly founders of religious orders are an interesting case in point. The members of an order come to understand themselves as participating in the distinct charism of their founder. There is a consistency here with Paul's assurance: "to each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). But there is an inconsistency also, since Paul was referring to individuals, not to collectivities.

So interred had the charisms of ordinary people become in the past memory of the church, that Cardinal Ruffini could inform the gathered Vatican II bishops that these special powers belonged in the early church and that if they were to resurface today, especially with the laity claiming them, we would be faced with a serious question about the stability of the Church.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Catholicism has allowed Pentecostals and born-again movements to arrogate to themselves this self-understanding and way of being equipped to bear witness to Christ in the world.

One of the few theologians to address charisms before and after the Council was Karl Rahner. His interest in them was both ecclesiological and ethical. He gave the charismatic element in the Church priority over the institutional and lamented the fact that the Council drew back from the position that would see the charisms belonging to the very constitution of the Church and settled for describing them as only "exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church" (*Lumen Gentium* no. 12). He saw "the institutional element in the Church simply as one of the regulating factors (albeit a necessary one)" for the charisms since he appreciated what he called their "ultimate incalculability."<sup>10</sup> He considered the institutional church as "encompassed by the charismatic movement of the Spirit in the Church, the Spirit who again and again ushers the Church as an open system into a future which God alone and no one else has arranged."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>*Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani II*, vol. 10, pars 2 (Vatican City, 1972) 629-30.

<sup>10</sup>Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 12 (New York: Seabury Press, 1974) 86.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

Since he considered the person in the Church as an *individuum ineffabile*, Rahner's ethics sees the individual as one "who subsists in his or her own spirituality [faced with choices that are] always more than the mere applications of the universal law."<sup>12</sup> He commented that "it would be absurd for a God-regulated, theological morality to think that God's binding will could only be directed to human action insofar as the latter is simply a realization of the universal norm and of a universal nature."<sup>13</sup> Charisms for Rahner are "divinely inspired individual impulses" which "the hierarchy has the duty to accept from those quarters in which they originally strike the Church in the providence of God; even from charismatics, prophets . . . (who are) antennae of the individual divine imperatives given to the Church."<sup>14</sup> These theses led him to plead for a greater use of "the discernment of spirits" in the Church as well as a theology of obedience that was more sensitive to the fact that one could offend God by not obeying "an utterly individual imperative of the individual will of God which is the basis of one's uniqueness."<sup>15</sup>

Rahner's ideas are provocative, and they surface one of the main reasons why charisms are such a sensitive matter in the Church. Who judges them? Does the recipient or those to whom they are manifest? Is the recipient the best judge of them? Both I think. The charisms presumably produce "products" that are "manifestations of the Spirit for the common good." So the community which is their beneficiary or their *terminus ad quem* is surely an appropriate judge. But not the only one, it seems to me. Jesus would not have been deemed charismed if the Jewish community's judgment of him were the sole criterion. In matters of the Spirit one needs the Spirit to judge. This necessary testing of the Spirit without extinguishing it is a complex affair (1 Thess 5:12; 19-20). Each one has to judge what it is that is moving him or her as well as accept the fact that the community for whom the charism is given also has to judge. Finally, time comes into the picture. Over time, judgments often change about the presence or absence of the Spirit. The prophets were killed and are still being killed. Over time, the stature of the charismed becomes clearer as does evidence of delusion. That being said, would that discernment were a science; alas, the best we can hope for is that it remains an art!

Here I would like to offer two general observations. First, charisms usually suffer from the same blight all Christian pneumatology has suffered from, namely a vertical supernaturalism. This has had both the Spirit and the charisms imagined adventitiously, thus leaving them to be seldom, if ever, expected or recognized by modern minds since we seem to find more immediate and immanent explanations for most everything. Our understanding of a charism should, in fact, begin in the gene pool and include all the ways that nature and nurture, especially the nurture

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<sup>12</sup>Karl Rahner "On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964) 226.

<sup>13</sup>Rahner, "Observations," 227.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 232.

the Church supplies, as combining to develop the charismed person. Unlike Plato's *daimon*, which has fascinating parallels to this subject matter, a charism goes from acorn to oak through the event of baptism. What nature and nurture provides is sublated by the Spirit and by cooperative grace, as Lonergan calls it. So, while it is true the Spirit blows where it wills, it is more likely to blow on sails it finds hoisted or on what "human hands have made" than where there is nothing there to work with. While it is true that charisms cannot be finally, humanly accounted for, that does not put them in the ranks of the miraculous. Charisms build on nature; they don't interrupt it or ignore it or disdain it.

The second general comment is that if we take a very general overview of the Hebrew Scriptures we would have to see that the *Ruach Jahweh*, the Spirit of God found throughout those texts, is intensely involved with matters public. Although Israel is God's central object of predilection in these texts, her lot is constantly intertwined with the life of the nations. And the *Ruach Jahweh* is not a domesticated spirit, but blows where it will over Israel and beyond Israel while working through the charismed Moses, David, Isaiah, and a Cyrus, a Pharaoh, an Assyria, and a Babylon.

The Spirit enlightened Israel about public matters and about its relationship to the ambient publics (the nations) that were as much in God's hands as Israel was. This *Ruach Jahweh* in the Hebrew Scriptures is a reminder for us to stretch our pneumatological tent poles beyond ecclesiology and our well-worn theological categories and topics.

The connection between the Spirit and matters public was made explicit by Jesus for his disciples. According to exegetes one of the incontestably authentic sayings of Jesus is his promise of the Spirit to those being brought before public tribunals and their rulers and authorities (Lk 12:11-12). The Spirit is promised to those whose words seek to address the public and its authorities. "The Spirit will teach you at that moment all that should be said" (Lk 12:12). Recall, too, John 16:7-8: "The Paraclete whom I will send [to you] will prove the world wrong about sin, about justice, about condemnation." The world equals the public; the promise is given to those who are brought before the world in order to speak a Spirit-inspired word to the world. If the charisms are promised anywhere, it would seem they are promised to those whose work addresses public life. This was the experience that Christians in the first three centuries acted on that made them at first so subversive and eventually so successful in the Roman Empire and in its aftermath.

#### IV. CHARISMED THEOLOGY

What, if anything, do charisms have to do with doing theology, with a particular aspect of this question being: doing theology for public life? What would it mean to do theology with the assist of a charism? Since I presume most of us have not thought about this, I would like to take a shot at imagining what the difference would mean between doing theology with or without a charism assisting

it. First of all, I don't think it would necessarily mean that one would be conscious of or experience the Spirit in doing theology. Though it is our understanding that it is the Spirit who actualizes in us the objective redemption won for us by Christ, this does not mean that the Spirit becomes an object of our attention. We do not reflect on nor theologize *on* the Holy Spirit but, hopefully, only *in* the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the total horizon within which our theologizing takes place, not one object in this horizon. The Spirit and a charism for theology enlightens and sheds light on the object being theologized without necessarily being the object of our attention or experience.<sup>16</sup> We are more likely to experience the Spirit in our prayer than when we do our theology. The Spirit is experienced as inspiring in us the desire to know the truth and do the good all the way to the point of becoming one with the Holy God who would gain ascendancy in our lives in the Spirit. The aspiration to be filled with the Spirit is an aspiration of the Spirit itself, it seems.

But, the best evidence of the presence of the Spirit is in the matter of our loves. What we love and who and how. Crucial among these objects of love is the matter of the Body of Christ, the People of God, the Church. Does the theologian love the Church? This is a fair question for the faithful to ask us and for us to ask ourselves. Not the Church of the theologians' categories, but the Church on the ground, so to speak. One would seem to be part of a house divided if one were a confessing member of the Body of Christ yet despising that reality at the same time. The person who doesn't theologize with the assist of a charism probably sees himself or herself as theologizing *ex corde academiae*, that is, doing theology from within the academic theological disciplines and for them. The more likely candidates, though by no means certain ones, for doing a charismed theology are those who see themselves theologizing *ex corde ecclesiae*, namely, from within the church, and actively participating in the life of the Church. Let me hasten to add that these two *ex cordes* are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, rather than pitting one against the other, it is helpful to recall that a creative tension between the two has been helpful, by and large, to both academy and church. Recall the aridity of much of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Roman Catholic theology, which was insular and insulated from the academy. Catholic/Christian theologians have to balance these two loyalties in a way that our secular colleagues do not. I suspect also that most of us would add that being academically competent in matters theological is much more a matter of perspiration than of inspiration, that is, of charism.

The point that needs to be made is that, given the Catholic theological tradition of the inseparable linkage between Christ and the Spirit and, in turn, the Church and Christ, it seems unlikely that a charism for doing theology would operate in a person who is not a member of the Church or who, having been, has become inactive in his or her faith or who is angry with the church or takes positions

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<sup>16</sup>A useful article in this matter is "Theological Presuppositions in Our Preaching about the Spirit" by Kilian McDonnell, OSB, in *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 219-35.

contentiously with the church. In saying this, however, I am not suggesting obeisance or an uncritical attitude is necessary for a charism for theology since I and you have known personally so many theologians who have served the Church well over the years by respectfully arguing against a position the church has taken on a given subject. But it would be hard to find examples of charismed theologians who theologized arrogantly or from anger.

At this point it would be helpful to exemplify these points by a theologian who not only did his work with the assist of a charism but who also actually seemed to entertain the question I have posed here. I am referring to Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988). He understood the Holy Spirit to be “the nonobjective-eternally-beyond-all-objectification-breathing mystery in whose light everything that is at all capable of being illuminated becomes clear and transparent . . . the Spirit is breath [who] wishes only to breathe through us not to present ‘himself’ to us as an object; the Spirit does not wish to be seen but to be the seeing eye of grace in us.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the charism one might have to do theology is not itself seen but is the seeing that comes in the doing of it. It is ascribed to charism because it cannot be accounted for simply by one’s natural gifts or training or perspiration.

Balthasar describes theology done with the assist of charism as an expression of an impression made on the theologian by the Spirit or, as he preferred, by the glory of God.<sup>18</sup> Theology done *sans* the charism or *sans* the Spirit does not know this impress moment of which Balthasar speaks. The impress made by the Spirit or by God’s glory or by charism is the originating source of the theological expression. This theology would be, then, tantamount to a reasoning done in the Spirit or possibly to a testifying to what one has seen or heard in one’s heart, though that may be too exalted a characterization. Charismed theology for Balthasar was precisely the experience of the beauty of what was apprehended, which seized the heart and mind of the theologian so that what was previously not grasped is or can be expressed. Is what is newly understood, then, new? Yes and no. What was there all along is known as if for the first time. It is “on the one hand an obedient repetition of the expression of revelation imprinted on the believer and, on the other, a creative, childlike, free sharing in the bringing-to-expression in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>19</sup> This echoes: “Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and old” (Matt 13:52).

I think Balthasar’s first reaction to the theme of our conference, on public life, would be “only beautiful theology, that is, only theology which, grasped by the glory of God, is able itself to transmit its rays, and has the chance of making any

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<sup>17</sup>Hans Urs von Balthasar *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 3, *Creator Spirit* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989) 111-12.

<sup>18</sup>Angelo Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar—A Theological Style* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 2.

<sup>19</sup>From Balthasar’s “Revelation and the Beautiful,” in *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 1, *The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989) 120.

impact in human history by conviction and transformation."<sup>20</sup> He found this kind of impressed-by-the-Spirit theology was done by such hallowed company as Irenaeus, Augustine, Dionysius, Anselm, Bonaventure, Thomas. To each of them a manifestation of the Spirit was given for the common good, as Paul put it in describing the role a charism plays. Balthasar threw in Dante, John of the Cross, Pascal, Solov'ev, Hopkins, and Peguy for good measure, to show that the charisms for freshly apprehending the revelation are not confined to those who see themselves as theologians.

I don't think Balthasar would accept David Tracy's ideas about the three publics theology is meant to address since for him there was only one public. Moved by the glory of God or their particular charism, theologians were missioned to irradiate the beauty of God as that is known by them in Christ through the Spirit to *one* public, the world. It seems to me that the charisms produce originals in two senses. The recipients are made original because they have something distinct to make manifest that has its origin in the Spirit. The impress made on each of those who bring a particular light to the world, whether theologian or not, is not the same. The highly unique character of a charism can originalize a personality. And in some cases their charisms produce classics. Their survival beyond the generation in which they were produced testifies to that.

On the other hand, Balthasar would be delighted with David Tracy's comment that classics achieved genuine publicness because of the "intensified particularity" their authors had developed. What is this intensified particularity if not the particularity of a person's charism? To quote Tracy: "each of us contributes more to the common good when we dare to undertake a journey into our own particularity . . . than when we attempt to homogenize all differences [from one another] or [try to] root out all particularity and call in publicness."<sup>21</sup> This journey into our own particularity does not mean we have to be concerned about producing a classic nor with how public an impact our theology will have. In fact, it is not even fruitful to be concerned about whether I have a charism to do theology since we can't will ourselves into having such. These all seem to be more the Spirit's business than ours. Rather, it seems that our responsibility is to improve whatever competencies we need to bring to our work and this in two senses: our theological competence but also the competence that accrues from having our minds and hearts immersed in the Word of God and the sacraments. For Balthasar, one's growth in holiness and one's doing of theology cannot remain in an extrinsic relation one to the other but must be in a relation of mutuality.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>From Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord: My Work in Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 13-14.

<sup>21</sup>I am indebted to Kristin Heyer of Boston College for pointing out to me David Tracy's "Defending the Public Character of Theology," *The Christian Century* 98 (April 1981): 355.

<sup>22</sup>See Balthasar's famous essay "Theology and Sanctity," in *The Word Made Flesh*, 181-209.

We cannot will ourselves into a charism, but one can become attuned to the interiority necessary to know the movements of the Spirit in one's mind and heart. This could head off concern about the public attention or acclaim one's work might win. Jesus didn't seem concerned about those who did not have ears to hear but with those who did. Our concern should be whether we ourselves have ears to hear and are quiet enough interiorly to listen. But, of course, like any charism a theological charism is meant for the common good. "To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). To be the bearer of a charism is to hold a public responsibility, you might even say a public office, not one that an electorate has elected one to; one holds this office by God's appointment.

One of the clearest ways the Church acknowledges outstanding theological charisms is to name the bearers doctors of the church. To date there have been thirty-three so named by the Church, the most recent being Thérèse of Lisieux. But she was not a theologian, of course. True, and the list of the doctors of the church is instructive since many of them were not. The two prerequisites in older times before one could be considered a doctor of the church were enough evidence of sanctity to be canonized and eminent learning. The present pope has changed this eminent learning category slightly to include those who have housed the mysteries of the faith with such purity that a new fresh insight becomes available to the church and the world through the expression of their insights whether that is done theologically or otherwise.

With this criterion in mind, think of our contemporaries who have borne fresh witness to the Gospel, none of whom are named doctors of the church—and probably never will be: Joseph Bernardin, Jean Vanier, Helen Prejean, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Dorothy Day, Tom Gumbleton, Henri Nouwen, Oscar Romero, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Don Samuel Ruiz, Aung San Suu Kyi (of Burma). In some cases, what they wrote bears much fruit. But in all cases it was and is their lives that edifies so many even moreso.

There is an intrinsic linkage between knowledge and life, word and act, theology and sanctity. Balthasar's observation about the history of theology is apposite here: "theology when pursued by saintly theologians was a theology at prayer. . . . When it became more and more divorced from prayer" it lost its range, its ability to be a light to the world of men and women, its publicness, if you will.<sup>23</sup> One of the ways Balthasar recommended for theologians to retrieve this earlier integration was to take their theological data from saints and mystics. Since these were clear manifestations of the Spirit, theologians could make them more available to the public for the common good. "The life of the saints is theology in practice."<sup>24</sup> By its ignorance of or neglect of this theological source, Balthasar found much contemporary theology peripheral to making revelation relevant; it so

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 209.



often led one away from the center of revelation by producing "knowledge that puffs up" (1 Cor 8:1) serving only curiosity or vanity."<sup>25</sup>

#### V. PAULINE NORMATIVITY

But there is a still clearer normativity available to us to know whether a charism for theology is present in ourselves or in a given theologian. What fruit does the theology in question bear in the church and in the world or, as we prefer these days, what are the outcomes? Paul accepted the fact that no human will was the author of a charism any more than their will was the author of their birth. They happen, if they happen, "as the Spirit wills." But that is not all he had to say about them. He knew that their authenticity could be weighed by several humanly measureable outcomes. Do they upbuild the Body of Christ? Does their exercise make the Body more coherent or less coherent? He knew that the Body was not meant to be homogeneous precisely because of the charisms, but neither was it to be riven by those who purported to have them.

So, St. Paul's specific norm, one that superseded every other test of a charism's authenticity, was "love." Do the charism's exercise and its carrier pass the test of love? For "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). Paul knew that *sans* love the whole enterprise would begin to tear apart and that the charismed would become irritants and sources of the Body's disintegration. Love was the only way that could prevent this from happening. Love was not only a charism that authenticated any other charism, it was the way they were to be exercised (1 Cor 12:31). Love was the originating energy of God in sending the Son into the world. Love was the only way to achieve the end for which the Son was sent. Where the charism of love is lacking, the presence of another charism is unlikely.

Love is concerned about the other, their good, and the common good. The present pope has developed a fresh understanding about love that he calls the virtue of solidarity. Solidarity for him is a virtue that is "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* no. 38). This virtue is a reminder that our theological research and teaching must be concerned with the common good, the good of the community. John Paul II treats solidarity as a moral virtue that derives directly from the theological, infused virtue of *caritas*. There's a big difference between doing theology with an eye to career, advancement, promotion, tenure, acclaim, and doing it with an eye to the good of others, in the classroom, the academy, the parish, the community, the city, society. So whether love is examined in the personalist Pauline sense of the foundational charism for the exercise of the other charisms, or in the societal, more collective sense of the pope's virtue of solidarity, in either case, "if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love,

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 196.

I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal . . . if I understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2).

But there is one final norm that augurs well for the presence of a charism of the Spirit for theology. Not measuring up to this norm makes it unlikely that one's theology is being done with such an assist. In the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul is concerned that the exercise of the gifts be edifying by being exercised in a way that is ordered, orderly. They must produce an experience of edification or upbuilding for those who are members of the assemblies and for those who are outsiders who happen to be in attendance, the public, if you will. "Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor 14:26). The way he spells out this edification and order is germane for our theme, that is, that the greater the scope of the charism's exercise, the more it should be privileged, allowed, given attention. And, conversely, the narrower or more private the scope of the gift being exercised, the less significant it is. So, for example, "praying in a tongue that is foreign" to those in the assembly is an example of the less significant gift whereas prophecy is the more significant one, especially because "an unbeliever or outsider" who happens to be in the assembly might be stricken to the heart and falling on his knees confess that "God is among you" (1 Cor 14:24). It is the edification of both those who are or who are not members of the community that is normative for Paul in the use of the gifts. Again: "To each a manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).

To theologize *in Spiritu*, theologians would have to have an eye to the purpose for which the charism was given. The theologian would have to be sensitive to and concerned that he or she not be contributing to disorder in the Body. As Paul describes this exigency in 1 Cor 14, it doesn't mean that the theologian would have to take on the role of a bishop but that one would do his or her theology respectful of the duties of those with the responsibility of administration or as it would subsequently be named, *episcopus*, overseer.

The logic of Paul's understanding of the charisms' exercise should be extended to mean that theology is ultimately to upbuild the human community for the common good. The scope includes the public. Like the ecclesial community itself, the exercise of the charisms was to bear witness to the larger community, that an enriching but coherent order is operating in the community from which these gifts emerge. The public was meant to experience the edifying dynamic of the gifts operating within the little publics of the churches. It was to see as coming from there something the public itself did not have but could recognize it needed. Let's call it light, light for the world.

I have roamed through the chapters of 1 Cor 12, 13, and 14 since I find them helpful in sorting out this matter of charisms and theology. One of our tensions currently as theologians is the *mandatum* which we are to request from our bishops. I find these three chapters of 1 Corinthians enlightening on this issue. They are a two-way street. In the twelfth chapter it seems that the theology we do must be done with an awareness of being one gift among many and therefore we need to be aware of the other's gift, for example, the administrator's or overseer's. And, vice

versa, theology should expect the bishop and the community to bring an enriching diversity into the community's never-settled unity. This double awareness is a mark of favor of the operative charisms. And, from the thirteenth chapter, if one's theology is done out of love—"love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful"—that is another mark in favor of the provenance of the Spirit in the theology being elaborated (1 Cor 13). But this norm is also double-edged. Authority exercised out of urges short of love would rightly call down ire were Paul the bishop. And, finally, if the theology is done aware of the need for an order that "edifies" the community, whether local or public, that theology would seem to have the earmarks of the Spirit (1 Cor 14).<sup>26</sup> But, again, the norm goes in other directions. The exercise of a bishop's responsibility must take into account whether it will edify or create an *odium fidei* in the local church. Conversely, where disedification abounds or love is lacking or an intended enrichment jeopardizes the Body's unity, the presence of a charism for theology is not likely or is still immature.

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<sup>26</sup>I am convinced by recent scholarship that 1 Cor 14:34-35 about women needing to be silent in the assemblies is not Pauline but an interpolation. See, e.g., Gordon D. Fee's *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) 281; Fee's whole argument is well documented on 272-81.