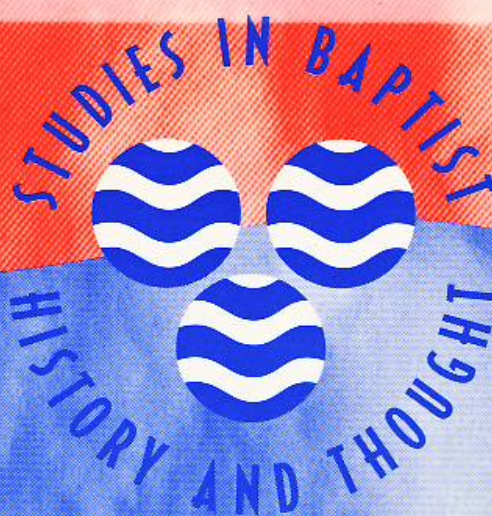


STUDIES IN BAPTIST HISTORY AND THOUGHT



Volume 19

Baptist Identities

International Studies from the
Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries

Foreword by
David Bebbington

'A valuable contribution to a better understanding
of the people of God called Baptists'
Timothy George

Edited by
Ian M. Randall, Toivo Pilli
and Anthony R. Cross

CHAPTER 6

The Impact of Charismatic Christianity on Traditional French Baptist Identity¹

Sébastien Fath

In spite of its growth,² Evangelical Protestantism is still quite mysterious to many people in France, where, according to Danièle Hervieu-Leger,³ even Catholicism seems to be leaving the cultural mainstream. The plausibility structures of Evangelical identity are difficult to comprehend, especially at the doctrinal level. But one category among this kind of Protestantism seems to draw more interest: it can be summarized in a formula 'Emotional Protestantism'. This concept defines the Pentecostal and Charismatic identity⁴ which is particularly flourishing in France, as in 2006 it represents about two thirds of the 350,000 French Evangelicals. According to some observers, the Pentecostalization of Christianity during the twenty-first century seems as inevitable as the rise of the sun. For Evangelical churches, notably Baptist congregations, this impact cannot be overestimated.

Compared with other Evangelical tendencies, Baptist churches seem to combine a particularly strong confessional identity, a 'heritage'⁵ rooted in early English Puritan times,⁶ with a plasticity due to their congregationalist emphasis. How has this

¹ This text reformulates and develops elements from a paper presented at a conference organized by the University of Strasbourg (Professor Jean-Pierre Bastian), 7-9 November 2002. Its title was 'Les baptistes dans l'Europe latine: entre tradition et émotion, quelles recompositions?' This conference has since been published: J-P. Bastian (ed.), *La recomposition des protestantismes en Europe latine. Entre émotion et tradition* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2004).

² For a general overview of Evangelical History in France, see S. Fath, *Du ghetto au réseau. Le protestantisme évangélique en France, 1800–2005* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2005).

³ D. Hervieu-Leger, *Catholicisme, la fin d'un monde* (Paris: Bayard, 2003).

⁴ For a synthesis, see J-P. Willaime, 'Le pentecôtisme: contours et paradoxes d'un protestantisme émotionnel', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 44.105 (janvier-mars, 1999), pp. 5-28.

⁵ H.L. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987).

⁶ A doctoral thesis has been completed in French on John Smyth, one of the founders of Baptist identity. See J-E. Stauffacher, 'La vie et l'œuvre de John Smyth, 1570?–1612' (PhD thesis, University of Strasbourg, 1987).

identity interacted with the Pentecostal and Charismatic emphasis?⁷ After situating the tiny French Baptist identity in its European context, a general focus on Charismatic influence on Baptist identity will be followed by the case study of France, where Baptists seem to balance between resistance and acculturation.

French Baptist identity in its European Context

European Baptists are a tiny minority, but, as we know, there are important variations between Baptists in different countries in Europe.

Southern Europe: Particularly Hard Soil for Baptist Identity

Compared to Eastern Europe, but also to Germany, and (last but not least) to the United Kingdom, Baptist implantation in southern Europe has been very weak. There are about 40,000 Baptist adherents in France and Spain (between 12,000 and 14,000 baptized members), about 20,000 in Italy and Portugal, a little more than 3,000 in Belgium, and less than 2,000 in French-speaking Switzerland.⁸ Behind these figures there are contrasting realities. In Spain, Italy and Portugal, Baptists play a major role within Protestant circles, which are, in themselves, very weak. The French case is different. In this country, Baptists appear well behind Lutherans and especially Reformed (Presbyterian) Protestants, even if, in the last forty years, leaders like André Thobois or Louis Schweitzer have played an important role in the French Protestant Federation, which is easily the main Protestant network.⁹ This specific situation is important to notice. The fact that in many European countries Baptists seem to be the most visible Protestant group has had an influence on French Baptist identity. We could imagine that such a situation would encourage

⁷ Differences between Charismaticism and Pentecostalism are not always clearly perceived. We might highlight six distinctives. Charismaticism is much more trans-confessional than Pentecostalism. It emphasises personal development rather than ascetism. Average social level also seems higher in charismatic churches than in Pentecostal ones. Charismatic churches do not consider glossolalia as an absolute condition for 'baptism of the Spirit'. Its worship mode is also more diverse and innovative (role of music, participation of women, etc) than the Pentecostal style. Pentecostalism (Assemblies of God type) also vehiculates a rigid conception of charisma, rooted in the New Testament, especially the 1 Cor. 12.29-30. On the contrary, Charismatic movements (especially the last 'waves'), seem to be more open to new charismas, if the Bible does not condemn them explicitly.

⁸ Albert W. Wardin (ed.), *Baptists Around the World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), pp. 271, 285. These statistics are to be taken as evaluations. Statistics given by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) in 2003 (<http://www.bwanet.org/fellowship/member-bodies/member-stats.htm#EUROPE>) are similar. We have to take into account that there are many separatist Baptist churches, who are not linked to the BWA. In general terms, the insular culture of some Baptist movements does not always open the door to the statistician.

⁹ Nearly 80% of all French Protestants (including half the Baptists) belong to it.

Baptists to play down slightly their denominational distinctives in order to appear as the main regular Protestant representatives on the religious and public scene. In France, on the contrary, the very strong Huguenot identity, and the weight of Lutheran and Reformed churches (about 650,000 members in 2003) nurtured, in Baptist ranks, the desire for distinctiveness. After all, they could never appear to be the main Protestant representatives. So they preferred to emphasize why they were different from other Protestants, and this had a direct impact on their history. What is amazing in French Baptist history is that in spite of very small numbers, French Baptists developed a very robust sense of Baptist identity. Sometimes it seems that they even wanted to teach some of their American sponsors how to be better Baptists! This specific emphasis on Baptist identity in France has to be remembered when we examine the impact of Charismatic tendencies.

European Networks

Another important characteristic of French Baptists in their European context is that they early on developed various links with their Anglo-Saxon forefathers,¹⁰ but also with other European countries, especially the Latin countries. As an example we can mention the Baptist regional conference of Latin countries which took place in Paris between 11 and 14 July 1937. Baptists from Belgium (pastors O. Valet and A. Wémers), from Spain (A. Celma from Barcelona), Portugal (Manuel Cerqueira) and Italy (G.B. Scrajber), gathered with their French counterparts, along with many Anglo-Saxon Baptists,¹¹ including a pastor named Pope who came, not from the Vatican but from the Antipodes, 'accompanied by several Australian Baptists', as the French observer notes.¹² A German Baptist, Dr Johannes Mundhenk, attended too. We might be less optimistic than Dr Lewis, who rejoiced that between 'these Baptists from various countries, the only differences are in physiognomy and language'.¹³ But this conference (which treated subjects like youth, evangelization, women's work and missions) is clear evidence, among others, of early networking. Many other signs confirm this, such as the circulation of Baptist writings between Latin countries. Several French Baptist texts were translated for other Latin European

¹⁰ For a closer look at American and English influence on continental Baptists, see I.M. Randall, "'The Blessings of an Enlightened Christianity': North American Involvement in European Baptist Origins", *American Baptist Quarterly* 20.1 (March, 2001), pp. 5-26, and S. Fath, 'A Forgotten Missionary Link: The Baptist Continental Society in France (1831-1836)', *Baptist Quarterly* 40.3 (July, 2003), pp. 133-51.

¹¹ Dr Truett (from America), President of the BWA, Dr Rushbrooke (from Britain), Secretary of the BWA, Dr Everett Gill, representing Baptists from Southern USA, and Dr Lewis, who managed the European section of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, which supported the Baptist implantation in France for a century.

¹² See the reports of the 'Conférence Régionale Baptiste des Pays Latins', *Le Témoign de la Vérité* 7 (juillet-août, 1937), p. 110.

¹³ Dr Lewis, quoted in the reports of the 'Conférence Régionale', p. 118.

Baptists.¹⁴ After World War II, as Baptist churches increased their number in France, the networking activities developed, finding stimulus in the new European Baptist Federation¹⁵ created in 1949.¹⁶

French Baptists: A Crossroads Situation

The Baptists' particular ability for building networks, articulated both locally and globally, explains in part why we find a very significant proportion of French Baptists at the head of Evangelical organizations in France. While being partly marginalised by the Reformed and Lutheran 'Big Brothers', Baptists played a crucial role in building Evangelical networks in France. For about forty years, the two people who hold the records for presidencies in Evangelical organizations are two Baptists, Jacques Blocher (1909–86) and André Thobois (b.1924). It seems quite difficult in France to build an Evangelical network without Baptists. This important role might also be rooted in the crossroads situation that characterises Baptists.

This crossroads situation works on a more fundamental level. It is crystal clear that more recent Baptist identity is located at an intersection between the Pentecostal/Charismatic world and the Lutheran and Reformed world. Through their theology, and their confessional heritage, Baptists are deeply connected to the *mainstream* Protestant tradition, especially the Reformed one. But through their congregationalist practice, they opened themselves earlier than others to 'emotional influences' from Pentecostalism.¹⁷ This is why they appear in some ways as a 'denominational test' if we want to explore the tension between a kind of 'pietist/orthodox tradition' and 'emotional/experiential tradition'.¹⁸ If the scenario seems to be that there is a dissolution of Baptist identity in the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement, we can suppose that the whole Evangelical

¹⁴ See, e.g., Jean-Baptiste Crétin, *Coleccion de textos que establecen las doctrinas cristianas y condenan las tradiciones de la Iglesia Romana. Traducico del Frances de D. Juan Bautista Cretin, pastor en Lyon* (Madrid: Imprenta de Jose Cruzado, 1871). Reuben Saillens, *Consejos Para un nuevo miembro de la Iglesia* (trad. por AMDL Deberes Cristianis pr. Cantacclaro, El Paso, Texas: Reimpresos por "La Vos Bautista", n.d.). Aimé Cadot, *Lettera amichevole ai membri del clero catholico* (published in Italy around 1890).

¹⁵ For the fiftieth anniversary of the European Baptist Federation, a book was published, B. Green, *Crossing the Boundaries: A History of the European Baptist Federation* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1999).

¹⁶ A European Baptist Mission was created later in 1954. Founded in Zürich, the first president (1954–67) of its executive committee was Henri Vincent, a French Baptist.

¹⁷ The Baptist practice of congregationalism gives the assemblies a quasi 'total freedom' to adopt a 'charismatic style' without risking hierarchical control, E. Veldhuizen in his doctoral thesis, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant en France (1968–1988)' (PhD thesis, University of Paris IV Sorbonne, 1995), pp. 402–403.

¹⁸ These two poles are to be understood as idea-types, according to Max Weber's definition. In other words, they are based on a stylization of reality in order to have a better understanding of a complex phenomenon. On an empirical level, however, things are more mixed: for example, emotion does not always oppose itself to orthodoxy.

world might take the same road. On the other hand, if Baptist distinctives remain then we can imagine that there will be a quite stable balance in the Evangelical world between both emotional/experiential and pietist/orthodox Protestantism. It is time now to take a closer look at this tension within Baptist identity.

Charismatic Influence on Baptist Identity: A Sociological Overview

Charismatic influence on Baptist identity cannot be understood in exactly the same way as in Catholicism or Reformed Protestantism. The type of religious organization Baptists developed is indeed very specific. The same winds, through different instruments, will not create the same music. The same Charismatic influences, as well, will produce in Baptist circles different results.

Baptist Identity: Between 'Sect' and 'Church'

What puzzles many French observers (and maybe other Europeans as well) is that Baptist churches do not fit in with the distinction between 'Church' and 'Sect'. For a good part of the French public, if you do not fit into the 'Church' type, characterized by a strong institutional regulation from above and a deep involvement in the world's affairs, it means that you belong to a 'Sect', typified by uncomfortable qualities such as intolerance, disorder and a potential threat to the public order. But a closer look at Baptist identity reveals that Baptist churches cannot be included either in one camp or the other. From the 'Church type', Baptists borrow an articulate relationship to global society, but without the institutional dimension. From the 'Sect type', they borrow a militant and horizontal ecclesial organization, but (usually) without retreating from 'the world' or considering themselves to offer the only way of salvation. In fact, the Baptists seem to be 'go-betweens', close to what we call a 'denomination', or a 'Free Church' in the sense used by Ernst Troeltsch.¹⁹ Working from a model built by the French sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime,²⁰ we can distinguish between a combination of institution and ritual (which is at work in Catholicism), a combination of institution and ideology, or doctrine (which defines the Reformed Protestant model), and a type based on association and charisma (which could define a group like the Davidian sect in Waco). Looking at the Baptist case invites us to add a fourth type, which combines association and doctrine (ideology). The very nature of a Baptist church is association instead of institution. But association does not mean necessarily the triumph of a charismatic leader. In the Baptist case, it is still ideology or doctrine, as happens in institutional churches like the Reformed church, which builds identity.²¹ In more precise terms, this doctrine is

¹⁹ Cf. E. Troeltsch, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1961 [1st edn, 1912]), pp. 733-37.

²⁰ J-P. Willaime, *La précarité protestante. Sociologie du protestantisme contemporain* (Paris/Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1992), p. 22.

²¹ This fourth type can also fit (more or less) with many other Evangelical denominations.

the result of a social construction, defended by specific mediations such as confessions of faith, conventions, meetings, a denominational press, and pastors' training schools.²²

Doctrine First

This Baptist emphasis on doctrine is difficult to understand. In the Catholic mindset, a doctrinal base cannot survive without a central institution, a 'Magisterium'. According to this vision, autonomous association means the domination of a charismatic leader. But French Baptist history seems to illustrate that an associative model could survive and develop while being regulated by a strong doctrinal and denominational line. This specificity meant that charismatic validation was supposed to be submitted to doctrinal validation. A young pastor cannot validate his calling by saying 'God gave me the gift, God can heal through me', and so on. He has to frame his theology and his pastoral practice according to Baptist distinctives. The Baptist pastor is supposed to be, first, an authorized interpreter of the Scriptures.²³ 'Be convinced of the Biblical truths, be men of the Book!', the leading French Baptist pastor Reuben Saillens advised young preachers.²⁴ The cornerstone of this religious system is the proper interpretation of the Bible.²⁵ As pastor André Thobois²⁶ wrote in 2002: 'Our piety sets its roots in the Bible. We always go back to it, and we conform to it. This is why we never seek elsewhere the source, the form and the meaning of our piety.'²⁷

A Dam against Emotional Streams?

This biblical orientation, often inspired by Calvinism (in its 'soft' or 'hard' versions) usually puts its emphasis on the importance of a proper orthodoxy, of conversion and of daily life lived by faith. God must be believed through a certain frame, and concretely experienced. In the majority of Baptist circles, this experience

²² For more details on this typology, see S. Fath, 'Un modèle associatif idéologique', in *Une autre manière d'être chrétien en France. Socio-histoire de l'implantation baptiste (1810-1950)* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), pp. 515-30.

²³ For more details on this type of pastor, see Jean-Paul Willaime, *Profession: pasteur. Sociologie de la condition du clerc à la fin du XXe siècle* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1986).

²⁴ R. Saillens' Foreword to Samuel Lortsch, *Félix Neff, l'apôtre des Hautes Alpes, biographie extraite de ses lettres* (Toulouse: Nouvelle Société d'éditions de Toulouse, 1941), p. 13.

²⁵ See Fath, *Une autre manière d'être chrétien*, pp. 576, 605.

²⁶ He was president of the French Baptist Federation from 1963 to 1987.

²⁷ 'Notre piété a ses racines dans la Bible. C'est à elle que nous revenons sans cesse et à laquelle nous nous conformons. C'est pourquoi nous ne cherchons nulle part ailleurs la source, la forme et le sens de notre piété', in A. Thobois, *Pour que notre piété soit vraie* (Paris: Carnets de Croire et Servir, 2002), p. 17.

does not mean miracles and extraordinary signs (even if these are not rejected). According to the pietistic tradition, the main emphasis is on everyday impregnation of biblical wisdom. Daily meditation on the Scriptures thus appears as the favourite tool every Christian must use to improve his or her communion with the Almighty. It is not surprising, then, that pastors themselves are submitted to this biblical regulation. Members are clearly allowed to contest their pastor if their minister seems to diverge from the biblical orientation favoured by the community. Members are admitted into the local church not only by conversion and baptism, but also if they identify themselves in some ways with the doctrinal orientation of the local church.²⁸

In spite of the flexibility provided by the associative structure, this emphasis on doctrinal regulation seems relatively hostile to the Charismatic/Pentecostal emphasis, if we define it as the tendency to favour experience and charisma over and above theology or orthodoxy.²⁹ But do we find an empirical verification of this global analysis? This is what we will try to see in the last part of this chapter.

French Baptist Identity and the Challenge of Charismatic Influence

Evaluating precisely the Charismatic influence on Baptists—which is just one of many fields in which we observe a ‘pentecostalization of Christianity’³⁰—is not an easy thing to do. Britain apart,³¹ monographs about European Baptists are rare, and the figures given by Baptist Unions do not distinguish between Charismatic Baptists and others. Should we then give up the attempt to make an empirical evaluation of Charismatic influence? Hopefully, the French case can be fruitful, since it seems to be less difficult than some others. Divided into three main ‘families’ of Baptists,³²

²⁸ As we know, this identification does not always require subscription to a confession of faith. Many Baptist churches do not have such confessions, or do not consider them as totally normative. But, even then, an implicit acceptance of a common doctrinal base seems to be favoured.

²⁹ Many observers of Charismatic trends admit that doctrinal regulation is not a priority in these circles. For example, ‘while there are many biblically responsive Christians who include themselves in the Charismatic movement, there are many others who need to take stock. There are many Charismatics who should ask themselves in all honesty: “Am I putting my emphasis on the Scriptures and God’s living Word or on the jolly times, the feelings, the experiences?”’ So, J.F. Mc Arthur, Jr, *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective* (London: Lamp Press, 1979), p. 206.

³⁰ J-P. Bastian, ‘Les protestantismes latino-américains. Un détour pertinent pour la sociologie des protestantismes’, in Y. Lambert *et al*, *Le religieux des sociologues* (Paris, L’Harmattan, 1997), p. 145.

³¹ See D. McBain, *Fire Over the Waters: Renewal Among Baptists and Others from the 1960s to the 1990s* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997).

³² There are about 40,000 Baptist attenders. About a half belong to the Fédération des Églises Évangéliques Baptistes de France (FEEBF). This Federation has been linked to the Fédération Protestante de France (FPF) since 1916. The other half divides itself between the Association Évangélique d’Églises Baptistes de Langue Française (AEEBF) and the

the movement has been studied in its past,³³ but, most of all, it has been analysed in recent decades through the lenses of the Charismatic wave. Evert Veldhuizen's doctoral thesis on Protestant charismaticism is absolutely crucial.³⁴ With the help of this work, combined with additional sources from the denominational press, it is quite possible to evaluate how Baptist identity is affected by Pentecostal and Charismatic influences. Three main scenarios seem to occur.

First Scenario: 'Baptist', a Label and no More

The first scenario, which occurs sometimes, is that Charismatic influence is so strong that Baptist identity seems to be no more than a label. If you scratch the glaze, there is nothing left of Baptist distinctives. This situation is quite seldom found in France. Probably a little less than 10% of so-called 'Baptists' fit this scenario. We can find a few examples within the French Baptist Federation. But the main field is the 'Fédération des Églises et Communautés Baptistes Charismatiques' (FECBC). Its founder is Charles Schinkel.³⁵ He started his ministry as a pastor of the Reformed Church. In the spring of 1977, however, he was excluded from his post at Nuneray (Nord-Normandie) by the regional council of the Reformed Church. The main reasons were his strong Charismatic convictions, but also his denial of paedobaptism.³⁶ Schinkel found out that he was a 'victim of his Evangelical convictions', believing, for example, that his baptisms were not 'rebaptisms'.³⁷ As a matter of fact, there were many other motives for his exclusion. One of them was that Schinkel refused to follow a bachelor's degree of theology.³⁸ According to him,

independent Baptist churches. Many of the latter belong to the Communion Évangélique de Baptistes Indépendants (CEBI). Because of more restricted views on ecumenism, the two last French Baptist 'families' do not belong to the French Protestant Federation.

³³ See Fath, *Une autre manière d'être chrétien*, and *Les baptistes en France (1810–1950), Faits, dates et documents* (Cléon d'Andran: Excelsis, 2002). This last book provides additional elements to the main book published in 2001 (biographies, a chronology, documents, maps). For a quick overview in English, see S. Fath, 'Another Way of Being a Christian in France: A Century of Baptist Implantation', in M.M. Hawkins, Jr (ed.), *Global Baptist History: Papers presented at the Second International Conference on Baptist Studies, Wake Forest University, July 2000, Baptist History and Heritage* 36.1-2 (Winter–Spring, 2001), pp. 159-73. (This will also appear in D. Bebbington and A.R. Cross [eds], *Global Baptist History* [Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 14; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, forthcoming, 2006].)

³⁴ E. Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant en France (1968–1988)' (PhD thesis, University of Paris IV Sorbonne, 1995).

³⁵ See 'Le parcours de Charles Schinkel', in Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', pp. 186-189.

³⁶ On this aspect, Evert Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 187, rightly points out that Schinkel adopts the Baptist view on baptism. Schinkel was himself baptized by immersion, and after 1973 he only baptized by immersion.

³⁷ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 193.

³⁸ In French, 'licence de théologie'.

such a degree did not give any value to his pastoral ministry. This revealing detail seems to confirm the typical Charismatic emphasis: the pastor is not first a doctor, an authorized interpreter of the Scriptures. He is first a prophet, whose legitimacy is rooted in his calling, his personal charisma. After being excluded from the Reformed Church (ERF), Schinkel developed a network of Charismatic assemblies around his own community, the Christian community of the Burning Bush. In 1986, this building process led to the creation of a 'Federation of Charismatic Churches and Communities'.³⁹ The Federation's centre is Louvetot, in Caudebec-en-Caux, Normandy, from where a quarterly magazine is distributed.⁴⁰ In 1988 the FECBC comprised about 1,100 members and thirteen assemblies.⁴¹ These statistics have not changed much since then.

Based on a very light structure,⁴² this Federation roots its identity not in Baptist distinctives—even if we find some of them present—in spite of the use of the word in the self-definition of this network.⁴³ The main emphasis by far is on the Charismatic identity.⁴⁴ Apart from the baptismal practices and the congregationalist orientation, the views on ministry, the spiritual gifts, and the role of doctrine differ notably from the classic French Baptist identity. Pastors, for example, usually emphasise vertical authority, rooted in their personal charisma, their divine calling, while in the majority of Baptist churches the pastor is supposed to be a *primus inter pares*, taking his authority from the vote of the members. Models given to the members are also never quite taken from Baptist history or actuality, but from the globalized universe of Charismatic Christianity.⁴⁵ It is no surprise, then, if 'the use of the "Baptist" adjective causes some trouble in the FEEBF'.⁴⁶ Baptist identity, in this case, seems to be just a label. The generic content is simply Charismatic: the regulation of the group operates much more through charisma than through Baptist doctrine or orthopraxy.

³⁹ 'Fédération des Églises et Communautés Baptistes Charismatiques'.

⁴⁰ Its title is 'Resurrection Magazine'. Charles Schinkel is its director and among its editors, at the beginning of the 2000s, are Jacky Chlepko, Lucien Clerc, André Habersetzer, Daniel Lhermenault, Daniel Mochamps and Jules Thobois.

⁴¹ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 404.

⁴² See C. Schinkel, 'Une Fédération nouvelle sans être une dénomination de plus', *Actes 2* 64, n.d., p. 3.

⁴³ As he explained it, Schinkel chose to define his movement as 'baptist' because this word was well-situated among French Protestants. It was easily identifiable.

⁴⁴ This explains why Veldhuizen chose to categorize the members of the FECBC among 'independant churches' instead of among Baptist churches.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, this remark from Charles Schinkel: 'Brother Carlos Anacondia works in the latin south-american world, close to the French situation... Nevertheless, it works there! The Gospel hits in Argentina. Why is it not the same here?', editorial of *Résurrection Magazine* 97 (mai-juin, 2001), p. 3

⁴⁶ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 423.

Second Scenario: Baptist Identity, an Acculturation Space for Charismatic Tendencies

A second scenario is far more frequent. We find it when Baptist identity works as an acculturation space for Charismatic tendencies. This scenario happens in various proportions, and it works in a double sense: there is reciprocity. While radical Pentecostal or Charismatic elements get acculturated into Baptist procedures, the latter also incorporate (or take into account) various elements of the Charismatic culture (worship style, and so on). About 40% of all Baptist churches are directly involved in this acculturation in various ways. The main field of acculturation is the Baptist Federation (FEEBF), which has been confronted by a kind of quasi- or proto-Pentecostal orientation since the nineteenth century. Before the creation of the Federation, the religious views of Irvingites (those who followed the London-based Scottish preacher, Edward Irving), who are considered sometimes as forerunners of Pentecostalism,⁴⁷ had an important impact on the first French Baptists, especially in the North but also around the town of Saint Etienne, from the 1830s to the 1850s. The Welsh Revival, fifty years later (1904–06), also influenced many Baptist churches in the North. The emphasis on ‘spiritual gifts’ particularly attracted them.⁴⁸ When the Pentecostal movement settled in France,⁴⁹ early relations at the start of the 1930s led to a kind of mini revival in the North (around Denain) and Picardy, from the 1940s to the end of the 1960s. The Pentecostal influence (Assembly of God style) on many existing Baptist and new Baptist churches was obvious. The pastor Jules Thobois,⁵⁰ who experienced the ‘baptism of the Spirit’ in 1947, was then the main leader of this tendency, emphasizing miracles, prophecy, divine healing and, in general terms, ‘spiritual gifts’. It is no surprise, then, that the beginning of the Charismatic influence in the early 1970s had an important impact on the Baptist Federation. This impact, which started a few years after its British equivalent,⁵¹ had been prepared by a long history of contacts with and influences from Pentecostals.

A clear majority of the Baptist churches of the Federation are engaged in a process of acculturation with the Pentecostal/Charismatic culture. Several degrees or types of influence can be pointed out. There are some Baptist churches where the Charismatic

⁴⁷ See C.G. Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973).

⁴⁸ For a detailed study of these early links between Baptists and the Pentecostal (and ‘pre-pentecostal’) movements, see S. Fath ‘Baptistes et pentecôtistes en France, une histoire parallèle?’, *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 146 (juillet–septembre, 2000), pp. 523–67.

⁴⁹ The only synthesis available on Pentecostal implantation in France (viewed from an insider) is G.R. Stotts, *Le pentecôtisme au pays de Voltaire* (Craponne: Viens et Vois, 1981).

⁵⁰ Jules Thobois (b. 1922) is André Thobois’ elder brother.

⁵¹ See D.W. Bebbington, ‘The Spirit Poured Out: Springs of the Charismatic Movement’, in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2nd edn, 1995), pp. 228–48. According to Bebbington, the Charismatic movement started in Britain in 1963.

emphasis is very militant, as it is in the 'Communauté Chrétienne du Point du Jour' in Paris.⁵² Many Baptist churches are moderately Charismatic, such as in Soissons or Saint-Quentin, in Picardy. Some of them exhibit attenuated Pentecostal or Charismatic characteristics, like glossolalia, which were more important three decades ago. We find also churches that are non-Charismatic but which are particularly welcoming to members of this orientation, while adopting a worship style inspired from Charismatic trends. In all these cases, it is important to notice that the structures of the Federation did a great deal to adapt the Charismatic culture to the French Baptist identity. Confronted at the end of the 1940s by the growing claims of 'Pentecostal Baptists', the Baptist Federation issued, in 1952, a 'resolution on the orientation of our churches' which defined clearly the common ground which 'Pentecostal Baptists' and others had to work together. According to Evert Veldhuizen, this resolution stressed an 'intermediate position, acceptable for Pentecostal Baptists and the others'. This document⁵³ makes a distinction between life experiences and confession of faith. The autonomy of the local assembly is recalled, along with the fact that the Holy Spirit works for the conversion, sanctification, Christian communion, perseverance and equipping of the believer. The manifestation of spiritual gifts is not considered as an obligation, which makes for a clear distinction between Baptists and Pentecostal hardliners. Healing is supposed to be a testimony, and certainly not a way of propaganda. Calling for brotherly communion, this text was meant to welcome the emotional/prophetic tendency without accepting that spiritual gifts or experience could compete with the absolute normativity of the Bible.

This text achieved its purpose. It pacified tensions within Baptist ranks. But the relationships between the tendencies sometimes remained difficult. While some pastors complained about what they considered to be the half-hearted attitude of Baptists towards the charisms, others closed the door to the new Pentecostal wave, which seemed a threat to traditional Baptist identity. But in spite of these local difficulties, the synthesis won, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century the FEEBF remains a welcoming acculturation space between a pietistic/orthodox emphasis and an experiential/emotional emphasis. Several initiatives have been taken to maintain this line. The Baptist press, for instance, is an obvious tool for reshaping the Charismatic question according to the Baptist distinctive.⁵⁴ The increasing role of the pastoral school of Massy should also be highlighted. It led all

⁵² Founded in 1907 as a dependance of the Reformed church of Passy, it was separated from the mother church in 1923. This assembly had Thomas Roberts for pastor from 1936. When Jules Thobois left the North of France for Paris in 1963, he replaced Roberts in what was called the 'Église indépendante de la rue Musset'. This church joined the FEEBF in 1966. With hundreds of members, it became an important center of charismatic influence. See Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', ch. 9, 'Au Point du jour', pp. 236-73.

⁵³ G. Brabant *et al*, *Résolution sur l'orientation de nos Églises* (Paris: FEEBF, 1952).

⁵⁴ See, for instance, the special issue on pastoral ministry (and the question of authority) in *Construire Ensemble* 11 (mars, 1999).

pastors, whatever their tendency, to obtain theoretical and theological training.⁵⁵ It seems quite clear that, even if officials from the Federation will not admit it openly, the legitimacy of the pastor/doctor is favoured. The pastor/prophet type is accepted, but is invited to complete his training in order to gain doctrinal and exegetical legitimacy as well. The Federation considers this ongoing training as a necessity in order to preserve a specific Baptist identity.⁵⁶

The results of this acculturation can be seen at different levels. First of all, it seems that the tendency to retreat from social issues,⁵⁷ which was a mark of early Pentecostal influence on Baptist churches in the 1950s, has been gradually attenuated. After a brutal rupture over the influence of the Social Gospel (whose main figure was Robert Farelly), most of the 'Pentecostal Baptists' came back, in one way or another, to the former dimension of social involvement. The example of 'social Charismatics'⁵⁸ in the Christian community of Lille is significant. Founded in 1975 by David Berly, a young Baptist pastor, this community started two 'Fraternities' ('Fraternités') as early as 1980. Open to inter-religious work, it created a meeting point for homeless people since 1985, and became a 'voice of social evangelism'.⁵⁹

Another sign of acculturation is that Charismatics who belong to the FEEBF seem in many cases to be more interested in doctrine, theology, than their colleagues from 'outside' Baptist life. Confessions of faith do exist, and seem to play a real role in most Charismatic-Baptist churches. They clearly incorporate Baptist specificities.⁶⁰

Thus it is quite obvious that the denominational structures settled by the Federation played an important *de facto* role in controlling Charismatic authority⁶¹ in the church. The emphasis on training, on regular regional and national meetings, means that Charismatic pastors have to adapt to the global Baptist 'frame'. These structures seem to attract many Charismatic communities, which seem sometimes

⁵⁵ This training school for pastors, which works along with a language school (Les Cèdres) created in 1976, does not provide the total pastoral training. The majority of pastors (or future pastors) previously studied at the Bible Institute of Nogent, or at the Evangelical Faculty of Vaux-sur-Seine (interdenominational). The purpose of Massy is to emphasize practical issues and Baptist distinctives.

⁵⁶ Every new pastor has to attend six different training sessions of two or three days each. This training has to be followed for no less than two years. A quarterly, *Les Cahiers de l'école pastorale*, is directly related to the school.

⁵⁷ For a close study, see S. Fath, 'Les baptistes dans le Bassin houiller du Nord', in B. Duriez (ed.), *Chrétiens et monde ouvrier, 1937-1970* (Paris: ed. de l'Atelier, 2001), pp. 47-61.

⁵⁸ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', pp. 315-25.

⁵⁹ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 324.

⁶⁰ It is interesting to compare Jules Thobois, 'Charte charismatique', in *Le Point du Jour* 18 (1982), pp. 1-2 (this confession of faith re-uses the one from the Federation, with some additions), with Charles Schinkel, 'Ce que nous croyons' which is displayed in every issue of *Actes* 2.

⁶¹ We use here 'charismatic authority' in the Weberian sense.

tired of their solitary adventures, especially when the heroic founder disappears. Several Charismatic assemblies have knocked on the Federation's door since the 1980s, expressing their desire for a denominational 'frame' which was then lacking.⁶² The case of Boulogne-sur-Mer, detailed by Evert Veldhuizen, is a good example of this integration process: because of missionary work performed by the Mission Intérieure Baptiste since 1984 (Baptist Interior Mission, MIB), a small 'Christian community' was founded in this town. But another Charismatic community, seemingly more radical and more isolated, was already there. It was the 'Eglise chrétienne charismatique de Boulogne-sur-Mer', linked to the FECBC (Charles Schinkel). After the departure of the founder, this assembly did not wait long to merge with the other (created by the Baptist Federation). It seems that the help from the 'communauté chrétienne de Lille' (FEEBF) from 1977 to 1984, the mediation of Daniel Lhermenault, the regional president of the FEEBF, and the impulse of a lay member, Maurice Devos,⁶³ boosted the process. Denominational structures obviously played a major role in this merging.

Nevertheless, the sky of the acculturation process is not without clouds. Tensions are at work. According to a survey conducted in 1988, there were 2,828 Charismatic members in the FEEBF,⁶⁴ that is about the half of the professing members. This proportion has increased a little since then. We might say that in 2003 the Charismatic tendency has become a majority, albeit a small majority, in the Federation. The denominational structures, however, remain under the control of a majority of non-Charismatic leaders. Until 2003, a Charismatic pastor had never been elected to the head of the Federation, which is no accident.⁶⁵ What is new is that the annual conference of the FEEBF in June 2003 decided for the first time to choose as president a famous Charismatic leader, Daniel Lhermenault. This important decision says more than long discourses about the actual weight of the Charismatic tendency in the Baptist Federation.

However, if the delicate balance between the tendencies means negotiations and tensions, there is no strong identity crisis at work. Since the famous text of 1952, the internal cohesion of the Federation has not really been challenged, and its Baptist identity remains. We cannot exclude, in the future, a disruption of the existing balance. But for the moment, what we observe in the Federation is acculturation instead of expulsion or invasion.

⁶² This motivation is not the only one: joining the FEEBF was also sometimes a good strategy in order to escape from the accusation of being a strange 'sect'.

⁶³ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 317.

⁶⁴ Veldhuizen, 'Le renouveau charismatique protestant', p. 402.

⁶⁵ In Britain, charismatics attained earlier to the presidency of the Baptist Union. Douglas McBain, author of *Charismatic Christianity* (London: McMillan, 1997) and himself a charismatic, was President of the Baptist Union in 1998–99. His successor (1999–2000) Michael Bochenski is also a charismatic.

Third Scenario: A Fort Alamo against Charismatics

As we all know, Baptists love diversity. It is no surprise, then, to see that some of them cannot accept the two first scenarios. There is (at least) one other: resistance. Charismatic invasion is considered as a threat, a worldly tendency that has to be fought. Even if the influence of the Charismatic Movement seems overwhelming, resistance is the only proper response, as it was in Fort Alamo. Nearly 50% of French Baptists, including a minority of churches in the FEEBF, a vast majority of churches in the Baptist Association (AEEBF), and almost all independent Baptist churches, share the belief that Pentecostals and Charismatics are to be confronted and opposed because their views on charisms are not biblically balanced. As with the other scenarios, this point of view is of course held worldwide.⁶⁶ We have to point out that such a condemnation is now much less aggressive than fifty years ago, in times when Pentecostals seemed to others to be inspired by the Prince of Darkness.⁶⁷ But we can still perceive it. On the theological level, such Baptists consider that an actualisation of glossolalia is non-biblical. They are also very sceptical about healings and new worship styles. They emphasise a very strong doctrinal regulation, close to the Fundamentalist tradition, which often belongs to their heritage in various proportions. Spiritual experience is here closely monitored, and submitted to a constant biblical validation through the authorized interpretation these churches favour.

While being very cautious toward Charismatics, we can notice that the press of the Baptist Association has shown a more open view in recent years. But no Baptist church belonging to the Association can be described as Charismatic, or related to specific Charismatic networks working in France. When we look at the independent Baptist world, their view of Charismatics is filled even more with suspicion. The new openness of the Association does not occur here. A look at the internet sites of some independent Baptist churches is revealing. An American missionary, Arthur Sommerville, founded the 'Eglise Baptiste du Centre' in Paris, but a French pastor, Emmanuel Bozzi, now leads it. We can read on its internet site that the Baptist church 'takes a stand against apostasy, the Charismatic movement and the Ecumenical movement'. From the same standpoint, the Baptist church of Montpellier explains that 'our worship style seeks to honour Christ, and we do refuse the new worship style which invaded so many churches in our area. We welcome all who want to hear expository preaching.' In less abrupt terms than those used by the Eglise Baptiste du Centre, we find the same rejection of Charismatic style, and the promotion of a liturgy that canalizes emotion and valorizes

⁶⁶ For a controversial Baptist look at the Charismatic Movement see, e.g., D. Middlemiss, *Interpreting Charismatic Experience* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

⁶⁷ See this document from the AEEBF, 'Les voies habituelles du Saint Esprit', in R. Dubarry, *Pour faire connaissance avec un idéal d'Église* (Valence: Imprimeries réunies, 1953), p. 146-52. 'Baptism of the Spirit' is understood as proceeding from 'the Enemy' (Satan).

transmission of the 'Word of God'.⁶⁸ This stance relates typically to an Evangelical tradition (including Fundamentalism, but not only it) that seeks to 'harness' emotional phenomenon found during revival events, in the name of a needed 'domestication' of spiritual experience.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Whatever we think about the charismaticization of Christianity, which affects all Christian identities today, it seems that in the French Baptist case things are quite balanced. The so-called 'charismatic wave' is not overwhelming.⁷⁰ Charismatic Baptists who have abandoned Baptist specificities are only about 10% of all French Baptists. Within the 40% who are in an acculturation process with Charismatic influence,⁷¹ only about half of them have adopted clear Charismatic distinctives, while others seem to favour acculturation of Charismatics within a pietist/orthodox orientation. Globally, we can consider that less than a third of French Baptist churches are clearly Charismatic, while others are either negotiating with the Charismatic position, or openly rejecting it. This must lead us to conclude that the reconfiguration of Baptist identity does not go in one direction only, even if the Charismatic trend is obvious. By contrast with the real Fort Alamo, extinction might not be inevitable for those who refuse to surrender to the current Charismatic mood. Instead of a war with a winner and a loser, there is a subtle game of mutual influence. Charismatic emphases transform Baptist identity, but it is also the case that the latter canalizes (or rejects) the Charismatic tendency.

⁶⁸ http://www.diakrisis.org/churches_Europe.htm#France.

⁶⁹ J.D. Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 100.

⁷⁰ In his thesis, Evert Veldhuizen evaluates at only 12,000 people within charismatic ranks within French Protestantism during the 1980s (this might be quite underestimated). Reminder: there are about 1,2 million Protestants in France, including 200,000 Pentecostals.

⁷¹ These figures are relatively close to what can be observed in Britain. According to N. Scotland, 50% of English Baptist churches are influenced by the Charismatic Movement. N. Scotland, *Charismatics and the New Millenium: The Impact of Charismatic Christianity from 1960 into the new Millenium* (London: Guildford, 2000), p. 19.