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**Charismata in Contemporary Theology: A Dogmatic Study on
the Doctrine of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of
Dumitru Stăniloae and Jürgen Moltmann, respectively**

(Abstract)

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Abstract of doctoral dissertation

Keywords: Holy Spirit, gifts, *charismata*, Dumitru Stăniloae, Jürgen Moltmann, pneumatology, ecumenical dialogue.

In the present thesis we examined the way in which two of the greatest contemporary theologians, Fr Dumitru Stăniloae and Professor Jürgen Moltmann understand the sensitive but extremely important issue of gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. In the current religious context, marked by the spectacular growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, we surmise that a revisitation of the doctrine concerning the charisms of the Spirit is welcome; charisms are already among the themes which have engendered a fruitful ecumenical dialogue.

In addition to the importance of the subject of charisms as such, we felt that a comparative study of this theme in the theology of Father Stăniloae and that of Professor Moltmann is a promising research avenue, given the theological affinity between the two, as well as the richness and maturity of their theological vision. Comparing the thought of Dumitru Stăniloae with that of Jürgen Moltmann was the initial point for numerous dogmatic studies which sought to clarify the manner in which the two theologians see doctrines such as pneumatology, the doctrine of creation (and God's involvement in it) or the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This fact encouraged us to embark on a comparative study concerning their respective doctrine of gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit.

For a proper and contextual understanding of the thought of the two great theologians, we felt that a preliminary survey was necessary, in order to analyze the theological perspective on the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit prevalent in the Christian traditions to which Stăniloae and Moltmann belong. Thus, in the first chapter of the dissertation we focused on the Eastern-orthodox and Reformed vision concerning our research topic (to which, in order to balance the perspective, we added the Catholic perspective on charisms), given the fact that Father Stăniloae belonged to the Eastern-orthodox tradition, while Professor Moltmann self-identifies with the Protestant movement, more exactly, its Reformed wing.

A preliminary conclusion which we reached in this chapter was that there is both a terminological and conceptual difference not only between the two theological traditions, but also among theologians who belong to the same confessional space. Therefore, we think that a

constructive theological dialogue is necessary in order to lead all parties involved towards a more precise and (if possible) a mutually agreed definition of gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit.

Ecumenical dialogue, building on this subject, will not be successful as long as the very concept of gift or charism of the Holy Spirit is understood differently in various theological traditions. Beyond the terminological issue, among the Christian traditions we studied there are considerable differences also in what pertains to the way in which believers acquire the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. Dominant in this field are the sacramental perspective and the "spontaneous" empowering of the Christian.

An important point of convergence between the perspectives of the Christian traditions we studied is the purpose of spiritual gifts, namely edification, building up the whole Body of Christ. Thus, Christians who receive gifts and charisms from the Holy Spirit are called to serve others, always seeking the common good. Finally, regarding the relevance of charisms for the life of the Church today, the perspectives is again divided; when by the "gifts of the Spirit" one understands gifts received in the sacrament of chrismation, as is the case in Eastern-Orthodox theology, the logical conclusion is that they continue to be given today, as has always been the case throughout church history. When, on the contrary, by gift and charism of the Holy Spirit one understands a supernatural empowerment with a (oftentimes) spectacular manifestation – a meaning which is closer to that which we encounter in the Pauline lists with Holy Spirit gifts – there is a tendency to hold that these ceased after the apostolic age.

In the second chapter we surveyed the main studies which take as a starting point the theology of Father Stăniloae and that of Professor Moltmann, building the argument around a few major themes which are connected to our pneumatological subject: the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, the relationship with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit and the life of the Church, the Holy Spirit as a divine person etc. The secondary literature strengthened our conviction that the thought of the two theologians bears an important resemblance, given the common or close perspectives which they share in connection to important topics of Christian theology, such as the doctrine of the Trinity or the pneumatological doctrine.

In the third and fourth chapters we studied the view of the two theologians concerning the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. Before delving into the subject proper, we tried to see the broader pneumatological framework in which functions. In order to facilitate a comparison of the theology espoused by Stăniloae and Moltmann, we tried to pursue, as far as possible, the same pneumatology sub-themes: the personality of the Holy Spirit, the place of

the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and the relationships (shared or individual) which He has with the other divine Persons, the place and role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. Having delineated these theological fields, we continued with the study of the doctrine about gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit; first, we sought to cast light on the terminology used in connection with the gifts and charisms of the Spirit; then we analyzed the way in which each of the two theologians understands the nature of gifts and charisms, their reception by the believers, how they should be used by the recipient and the relationship which can be established between the charismatic ministry and the ordinary ministry of the Church. At this level, our analysis was mainly descriptive, because we devoted the next chapter (the fifth) to a thorough comparison of the two theological visions. However, in the assessments included at the end of each chapter I also offered personal points of view regarding the issues under scrutiny.

In the last chapter of the thesis – the most important, if we have in mind the conclusions of the research – I studied comparatively Father Stăniloae's perspective and that of Professor Moltmann on the subject of gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. However, as a preliminary step I looked first at the pneumatological framework in which this topic was developed by both authors.

Thus, we could notice especially the ecumenical openness which both theologians share. Secondly, one can notice in both theologians a great interest for the person and work of the Holy Spirit. If in the case of Father Stăniloae this propensity for pneumatology can be explained partly by the nature of the tradition from which he comes, in the case of Professor Moltmann it is rather an exception to the rule, given the scant attention given that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity in the West.

A strong defense of the personhood of the Holy Spirit is another point of convergence between the two theologies; however, whereas Father Stăniloae merely affirms the personhood of the Holy Spirit, Moltmann aims to demonstrate, by using the Biblical metaphors which describe the Holy Spirit, as well as the relationships which He has with the Father and the Son, that the Holy Spirit is truly a divine Person, equal with the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity.

In regard to the place of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, the perspectives of the two theologians come close to one another in a few key points. A first aspect is the condemnation of any theological position which seeks to subordinate the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. In order to avoid the danger of subordinationism, both Stăniloae and Moltmann conclude that the rejection the Filioque clause to the Christian creed is necessary.

However, while the Romanian theologian strongly affirms the procession of the Holy Spirit solely from the Father, the German theologian seems to go only halfway in his adoption of the Eastern perspective, trying to explain the eternal relationship of the Holy Spirit with the Son. Although he borrows from Stăniloae the idea of the Holy Spirit resting over the Son, he does not adopt the conclusions of the Romanian theologian, but frames an idiosyncratic wording, a compromise formula between the East and the West, namely the idea that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father of the Son, receiving His eternal existence from the Father and the relational form from the Son.

The perichoretic relationships, or the inter-subjectivity of the Persons in the Trinity, is another aspect shared by both theologians. By resorting to perichoretic relations, both theologians manage to emphasize that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit share the status of divine and equal Persons, while also having a distinct character and working in perfect unity.

The relationship between pneumatology and ecclesiology is seen rather differently by Stăniloae and Moltmann. Whereas the former asserts that the Holy Spirit is to be found only in the community of the Church, the latter opines that He is not bound in any way to the church. Consequently, the Holy Spirit cannot be imparted to the believers by way of sacraments. However, Moltmann avoids the Christomonism characteristic of the Western theology, always mentioning the Holy Spirit alongside with Christ when discussing the doctrine of the Church.

In the last part of the fifth chapter we dealt, in particular, with the perspective of the two theologians on the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. As we have already seen, neither of the two authors wrote a work devoted exclusively to this subject. However, it is discussed in several works which focus on doctrines such as pneumatology, ecclesiology, the doctrine of deification etc.

An important aspect which we have noticed, both in Stăniloae and Moltmann, is the problem of terminology; when they refer to the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit, they use different concepts which are related and different terms, sometimes interchangeably, at times with certain semantic differences between them, so the exact definition of “gift” and “charism” becomes a difficult task. A noteworthy observation is that Father Stăniloae sees a difference between the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit, but not a difference of kind, but rather of “intensity”. Thus, charisms are seen as very special gifts, different from those received by the faithful in the sacrament of chrismation, to which a person arrives after a holy life and in close collaboration with the divine grace. Charisms are therefore gifts whose

manifestation is spectacular, in that their charismatic owner has authority over nature and can often perform miracles. Therefore not many Christians are charismatics, while all those who have been baptized and have received the sacrament of Chrismation have also received the enlightening gifts of the Holy Spirit. The latter are meant to accompany believers in their spiritual ascent and to help them perform their general priesthood, to which they were called. Jürgen Moltmann does not make this distinction between the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit; he uses the two terms interchangeably and thus employs them to designate the gifts and the natural endowments of man, which, after God's call, become charisms. By using them, one has to serve other members of the Church and the Kingdom of God in its entirety. Dumitru Stăniloae shows that the basis for all gifts is the grace received in the holy sacraments; therefore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also based on the sacrament of chrismation, which is “administered” to the believer right after the sacrament of baptism (which is why it is sometimes regarded as the second part of the sacrament of baptism). Chrismation is the “personal Pentecost” of a Christian, the moment in which he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, as well as His divine gifts.

However, the Romanian theologian emphasizes the fact that these gifts must be “activated” at a later time, by living in holiness, so that they can become effective for the believer. Given his perspective on the sacraments, Jürgen Moltmann does not expect the gifts of the Spirit to be imparted by way of a mystery or sacrament; in fact, for him the gift or charism of the Holy Spirit is not something newly created in the believer, not even an empowering of natural endowments, but rather a “change of direction” manifested in the use by an individual, of endowments and energies which he already possesses.

An exception are the “special charisms” which a Christian experiences for the first time as a disciples of Christ. Here one might include especially charisms which have to do with the ministries within the Church. At this point, we might find a convergence between the perspectives of the two theologians, in the sense that Stăniloae accepts the idea that one is not left only with the gifts received in the chrismation, but can receive new gifts by collaborating with the divine grace; in Moltmann’s view, new gifts can be received when a believer is called to a special ministry in the Church. Another aspect shared by both theologians is that the Holy Spirit uses the gifts, talents and natural endowments of man when He bestows upon him His divine gifts. According to Stăniloae, in chrismation the Holy Spirit strengthens every part of the human being, but, given the fact that He is more active through this or that part, these are strengthened by the Spirit in a particular way, to the effect that they result in one or more personal gifts.

Regarding the roles fulfilled by the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit, Stăniloae and Moltmann come close to one another, in their vision, when they show that these must serve for the edification of the whole Body of Christ; gifts in themselves are not transmitted by believers to other members of the Church, yet the effects, i.e. ministering with these gifts is a blessing for others. Also, both theologians dwell on the idea that general priesthood is fulfilled by using the gifts of the Spirit;

Christians are called to fulfill the three offices of Christ, namely that of priest, prophet and king (it should be noted that Father Stăniloae discusses very briefly the topic of general priesthood, developing instead a more comprehensive teaching on the consecrated priesthood of the Church, while Moltmann insists more on this subject). However, when it comes to the roles performed by the gifts of the Spirit, we do find a difference between the two theologians. Father Stăniloae's vision on the gifts of the Spirit is richer and therefore in his writings we find another role for the gifts of the Spirit (especially of the "common" gifts which all believers, without exception, receive in a sacramental fashion through the sacrament of chrismation), namely the role their enlightenment process.

The practical aspect of service by using one's personal gifts, although present in both theologians, is dealt with rather inadequately by Father Stăniloae; he gives much more attention, for instance, to the role which gifts play in illuminating the believer, as opposed to serving others with the gifts he or she has received from the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, Moltmann tends to focus more on the practical aspect of ministering with one's personal gifts and he invites believers of the Charismatic Churches (for which the doctrine of charisms is of paramount importance) to use their gifts and charisms in order to tackle the current problems of the world they live in, instead of "escaping" into a "spiritual" world which is disconnected from the reality of today's world.

One final aspect on which we focused, in our research on the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit in the two theologians, is the relationship between spiritual gifts and the ecclesial office. On this issue, Stăniloae and Moltmann agree on the idea that between the two aspects of ministry in the Church there should be no misunderstandings, fractures or competitions. This perspective derives largely from the concept that both theologians share in connection with the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church; since these two are inseparable, there should be no dissensions among believers. But Stăniloae and Moltmann argue in favour of the symphony which must exist between office and charisms by asserting that those called to perform a public ministry in the Christian community are not devoid of the gifts of the Spirit. On the contrary, they receive from God the gifts necessary for the service to

which they are called. Therefore, one should not post an opposition between those with gifts (charismatics) and those without gifts (members of the clergy). Moreover, the same Holy Spirit works both through the gifts and charisms of the laity, and through the hierarchical structures of the Church; here, Father Stăniloae claims that the Spirit works through the members of the hierarchy, while Moltmann, who rejects the monarchical episcopate, shows that those at the head of the Church (and who are not part of a hierarchy) serve the community of believers after a call which they received from God and that, in exercising their ministry, they actually exercise the gifts which they have received, just as the other believers exercise their gifts in the ministry to which they have been called (even if such gifts do not find a public expression in the Church). To all these arguments, Father Stăniloae adds another one, to the effect that believers themselves could not take possession of the gifts of the Spirit without the mediation of the ordained ministers, the only ones who have been called to perform the sacraments which make possible the reception of the gifts (this argument in favour of unity is missing in Jürgen Moltmann's theology which, as we have seen, does not predicates the reception of the gifts on the sacraments of the Church).