



## Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr's Ecclesial Relationship

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### Abstract

Many systematic theologians acknowledge the relationship between Hans Urs von Balthasar, the significant twentieth-century Catholic theologian, and Adrienne von Speyr, the Swiss physician and Catholic mystic. There is, however, difficulty understanding the actual character and purpose of this relationship. I argue in this paper that Paul's theology of charism, particularly dealing with double mission charisms, will help us understand correctly the ecclesial relationship between von Balthasar and von Speyr. After an overview of von Balthasar's statements regarding the relationship and the three main interpretations of it, I offer my own interpretation of this relationship by using Paul's theology of charism. The ramifications will be a reinterpretation of central aspects of von Balthasar's theology including but not limited to his theology of Holy Saturday, Trinitarian theology, and theology of the communion of saints.

### Keywords

Catholic Mysticism, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Adrienne von Speyr, Theology of Mission, Theology of Charism, Theology of Holy Saturday

### Article

Many systematic theologians acknowledge the relationship between Hans Urs von Balthasar, the significant twentieth-century Catholic theologian, and Adrienne von Speyr, the Swiss physician and Catholic mystic.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, difficulty understanding the actual character and purpose of this relationship. What precisely does von

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), pp. 57–89.

Balthasar mean when he calls the greater part of his writings “a translation of what is present in more immediate, less technical fashion in the powerful work of Adrienne von Speyr”?<sup>2</sup>

I argue in this paper that Paul's theology of charism, particularly dealing with double mission charisms, will help us understand correctly the ecclesial relationship between von Balthasar and von Speyr. While Paul's theology of charism (1 Cor 12–14) speaks mostly of single missions (preaching, teaching, etc.) for the building up of the church, he also sees a necessary place for double missions. For example, an interpreter of tongues must accompany the charism given to the speaker of tongues “so that the Church may be edified” (1 Cor 14:5). This Pauline theology of the mutual dependence of charisms will provide a way for understanding the inextricably interwoven relationship between Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr.

In this paper, I will first provide a brief overview of this interesting relationship and von Balthasar's statements regarding it. Second, I will then offer the three main interpretations of this relationship. Lastly, in the third part of this paper, I will offer my own interpretation of this relationship by using Paul's theology of charism.

### Review of the Relationship

Born in 1902 in western, French-speaking Switzerland, von Speyr, who was raised in the independent Reformed church, grew up to be one of the first women physicians in Switzerland. In 1931 after completing medical school, she began her own medical practice in Basel. In 1934, von Speyr's happy family life came to a crashing halt with the sudden death of her husband, Emil Dürr, who was a history professor at the University of Basel. At her dying husband's bedside, she remembers trying to pray the Our Father repeatedly but the words “Thy will be done” stuck in her throat. She could not pray for God's will to be done if it meant her husband's death.<sup>3</sup> A couple of years later, in 1936, von Speyr married Werner Kaegi, who was also a professor at the University of Basel. They were happy together and had a lively open home filled with people coming and going.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘Another Ten Years: 1975’, trans. John Saward in *My Work: In Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, trans. Antje Lawry and Sergia Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), p. 31 and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Our Task: A Report and a Plan*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Cornelia Capol (director of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr Archives and one of the initial members of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*), in an interview with me, March 8, 2006, Basel, Switzerland.

The sorrow, however, of losing her first husband and the inability to pray the Our Father stayed with her.

For several years, von Speyr had been looking for a Catholic priest to discuss her questions about Catholicism. In the spring of 1940, Hans Urs von Balthasar was assigned as a student chaplain to the University of Basel. He had heard of the Kaegis and wanted to meet them.<sup>5</sup> The first meeting took place after von Speyr had returned from the hospital having recovered from a severe heart attack.<sup>6</sup> Von Speyr and von Balthasar went for a walk along a terrace overlooking the Rhine. They began speaking about the French Catholic playwrights and poets, Paul Claudel and Charles Péguy, whom von Balthasar was translating. Von Speyr gathered up the courage and said that she thought she would like to become a Catholic too. They started to speak about her prayer life and her difficulty praying the Our Father. Von Balthasar then showed her that this prayer is not about what we want and are able to do ourselves. Rather, “we offer him our willingness to let what *he* does take over our lives and move us anywhere at will.”<sup>7</sup> Immediately, von Balthasar remarked, she recovered her prayer life and was carried away by a flood of prayer as if a dam had burst.<sup>8</sup>

When von Balthasar began preparing her for Baptism, he said that she learned everything as if she already knew it but was only looking for him to affirm it. Von Speyr was baptized on the Feast of All Saints, November 1, 1940 and was confirmed a few days later. Although many friends and family were shocked by her conversion, through von Balthasar she became friends with many significant Catholics, like Hugo Rahner, Erich Przywara, Henri de Lubac, Reinhold Schneider, Annette Kolb, and Gabriel Marcel. For her part, von Speyr encouraged von Balthasar to have a deep engagement with Karl Barth. She attended different events with von Balthasar and Karl Barth. She also prayed intensely for them during their more formal dialogues.<sup>9</sup>

After von Speyr's conversion, many mystical experiences took her by storm. A few months after her Baptism in the spring of 1941, a remarkable set of mystical visions began, which terrified von Speyr. The first was the appearance of an angel who stood by her bedside one night and said most earnestly, “Now it shall soon begin.”<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Von Balthasar, *First Glimpse*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Continuum, 1994), pp. 305–306 and von Balthasar, *Our Task*, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> Von Balthasar, *First Glimpse*, p. 34.

following nights the angel asked for her consent to all that God was planning for her. She did not want these mystical experiences and, in the beginning, it was difficult for her to bring together her life as a doctor and these new mystical visions.<sup>11</sup> Von Balthasar would try to convince her that she was experiencing nothing abnormal, but something quite consistent within the Christian tradition.<sup>12</sup>

The first mystical visions were an introduction to the heavenly world through the appearances of saints and angels. However, during the first Holy Week in 1941 after her conversion, she began to have mystical experiences of Christ's passion, which would continue for the rest of her life during Holy Weeks and would always end dramatically on Holy Saturday.<sup>13</sup> The experiences were not visions of the historical scenes of the Passion narratives, like those of Bl. Anne Catherine Emmerich, but more, intense, interior experiences of Christ's sufferings, especially the experiences of forsakenness from the Father and his descent into hell.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning more formally in 1944, von Speyr would dictate to von Balthasar what she was experiencing in her visions and contemplations. She soon became adept at dictating and getting von Balthasar to understand what she was seeing so that he could transcribe in shorthand without much difficulty. Almost daily, they would go into a quiet room and she would open her French Louis Segond Bible, close her eyes, and then begin to speak in a quiet, objective tone.<sup>15</sup> These sessions would often happen in the afternoon for only about a half an hour out of which over sixty volumes were produced. Von Speyr also believed that God was calling her to found a secular institute, which she did in 1945 with the help of von Balthasar who left the Jesuits to help begin the institute. This group of priests, sisters, and laymen and women are called the *Johannese Gemeinschaft*, or Community of St. John, and are in existence today although they are few.

In her final years, von Speyr's health deteriorated and she experienced an overwhelming amount of physical suffering. She had a whole life's worth of suffering in her childhood, but in the later

<sup>11</sup> Von Balthasar, *Our Task*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> Von Balthasar writes that von Speyr "fought against the idea of being a mystic. . . . She had to be taught that even 'unworthy people' in the Church may receive apparitions. She replied that 'the apparitions she had were not visions at all, just simple reality. . . . It truly was actuality, ordinary reality, and by comparison the other kind (earthly reality) was almost unreal.' . . . Under no circumstances did she want to be confused with a saint" (See von Balthasar, *Our Task*, p. 59n13).

<sup>13</sup> Von Balthasar, *First Glimpse*, pp. 35–37.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Adrienne von Speyr, *The Passion from Within*, trans. Lucia Wiedenhöver (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998) and *Kreuz und Hölle*, 2 vols. (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes Verlag, 1966 and 1972).

<sup>15</sup> Von Balthasar, *First Glimpse*, p. 37.

years her death was, as von Balthasar remarked, "A dying in the slowest of all slow motion."<sup>16</sup> In 1940, she had a severe heart attack and always had a weak heart from it. She also developed a serious case of diabetes and had aggravating arthritis. In 1964, she started to lose her sight as well as the feeling in her feet. The "passions" during the Holy Weeks became quite severe and left her exhausted for weeks afterward. With great sorrow, she had to give up her medical practice. The final months of her life were particularly torturous, but she bore all of it, as von Balthasar said, "with great equanimity, always concerned about others."<sup>17</sup> Adrienne died on September 17, 1967 on the Feast of Hildegard von Bingen, with whom she had a deep affinity because she was also a doctor and a mystic.<sup>18</sup> She was buried in Basel on September 20, her sixty-fifth birthday.

After her death, von Balthasar began extensive publication of her works, including the twelve-volume collection called *Die Nachlassbände*, the posthumous volumes. Von Balthasar's writings, publishing, and thought continued to have von Speyr's works and mission at the center of his energies until his death in 1988.

The relationship between Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr began in 1940 and continued until von Speyr's death in 1967. What is to be made of this relationship? In 1984, von Balthasar published the book *Our Task: A Report and Plan*, which is much like a history and rule for their secular institute, *Johannesgemeinschaft*. In this book, he wants to make sure that his work would be interpreted in substantial connection with Adrienne von Speyr's work. He says that this book has "one chief aim: to prevent any attempt being made after my death to separate my work from that of Adrienne von Speyr."<sup>19</sup> He continues later on in the book with these bold words, "Without these pioneers" (he means in this immediate context, Henri de Lubac, Erich Przywara, Jean Daniélou, Paul Claudel, Irenaeus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor),

"I would have been incapable of understanding and communicating, with any reasonable degree of competence, the dictated works of Adrienne von Speyr in the exactness of their insights and the almost immeasurable variety of their theological opinion."<sup>20</sup>

He claims here that his vast literary, philosophical, and theological education provided him the otherwise impossible ability to

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Adrienne von Speyr, *The Book of All Saints: Part One*, trans. David C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), pp. 59–62, 236–237 and Adrienne von Speyr, *Subjektive Mystik*, vol. 1 of *Das Wort und die Mystik* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1970), pp. 38–39, 275–276.

<sup>19</sup> Von Balthasar, *Our Task*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

understand and communicate with exactness and breadth what he believes he witnessed in von Speyr's mysticism. Through his education, he had the means "for assimilating the fullness of her theological insights and given them appropriate expression."<sup>21</sup> In other words, von Balthasar reads his intellectual formation as a preparation directed toward expressing von Speyr's mysticism.

In an interview in 1986 with Angelo Scola, von Balthasar spells out what were their mutual but different contributions to this relationship. He said that:

"All I attempted to do was gather it [von Speyr's mysticism] and embed it in space, such as the theology of the Fathers, that of the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. . . . My contribution consisted in providing a comprehensive theological horizon, so that all that was new and valid in her thought would not be watered down or falsified, but be given space to unfold."<sup>22</sup>

In this statement, von Balthasar delineates von Speyr's role as the receiver of new and valid thoughts that need to be unfolded within a theological horizon. Von Balthasar expresses his role as contributing this theological horizon through his knowledge of the Fathers, the Middle Ages, and the modern age. Von Balthasar makes the claim that she and he have different roles that are not only complementary but also inherently directed toward each other.

In von Balthasar's book, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, which he wrote in 1968 soon after von Speyr's death, he states with force about the decisive role she played in his life and theology. He wrote that, "On the whole, I received far more from her, theologically, than she from me, though, of course, the exact proportion can never be calculated."<sup>23</sup> He says that he "strove to bring my way of looking at Christian revelation into conformity with hers."<sup>24</sup> I conclude from these statements that, from von Balthasar's own perspective, what von Speyr experienced mystically did not just influence him spiritually but she also influenced him theologically. The way he understands and articulates his theology, he claims, has been more influenced by her than he influenced her. Von Balthasar even believed that her work was more important than his: "Today, after her death, her work appears far more important than mine. . . . the publication of her still unpublished writings [*Die Nachlassbände*] takes precedence over all personal work of my own."<sup>25</sup> He believes that we will never be able to extract the exact proportion of influence (indeed, friends for

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Test Everything: Hold Fast to What is Good*, trans. Maria Shady (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> Von Balthasar, *First Glance*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

twenty-seven years would have the same difficulty), but he expresses bold positions that, in my view, go beyond eulogistic remarks. We must remember von Balthasar's claims as we evaluate the different interpretations of their relationship.

### The Interpreters of the Relationship

Having gathered the significant statements made by von Balthasar on his relationship with von Speyr, it is important now to examine the three different ways that this relationship has been interpreted.

During von Balthasar's life and after his death, the first interpreters of his relationship with von Speyr gave it mild respect but did not engage it in a scholarly way. Except for two scholarly conferences on von Speyr in 1985 and 2002, there has not been substantive scholarly engagement of the two.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, many von Balthasar scholars do give mild respect to von Speyr's influence on von Balthasar. For example, the von Balthasar interpreters, Manfred Lochbrunner and Edward Oakes, argue that a major shift in von Balthasar's works occurred between the publication of his dissertation in 1937 and the writing of the first volume of his major work of the trilogy in 1947.<sup>27</sup> Although they both acknowledge that during this period he met von Speyr and began working with her, they do not think that she was behind this major shift.

Let us look closer at Edward Oakes, who is one of the principle interpreters of von Balthasar in English. His book, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* published in 1994 is one of the main entry points into the secondary scholarship on von Balthasar. He wrote that "for the purposes of this book" he has gone against the wishes of von Balthasar and, "shall be insisting on the opposite: that his [von Balthasar's] is a building that not only can stand on its own, but does."<sup>28</sup> For Oakes, von Balthasar's work stands on its own and does not necessitate a joint examination of von Speyr's works. To his credit, at the end of his book, Oakes does provide an initial, inconclusive interpretation of the relationship between von Balthasar and von Speyr. He says that he remains agnostic about how to account exactly for this relationship in von Balthasar's theology. Besides saying that she influenced him on his

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, 'Ansprache des Heiligen Vaters', in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung: Akten des Römischen Symposiums 27.-29. September 1985*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar, Georges Chantraine, and Angelo Scola (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1986), pp. 181–182.

<sup>27</sup> Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, p. 284n15 and Manfred Lochbrunner, *Analogue Caritative: Darstellung und Deutung der Theologie Hans Urs von Balthasars* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1981), p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

theology of Holy Saturday, which most interpreters do, Oakes states that most of his own research is only spent on the intensive study of von Balthasar's works. When he does read von Speyr, he encounters too many "moments that disconcert me."<sup>29</sup> In Oakes and others like him, there is a respect and appreciation for von Speyr's works, but in the end, there is not a serious scholarly engagement of her works as being decisive in understanding von Balthasar's theology.

While the majority of von Balthasar scholars think that von Speyr should be respected as an influence on von Balthasar, there is another interesting minority group of interpreters that either has a distaste for or rejection of this relationship as having any impact on von Balthasar. A representative of this rejection interpretation would be Kevin Mongrain and his book, *The Systematic Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar: An Irenaean Retrieval*. Mongrain argues in his book that von Balthasar should be classified as a *ressourcement* theologian in continuity with the theologians that inspired Vatican II. He argues that von Balthasar's internal logic can be articulated as an Irenaean theology of mutual glorification of God and humanity in Christ read through the lens of Henri de Lubac.<sup>30</sup> Mongrain argues that von Balthasar's claims regarding von Speyr's influence are dubious and should not be trusted. He writes that,

"The assumption guiding my reading of von Balthasar is that von Speyr's influence on his theology was deforming rather than constructive, derived rather than original; von Speyr is essential for psychologically understanding von Balthasar but completely dispensable for theologically understanding him."<sup>31</sup>

Mongrain's von Balthasar has been deformed by von Speyr's relationship with him. Rather than a positive theological influence on von Balthasar, von Speyr is really a negative psychological presence that should be extricated from any theological reading of von Balthasar. Unfortunately, Mongrain does not choose to defend this assertion, which he says is beyond the scope of his present study.<sup>32</sup> His hope is that his book, without a trace of von Speyr in it, will give scholars a way to refute von Balthasar's own claims about von Speyr's influence. Other von Balthasar scholars reject or have distaste for von

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>30</sup> Kevin Mongrain, *The Systematic Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar: An Irenaean Retrieval* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2002), p. 1. Mongrain's conclusion and method is admirable in his understanding of de Lubac and Irenaeus' place in von Balthasar's thought patterns, but it remains reductionist of too many areas of von Balthasar's thoughts, particularly von Speyr's works. Unlike the majority of von Balthasar scholars, he provides no substantive engagement of the other influential thinkers, such as Origen, Erich Przywara, Karl Barth, Ignatius of Loyola, and the major corpus of classic and modern German writers and philosophers.

<sup>31</sup> Mongrain, *Systematic Thought*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 12.



Speyr's relationship with von Balthasar. Another example, though quite different theologically from Mongrain, would be the work of Alyssa Pitstick.<sup>33</sup>

We have now discussed two different interpretations of the relationship between von Balthasar and von Speyr. The first, which is characteristic of the majority of von Balthasar scholars, respects the relationship but does not engage it in a serious scholarly way. The second, which is characteristic of a much smaller minority of scholars, rejects the relationship and does not engage in any serious scholarship of Adrienne von Speyr. There is however a different group of scholars, which is growing, and in which this paper can be placed. It is the view of this group of scholars that von Speyr's relationship with von Balthasar is essential to understanding him and deserves serious scholarly engagement. These include, for example, Raymond Gawronski, Aidan Nichols, Angelo Scola, Michelle Schumacher, Jacques Servais, Justin Matro, Blaise Berg, and me. Scholars in this interpretive matrix place an emphasis on the changes that happen in von Balthasar's theology after the 1940 meeting with Adrienne von Speyr. These types of scholars also emphasize von Balthasar's work in co-founding with Adrienne von Speyr their secular institute, *Johannesgemeinschaft*, and von Balthasar setting up a publishing house, the *Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln*, specifically designed to publish over sixty of von Speyr's works, which were dictated to von Balthasar. Scholars with this interpretive perspective emphasize von Balthasar's growing use of von Speyr's works, both in quotation, citation, and implicit influence throughout the writing of the trilogy.<sup>34</sup> Above all, this group of scholars point to centerpiece of von Balthasar's theological work, namely his theology of the descent of Christ into the Hell, was not present in his works before his meeting with von Speyr. His witnessing to these mystical experiences of Adrienne von Speyr brought a completely new focus to von

<sup>33</sup> Alyssa Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), pp. 346–347. For my critique of Pitstick's thesis, see my dissertation, 'The Gate of Heaven Opens to the Trinity: The Trinitarian Mysticism of Adrienne von Speyr,' Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2007, pp. 211, 218–224. Pitstick, whose ideas several scholars of von Balthasar reject, does not even have a serious discussion of von Speyr's mystical experiences of Christ descent into Hell. There are of course a few cursory footnotes about her experiences, but these show no substantive engagement and make at least implicitly if not explicitly that von Speyr's theology of Holy Saturday had no major influence on him deserving of authentic scholarly engagement. On this aspect of her argument, see Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, pp. 389n50, 392n102, 395n154, and 412n186.

<sup>34</sup> See especially, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ*, vol. 3 of *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) and his, *The Last Act*, vol. 5 of *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998).

Balthasar's theological work and he says as much.<sup>35</sup> While before 1940, von Balthasar's method of doing theology is well established, some of the content of his theology, specifically its central Trinitarian character, its placing Holy Saturday at the center of revelation, and his deep theology of the communion of the saints would not be present had he not met Adrienne von Speyr and became her friend and confessor for twenty-seven years.<sup>36</sup>

What has not happened in this group of scholars who emphasize the essential relationship of von Balthasar and von Speyr is a way to account theologically for their relationship. It is one thing to say that the relationship is essential. It is another thing to have a good, persuasive interpretation of this relationship. I would like to turn to developing this interpretation now.

### Paul's Theology of Charism

In order to interpret theologically this relationship, I will use Paul's theology of charism, particularly his theology of the double mission charisms. In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, he tried to teach the church at Corinth that its experience with social, sexual, and spiritual problems, especially in relation to the supposedly enlightened elite against the supposedly unenlightened non-elite are completely interrelated. For Paul, the only way to solve these interrelated problems is through a community-wide return to being countercultural and conformed to the cross of Christ with the expectation of the imminent coming day of the Lord so that all they do may "be done in love" (1 Cor 16:14, RSV).<sup>37</sup> Paul addressed a host of issues in this letter. I would like to focus on his theology of *charismata* (charisms or spiritual gifts).

Among their many problems, Paul believed that the church at Corinth was abusing their experience of charisms. Some were taking pride in speaking in tongues and belittled the other charisms.

<sup>35</sup> As these passions began to happen, von Balthasar did not anticipate the suffering would continue into Holy Saturday and he found himself completely not expecting this Holy Saturday mysticism. See his introduction in Adrienne von Speyr, Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'General Introduction to the Posthumous Works', in *Book of All Saints: Part One*, trans. David C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), pp. 13–14.

<sup>36</sup> See especially the section, 'Adrienne's Help with My Work', in von Balthasar, *Our Task*, p. 73–82. See also, Aidan Nichols, *Scattering the Seed: A Guide through Balthasar's Early Writings on Philosophy and the Arts* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006) and Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'The Fathers, the Scholastics, and Ourselves', *Communio* 24 (1997): pp. 347–396. In order to further argue this interpretive position, there will need to be a sustained textual analysis, which this article cannot accommodate given its chosen theological scope.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), pp. 229–237.

These tongue speakers considered themselves elite receivers of the Holy Spirit. Instead, Paul exhorted them that “each has his own special gift [Gk. *charisma*] from God, one of one kind and one of another kind” (1 Cor 7:7). For Paul, each of these special charisms are uniquely given to particular people within the church not for boasting in themselves but for the building up of the church (1 Cor 12:7; 14:1–5). In this letter, Paul tried to connect spiritual gifts with conformity to the cross so that there may be true ecclesial, cruciform unity.<sup>38</sup>

Within Paul's discussion of charisms, he delineated different types (1 Cor 12). These include the “utterance of wisdom,” “utterance of knowledge,” “gifts of healing,” “working of miracles,” “prophecy,” “distinguishing between spirits,” “tongues,” and the “interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor 12:8–10). In this list, which of course is not comprehensive but suggestive, Paul mostly spoke of what we could call single mission charisms, that is a spiritual gift given to a single person intended for their mission within the church. But the last two spiritual gifts, “speaking in tongues” and the “interpretation of tongues,” as he later argued in this letter (1 Cor 14), are not single mission charisms. Rather, Paul believed they should be understood as what we could call double mission charisms, which are spiritual gifts given to two people intended to be used together for their joint mission within the church.

Let us look more closely at Paul's discussion of tongues and interpretation of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. The one who speaks in tongues “speaks not to men but to God” as he “utters mysteries in the Spirit” (1 Cor 14:2). The act of speaking in tongues is a godly language of prayer that is given to some within the church. Paul wrote that he would like everyone to have that gift, but even more he would like everyone to have the charism of prophesy. Paul continued that if one has been given the gift of tongues, then he must be accompanied by another one who has been given the gift of the interpretation of tongues “so that the Church may be edified” (1 Cor 14:5). Paul went on to write quite clearly that “If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor 14:27–28). For Paul, an interpreter of tongues must accompany the speaker in tongues otherwise the charism of tongues should not be exercised within the assembly. In other words, these charisms unlike the others are mutually dependent upon each other. It is only when they are used together that they provide the full force intended by the Spirit to build up the church.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 270–277.

There are several theories about the exact nature of the speaking of tongues of the early church, but for my purposes here, I can conclude that Paul believed that there are charisms that necessarily need each other to be fruitful for the church.

Paul's theology of double mission charisms can be applied to other charisms that have occurred within the history of Christianity. The one I would like to address now is the relationship between the charism of mystical experience, which speaking in tongues could be classified under, and the charism of the theologian, which interpreting of tongues could be classified. Throughout church history, there have been countless joint relationships between a mystic and a theologian who working together helped to build up the church. It does not take us long to assemble a list: John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Claude de la Colombière and Margaret Mary Alacoque, Francis and Bonaventure, John and Peter, Faustina Kowalska and Father Michael Sopocho.<sup>39</sup>

In these cases and many others, the mystic often needs a theologian to help make the insights he has received available to the rest of the church. When a mystic speaks alone, there is usually skepticism about the validity of the mystical experience, but when the mystic has a theologian who helps translate the experience, there is a greater acceptance of the validity of the mystical experience. In many ways, the mystical experience, much like the speaking in tongues, becomes only fruitful for the church when there is a theologian who is interpreting the experience, an interpreter of tongues should accompany much like the speaking in tongues.

While we must say with Paul that all the charisms are mutually dependent, the roles of the mystic and the theologian are particularly mutually dependent upon each other, especially if the mystical experience is meant to have objective influence in the Church. We should rightly call the relationship between a mystic and theologian a double mission charism. This idea is biblical. When Paul has a mystical experience of the risen Lord on his way to Damascus, he is conjoined to Ananias who helps Paul interpret what has happened to him. Ananias then helps the church at Damascus interpret what has happened to Paul (Acts 9). This idea is historical. When Teresa of Avila began having deep mystical experience, it was not until she met, among others, John of the Cross who helped her interpret them and translate them to build up the church in sixteenth-century

<sup>39</sup> By mystical experience, I mean here only a deep or intense experience of the spiritual realm. For a fuller discussion of my understanding of mysticism, see these sources: my dissertation, 'Gate of Heaven', pp. 45–104; Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998); and Adrienne von Speyr, *Die Wort und die Mystic*, 2 vols. (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes Verlag, 1970).

Spain. This idea is also currently practiced within the Pentecostal and charismatic movements of the twentieth and twenty-first century church.<sup>40</sup> This idea is also explored in academic theology in which systematic theologians are trying to make space for mysticism within their constructive systematic theologies.<sup>41</sup>

Having gathered some insights into Paul's theology of double mission charisms with a reading of mysticism and theology, let us now turn to the present case of the relationship between the mystic Adrienne von Speyr and the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. I would like to return to a quotation of von Balthasar when he described his relationship to von Speyr. He said,

All I attempted to do was gather it [von Speyr's works] and embed it in space, such as the theology of the Fathers, that of the Middle Ages and the modern age. . . . My contribution consisted in providing a comprehensive theological horizon, so that all that was new and valid in her thought would not be watered down or falsified, but be given space to unfold."<sup>42</sup>

As I analyzed earlier, von Balthasar is presenting her work as a mystical experience of God and other spiritual realities. He understands his work as interpreter of those experiences. Put in Pauline language, von Speyr would be the speaker of tongues speaking the "mysteries of the Spirit" (1 Cor 14:2) and von Balthasar would be the interpreter of tongues "so that the Church may be edified" (1 Cor 14:5). As quoted earlier, von Balthasar sees the greater part of his writings as "a translation of what is present in more immediate, less technical fashion in the powerful work of Adrienne von Speyr."<sup>43</sup> Von Balthasar sees himself as a translator or interpreter of the mysticism of von Speyr. He sees himself in an ecclesial link to her work. Given the analysis of their joint biography, von Balthasar's own statements about the relationship, and the reading of Paul's theology of double mission charisms and its relation to mysticism and theology, I think that the most appropriate way to interpret theologically the relationship between von Balthasar and von Speyr is that it is an ecclesial relationship of a double mission charisms. The implication here is that their charisms must be understood as mutual interdependent. In other words, the mystic and the theological interpreter cannot be

<sup>40</sup> For a theological account of the present practice of these movements, please see Craig Keener's book, *Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001) and Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> See again the argument of Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*. This book in particular provides the rationale for the thrust of this article.

<sup>42</sup> Von Balthasar, *Test Everything*, p. 88.

<sup>43</sup> Von Balthasar, *My Work*, p. 105.

analyzed in separation from each other because their double mission charism is an ecclesial relationship.

I have argued here that the relationship between von Balthasar and von Speyr should be more than just respected and it should not be rejected or held with distaste. Rather, the theological evidence of the relationship presented to us by von Balthasar and von Speyr should be interpreted ecclesially and that the best way to characterize it is as an example of Paul's theology of double mission charisms. I think that if we take seriously the double mission charism of von Balthasar and von Speyr, the ramifications will be a reinterpretation of central aspects of von Balthasar's theology including but not limited to his theology of Holy Saturday, his Trinitarian theology, and his theology of the communion of saints. The other essential implication of examining this relationship as an ecclesial relationship of double mission charism is it helps build up the church of the twenty-first century through the joint work of the twentieth-century relationship of von Balthasar and von Speyr. Rather than refusing a relationship between mysticism and theology, the analysis of the joint work of von Balthasar and von Speyr help overcome the animosity so that we can acknowledge the purpose of charisms, which means living in an ecclesial, cruciform unity where truly "Love never ends" (1 Cor 13:8).

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