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The Offer of Catholic Spirituality

Pavel Vojtěch Kobut

SUMMARY

This article traces our Christian heritage back to the long and rich tradition of Catholic spirituality, showing the importance of ecumenical approaches. We are invited to explore the riches of spiritual and mystical experiences, the lifestyle of some groups of Catholic Christians, the so-called ‘schools of spirituality’, and the role of religious institutions and movements including ‘popular piety’.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article retrace l’héritage chrétien de spiritualité laissé par la longue et riche tradition catholique, en montrant l’importance des approches œcuméniques. L’auteur nous invite à explorer les riches expériences spirituelles et mystiques, le style de vie de certains groupes de chrétiens catholiques, les dites « écoles de spiritualité », et le rôle des institutions religieuses et des mouvements religieux, sans oublier la « piété populaire ». Il aborde la spiritualité par le moyen de la « théologie spirituelle »,

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel verfolgt die Spuren unseres christliches Erbes zurück bis hin zur langen und reichen Tradition katholischer Spiritualität und hebt die Bedeutung ökumenischer Ansätze hervor. Wir sind dazu eingeladen, den Reichtum geistlicher und mystischer Erfahrungen auszuloten, den Lebensstil einiger Gruppen katholischer Christen, sogenannter „Schulen geistlichen Lebens“, näher zu betrachten sowie die Rolle religiöser Einrichtungen und Bewegungen einschließlich der „Volksfrömmigkeit“ zu untersuchen. Wir nähern uns der

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Preliminary remarks

1. The concept of ‘spirituality’ has recently become important. It has crossed its original boundaries, the sphere of theology and faith (religion), and

We will explore spirituality by means of ‘spiritual theology’ because theology is not always ‘spiritual’ and often forgets the work of the Holy Spirit, his powerful influence and basic role in the Christian life. Each of these explorations will be linked to the Bible. Spiritual theology can challenge contemporary European churches which have faced the pressure of rationalistic arguments for many years and have possibly lost something of their spiritual dimension.

en soulignant que la théologie n’est pas toujours « spirituelle » et néglige souvent l’œuvre du Saint-Esprit, son influence puissante et son rôle fondamental dans la vie chrétienne. Chaque exploration est mise en rapport avec la Bible. La théologie spirituelle peut conduire les Églises européennes contemporaines à se remettre en question, alors qu’elles ont dû faire face durant de nombreuses années aux pressions des arguments rationalistes et qu’elles ont peut-être perdu quelque chose de leur dimension spirituelle.

Spiritualität auf dem Weg der „spirituellen Theologie“, [einer eigenständigen Disziplin in der katholischen Theologie], weil Theologie keineswegs immer „geistlich“ ist und häufig das Werk des Heiligen Geistes vergisst sowie seinen kraftvollen Einfluß und seine grundlegende Bedeutung im Leben von Christen. Jeder dieser Forschungsbefunde wird auf die Bibel bezogen. Spirituelle Theologie kann den gegenwärtigen Kirchen in Europa eine Herausforderung bieten – Gemeinden, die über lange Jahre hinweg den Druck rationalistischer Argumente ausgehalten haben, worunter vielleicht ihre geistliche Dimension gelitten hat.

has moved into other areas including the sciences, particularly psychology.¹ But I believe that as a consequence the term ‘spirituality’ has profoundly changed its meaning and became synonymous

with something non-institutional, and even something that is opposed to religious institutions and structures.² We therefore need to be careful when we use the term today.

2. I was asked to speak about what Roman Catholic spirituality can offer to evangelical and other Christian spiritualities.³ From several points of view I can answer without hesitation: ‘very much’, but from other points of view I am afraid that I need to say: ‘nothing!’ Everything depends on what we mean by ‘spirituality’. In some respects the expression ‘Catholic spirituality’ is full of deep meaning and rich in content, but in others we need to admit that it can be used only analogically, improperly.⁴ It will therefore be good to reflect on the different *theological* meanings of ‘spirituality’, because especially in English it has at least *three fundamentally different meanings*: 1) spirituality as the ‘spiritual life’; 2) spirituality as ‘lifestyle’ and 3) spirituality as a ‘subdivision of theology’. I will consider these three fundamental meanings of spirituality one by one. Only by doing this I will be able to avoid the risk of using the term in a different way from some of you.

1. The riches of spiritual experiences. Christian mysticism in the western tradition

The first use of the term ‘spirituality’ is as a reference to ‘spiritual life’. Sometimes we also speak about ‘religious life’, ‘Christian’, ‘divine’, ‘inner’ or ‘theological life’. Such spiritual life is common to all believers in Christ. It is a concept of spirituality that is open to the reality of spiritual or Christian experience and, in the end, to authentic mysticism. Let us look more closely at this use of spirituality.

1.1 Spirituality as ‘spiritual life’

The notion of ‘spiritual life’ is often misunderstood, especially in a secularised environment where ‘spiritual’ is used as a synonym of ‘immaterial’ and ‘beyond time’. But this is not the correct and original sense of the term in the Christian literature: ‘spiritual’ means ‘of the Spirit’ and is connected with the powerful action of the third divine Person.⁵ There is no situation and no place which could not be ‘spiritual’, because the Holy Spirit creates, penetrates, maintains and sanctifies everything, including the *materia* and the *tempus*. We can continue to speak about privileged places (*topoi, loci*) of the Spirit’s action, but we need to

understand that God can enrich every man and woman in any place, any situation, any state and any condition.⁶

The best starting point to consider the spiritual life is the biblical concept of *morfē* in Rom 12:2, where Paul writes: ‘And *be not conformed (mē sychēmatízesthe)* to this world, but *be transformed (metamorfóusthe)* by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God: what is good and acceptable and perfect.’ Paul draws a contrast between the *schēma* or ‘mentality’ of the world (cf. 1 Cor 7:31) and the *morfē* (‘form, figure’); between the *exterior* form, the form made by the action of the world (*kosmos, aiôn*) as the ‘enemy of the soul’ and the *interior* form created by the action of the Holy Spirit. This inner life built by the Holy Spirit we call ‘spiritual life’ and it is the common property of all believers in Christ, although it differs depending on the concrete creeds of individual churches and denominations. It is the ‘life in the Spirit’, according to another expression of Paul (Rom 8:1ff.) or ‘living in Christ’ (Rom 6:11; 2 Cor 5:15). And this is also the fundamental meaning of the notion of ‘piety’ (*Frömmigkeit*) that is so dear to many in the Protestant tradition.⁷

We can define this concept of spiritual life as ‘sacramental participation in the mystery of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit which makes us God’s children’.⁸ At the heart of this definition is the mystery of Jesus Christ which consists of his incarnation and his act of redemption. Our participation is ‘sacramental’ in two senses: It is made possible by baptism and it is realised, effectuated, by means of the signs. The agent of this participation is the Holy Spirit, hence we call it ‘spirituality’ or ‘spiritual life’. The goal of this participation is our dynamic growth in divine sonship (*hyiothésia*).

1.2 Authentic, qualified and mystical experience

The normal expression of sacramental participation in the mystery of Jesus (i.e., of spiritual life) is the spiritual experience.⁹ Both Catholic and Protestant have three reasons to be hesitant about the use of the term ‘experience’ in regard to theology:

- We are afraid of excessive *subjectivism*, as for example in the ‘experience’ of some modernists.
- We are afraid that acceptance of the role of experience in the Christian life will *weaken the primacy and necessity of the faith* and the datum of revelation.

- We are afraid of the *dictate of extraordinary experiences* as signs of the quality of spiritual life, as it was among Messalians.

But these fears are unnecessary if we use the correct, biblical concept of 'spiritual experience'. Roman Catholic theology, especially around the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and in the field of spiritual theology, has produced some important studies on this issue, of which I mention only two: the study of Jean Mouroux about the theological nature of Christian experience and the study of Augusto Guerra about its criteria.¹⁰ Mouroux makes a three-fold contribution; he shows that: 1. The term 'experiential' means neither 'experimental' nor 'impressional'; 2. The *objectivity* of the Christian experience is given by the self-communicating God;¹¹ 3. The *necessity* of faith is given by the non experimental and gratuit character of Christian experience.

1.2.1 Authentic experience

Augusto Guerra builds on this foundation and offers the tools to discern the authenticity of spiritual experience. He presents the following criteria: 1. The Christian spiritual experience needs to correspond to the common sense of believers (*sensus fidelium*) in that period of history; 2. It needs to be in harmony with human reason (not only rationally, but also intuitively); 3. It needs to have the signs of imitation and following of Christ, both in its horizontal and vertical dimensions; it also needs to have christological conformity with the determined period and piety of the other people; and Jesus' life needs to be the norm of the entire personal life; 4. The fruit of Spirit, not only according to Gal. 5:22 but also according to the primacy of love which is incarnate, challenging and, especially, love of the neighbour.¹² If our experience meets these criteria, it is probably authentic. But authentic experience is not a guarantee of authentic Christian life; it is only a valuable starting point for it!

1.2.2 Qualified experience

There are some particularly valid experiences among the authentic spiritual experiences, which faithfully reflect the Christian dogma and are therefore called 'properly religious'. They are usually intense and effective, and often they create a series of related experiences. If such experiences are, finally, verified by time, they can be called 'validated' experiences¹³ and they are the best source

of inspiration for our spiritual life.¹⁴ Whereas every validated experience is authentic, not every authentic experience is automatically validated.

1.2.3 Mystical experience

The criteria of Augusto Guerra are also valid for mystical experiences, but in this case we need to add something important. Giovanni Momioli enumerates four characteristics of Christian mystics: 1. They are believers in Christ with a living faith. 2. They have the sense of covenant. 3. They are conscious of the relativity of their own mystical experiences. 4. Their experiences are ineffable.¹⁵ If Momioli is right, it means that the mystical experience is necessarily consistent with the faith of the mystic.¹⁶ If we accept that Christian mysticism is, from the theological point of view, the 'particular communion with God characterised by infused loving knowledge (*contemplatio*), which is produced by the Holy Spirit and which purifies and unites human persons with Christ',¹⁷ it means that every *truly* mystical experience is authentic and also validated.

This statement reveals to us the great importance of Christian mysticism for the common Christian spiritual life.¹⁸ The same observation can be made about the authentic experience: Not all mystical experience automatically implies a high quality spiritual life.

1.3 The spiritual riches of the western mystical tradition

The most precious element of Christian mysticism, I believe, is the characteristic experience of contemplation, i.e. of 'infused loving knowledge of God' (John of the Cross),¹⁹ which is the *mystical variant* of high quality theological life, the life of faith, hope and love, consistent with the creed of the mystic. As such, the mystical contemplation is not a substitute for Christian attitudes of faith, hope and love, but it is precisely the *mystical mode* of living them. This mystical mode is no better or worse than the common mode of living, it is simply a *different* mode. But because the mystical contemplation is an *infused* mode of Christian living of *infused* virtues, this experience is *privileged* and *precious*.

The western mystical tradition of the Church is extremely rich in mystical expressions of living Christian faith, faith operating by love and hope. (I omit the Eastern mystical tradition of Christianity here, not because this mysticism is not rich but because I do not feel competent to dis-

cuss it.) The western mystical tradition offers all Christians an immense number of examples and types of qualified experienced faith such as ‘mysticism of essence’ (*Wesensmystik*), ‘betrothal mysticism’ (*Brautmystik*), ‘mysticism of presence’ and ‘mysticism of absence’, ‘mysticism of light’ and ‘mysticism of darkness’.²⁰

We may not want to call someone a mystic because their experience is simply unusual, but if we investigate its authenticity, we will be able to state if the person and their experience are really mystic and mystical. It is useful for us to listen to these voices because such people are privileged witnesses of the living God. I hope that I can say these things here at this meeting of evangelicals, because I know the difficulties that the first Reformers had with mysticism for historical and doctrinal reasons. My hope is based on three things: Firstly, the Catholic theology of the last century has prepared a new and solid basis for the dialogue on this topic.²¹ Secondly, during the last decades we have witnessed a more open and interested attitude towards mysticism from the side of evangelical authors and theologians.²² And thirdly, at the present time, we have new evidence for mystical experiences and mystics in Protestant circles.³³ In this way mysticism has become one of the topics of ecumenical dialogue.²⁴

2. Spiritualities in the Catholic Church. The predominant role of religious institutes

Having discussed ‘spirituality’ as ‘spiritual life’ or sacramental participation in the mystery of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we move to the original significance of the term ‘spirituality’: the concrete lifestyle of a group of Christians. This concept grew up in the religious environment in the Catholic Church, especially at the beginning of modernity in the sixteenth century, but the roots of the spiritual life in the individual religious orders are much older. The religious institutes (orders and congregations) and recently also other movements within the Church play leading roles in the rise of determined spiritualities.

2.1 Spirituality as lifestyle

A useful approach to spirituality as lifestyle can be found in the document *Lumen gentium* of the Second Vatican Council, which says to the religious friars and sisters (called the ‘religious’):

Religious should carefully keep before their minds the fact that the Church presents Christ to believers and non-believers alike in a striking manner daily through them. The Church thus portrays Christ in contemplation on the mountain, in His proclamation of the Kingdom of God to the multitudes, in His healing of the sick and maimed, in His work of converting sinners to a better life, in His solicitude for youth and His goodness to all men, always obedient to the will of the Father who sent Him (*Lumen gentium* 46a).

Thus, the religious are called to show Christ in different positions, attitudes and actions, and this is the starting point for the plurality of religious forms of life.²⁵

There is always an *architectonic principle* in the spirituality of a religious, around which the other elements of his or her spiritual life are organised. Inspired by Giovanni Moiola and Bernhard Fraling, I propose my own definition of spirituality as lifestyle: ‘Spirituality is the concrete and visible, balanced lifestyle created by the Holy Spirit and human collaboration in specific historical and geographical conditions and transmitted to other persons. This lifestyle helps its bearer to relive all of Christ’s mystery on the basis of certain aspect of Jesus’ earthly life which displayed all of this style with the peculiar mission in the community of Church and in the society.’

This definition contains seven principal elements:

- Concrete and visible, balanced lifestyle: it is a harmonious arrangement of all theological values in the Christian community which makes possible reciprocal interaction inside and outside; very often it is about the unity of antinomies;
- Action of the Holy Spirit and human collaboration: ‘spirituality’ is the synergy of the Holy Spirit and human beings;
- The whole mystery of Christ: it is union with God by participation in Christ’s life; all aspects of his life on earth become the ‘material’ of our spirituality;
- Arrangement around an architectonic principle: one aspect of Christ’s mystery is put in the centre because it is impossible to live for all aspects of his life with the same intensity; this aspect is the starting point for the legitimate plurality of spiritualities;
- Characteristic mission: this is determined by the

architectonic principle and by the challenges of one's own time;

- Historical and geographical conditions: spirituality needs enculturation into concrete conditions;
- Communicability: it is real only from the moment of its transmission to other persons.

This definition of spirituality as lifestyle shows clearly that there is no 'common spirituality' (whether Evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox or other) because there are many spiritualities in every church and in every denomination. We can certainly speak about some *typical elements* which characterise individual denominations, but these are never *exclusively* present in the concrete church; in the same manner, they are not completely absent in other churches/denominations. Could we risk saying that God's Word has no central role among the Catholics, or that Protestants have no idea of liturgy, divine worship or Eucharist? It would be wrong to generalise in such way. Once we realise this, we can say that the Catholics can offer to the Protestants not only some *elements of spirituality* which the Protestants do not have, but rather a *whole number of different spiritualities* which arose in the Catholic Church over the past centuries. On the other hand, we can admit that the Protestants can offer something similar to the Catholics.

To express spirituality as lifestyle by means of a biblical concept, I think the best term is Paul's *charism* (*charisma*; see especially 1Cor 12). When we compare this notion with the term *morfe*, i.e. when we compare spirituality as the 'spiritual life' and spirituality as lifestyle, we see that they are the same realities but viewed from a different perspective: 'spiritual life' is *what* we are called to live by the power of the Spirit, and lifestyle is *how* we are called to live for the benefit of others.

2.2 Traditional schools of spirituality

Most spiritualities in the Roman Catholic Church (intended as lifestyles) are linked with religious Orders and Congregations, each of which has its own founder, its own history and its own challenges that it is called to respond to. The great majority of these Institutes exist only for a while and then disappear, commonly after 80 to 120 years of existence. In sociological terms their lifecycle can be expressed as containing the periods of birth, childhood, adolescence, first maturity, full maturity and old-age, or if we want, by spring, summer, autumn and winter. However, some Institutes

continue to have new cycles of life. There are two explanations for this: either they respond well to the *permanent challenges* or *needs* of Church and society, or they bear the *permanently central values* of the Christian life as the architectonic principle of their spirituality.

Especially in these Institutes we find the phenomenon of the *schools of spirituality*. These are defined by Athanasius Joseph Matani with the following words:

... all representatives (saints and blessed, theologians, teachers, authors and the persons of the Spirit) who teach, study and apply in practice the determined Catholic spirituality, intended precisely as the science of piety.²⁶

Unfortunately, there is no agreement among the theologians about the number of these schools of spirituality. Because the notion *school of spirituality* is prestigious, every author wants to see his own spirituality on the list! But the most important ones, mentioned by all specialists, are the following schools of spirituality in the Catholic Church: Basilian, Augustinian, Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, Jesuit, Oratorian, Salesian, Vincentin, Passionist and Redemptorist.²⁷ If I were asked to recommend to Protestants some Catholic spiritualities (intended here as lifestyles), I would advise that they study some of the above spiritualities and their greatest representatives. There Protestants can find the 'pure and healthy water' of the Spirit and of the Gospel, incarnated in a concrete lifestyle.

2.3 The role of religious institutes and Church Movements

We just claimed that the Religious Institutes play decisive roles in this area of spirituality as lifestyle. But I must immediately add those movements in the Catholic Church that represent more recent, vivacious expressions of faith and spiritual life, in particular after the Second Vatican Council. Movements like Focolare, Work of Schönstatt, Legio Mariae, Cursillos de Cristiandad, Community of Arche, Light-Life, Oasis, The Neocatechumenate Way, Communion and Liberation play very important roles in the lives of today's Roman Catholics. They not only engage large numbers of lay people directly but by their actions and by living this spirituality they also help in traditional communities and structures of the Church like the parishes and quite often through the Religious Institutes.²⁸

Every Church Movement has its own, unique spirituality, which often developed within a short period of time during the last century. Sometimes, however, these movements lack the more distinctive knowledge of their own original spirituality and they still need to reflect on it more carefully. In any case, these Church Movements form a rich source of authentic experience and inspiration for all believers.

Besides the Religious Institutes and the Church Movements, the Catholic Church has clergy and lay people who do not belong to any movement. Although we could also speak about the spiritualities of the clergy, I prefer to not touch on this topic and instead to make a brief remark about the lay people who do not belong to any structured spirituality. The mere fact that they do not belong to any community or movement does not mean that they have no spirituality. Their spirituality is simply not clearly arranged, structured, peculiar or characteristic, and often it is not consciously reflected, but it exists. In this case we usually speak about 'popular piety'. About fifty years ago, the expression 'popular piety' sounded rather pejorative in the Catholic Church and we started to replace it by the term 'parish spirituality'. But if we are to use this new expression, it is necessary to be conscious that the use of the term 'spirituality' is inappropriate in this case, or at least only analogical to our concept of spirituality as lifestyle, because the lay people in the parishes are living out many different spiritualities. They have, surely, some typical common elements such as interest in common human values, a deep sense of God and a sense of duty and dedication,²⁹ but they still have many different ways of living, not only because of their different occupations and roles in life but also because of the different cultural and national conditions. To define 'popular piety', we could say that it is a 'common form of living the faith by the lay people in different cultures and nations'.³⁰ This broad and free definition reflects a largely unrestrained mode of life, humanly very authentic and valid, but often exposed to any kind of deformation.

For these reasons 'popular piety' needs permanent renewal, consisting in avoiding two extremes: preservation of every possible expression on one side and iconoclasm of every form of popular piety on the other side. It is also in need of leaders who take responsibility to limit any unbiblical elements, to re-evangelise the people and to direct separate groups to the whole and to make the whole sensi-

tive to the groups.³¹ Yet in spite of the scepticism of some decades ago, 'popular piety' has much to offer, even to the structured spiritualities.

3. Spiritual theology. Its historical development and its main issues

After the concepts of spirituality as 'spiritual life' and as lifestyle, we come to the last meaning of the term 'spirituality', namely 'spiritual theology', that is, an autonomous branch of sacred science. Let us look at a short historical sketch of developments in the Catholic Church, its theological justification (*raison d'être*) and its systematic basis, and, finally, its main characteristics which help us to reconnect it with the preceding meanings of the notion of 'spirituality'.

3.1 Spirituality as 'spiritual theology'

Spiritual theology is a relatively new theological discipline and its beginning is connected with so-called 'Mystical problem' or *Querelle mystique*. It started with the controversy between two French authors, Soudreau and Poulain, about the nature of mysticism and its significance for human participation in the divine holiness. This polemic soon involved many theologians and led to three fundamental schools, represented by three religious Orders: the Dominicans, Jesuits and Carmelites. This long discussion continued until the 1940's and although it was fruitful, at the end it was also a bit tiring and repetitive.³²

In any case, the controversy not only resolved some of the entrenched problems and helped to clarify important distinctions and definitions, but it also caused the rise of a new branch (or better branches) of theology, the so-called 'Ascetical and Mystical Theology'. In 1919 the first Department of Asceticism and Mysticism was founded in the Jesuit Institute *Gregoriana* in Rome and in 1920 another one in the Dominican *Angelicum* in the same town.³³ From 1931 Ascetical Theology became an *auxiliary* discipline of fundamental theological studies, while Mystical Theology became an *optional special* discipline.³⁴ Since the 1940's theologians have preferred to join these two branches into one discipline, called 'spiritual theology'.³⁵ Questions of method, sources and relationships to other areas of theology were discussed in preconciliar and early postconciliar times.

After some 60 years of theological investigations into the proper nature of spiritual theology, it can be observed that in spite of some sceptic

voices³⁶ this theological discipline is quite well identified³⁷ and can be defined as the theological discipline which on the basis of biblical revelation and qualified Christian experience systematically investigates the union of human beings with God in Christ, performed by the action of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Church and world and by human collaboration, and which describes its organic and dynamic development, the variety of its unique, individual ways.

3.2 Four fundamental expressions of the faith of the Early Church

Although it has now been in existence for about a hundred years, today this theological discipline is still contested. When earlier in life I was deciding which theological specialisation to choose, a Dominican friar said to me: ‘Spiritual theology? Do you know that this discipline is superfluous?’ ‘I agree’, I replied, ‘but only on condition that all other branches of theology are “spiritual”.’ I still think the same until the present day: if all theology was really and always ‘spiritual’ and would never forget the Holy Spirit and his powerful action, then yes, spiritual theology would be unnecessary. But spiritual theology becomes useful because we often forget Him in systematic theology, theological ethics and other disciplines. And it is also useful because it helps us to see the activity of the Holy Spirit systematically in one place and not to have it spread over many different disciplines.

I am convinced that we can also discover the usefulness of spiritual theology in the Bible, although, of course, not explicitly. In Acts of the Apostles the faith of the Early Church is characterised by four fundamental terms: ‘They continued steadfastly in the *apostles’ doctrine and fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayers*’ (Acts 2:42). The ‘apostles’ doctrine’ is our faith, our creed; ‘fellowship’ is our ethics; ‘breaking of bread’ is our liturgy, divine worship; and ‘prayers’ are our *spirituality*.³⁸ To these four fundamental expressions of the faith correspond four fundamental theological disciplines: systematic theology, theological ethics, liturgical theology and spiritual theology.³⁹ Thus we can say that spiritual theology has close links with systematic theology, theological ethics and liturgical theology.

3.3 Faith, love and hope

In the past fifty years many attempts have been made to describe the relation of spiritual theology with systematic theology and theological ethics.⁴⁰

Nowadays almost no one would deny their mutual dependence; thus we can say that ‘spirituality without dogma is blind and dogma without spirituality is dead’ and ‘morality without spirituality is rootless and spirituality without morality is disembodied’.⁴¹

We can also describe the mutual relationship between spiritual theology and these two fundamental theological disciplines, systematic theology and theological ethics, from the point of view of the theological virtues: the relationship with systematic theology is in the sphere of *faith*, the relationship with theological ethics in the sphere of *love*. While systematic theology is more focused on the intelligence of faith (*intelligentia fidei*), spiritual theology is more concentrated on the adhesion to the faith (*adhaesio fidei*).⁴² And while theological ethics is more focused on the order of love (*ordo caritatis*), spiritual theology is more concentrated on the exchange of love (*commercium caritatis*).⁴³

But how can we grasp the relationship between spiritual theology and liturgical theology? We find common ground in the sphere of hope when we consider the liturgical exclamation *Maran atha – Marana tha* (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20), which is, in the second form, the great expression of the Christian hope and the expectation of the *Parousia*.⁴⁴ Can we say that liturgical theology is more focused on the celebration of hope (*celebratio spei*), while spiritual theology is more concentrated on holding hope (*captatio spei*)?⁴⁵

Here we also find the connections between the three fundamental meanings of the notion ‘spirituality’: the theological life of faith, love and hope, mentioned by the apostle Paul (1 Thess 1:3; 1 Cor 13:13; Col 1:4-5), is the sacramental participation in Christ by the power of the Spirit and the concrete lifestyle created by the Spirit and human collaboration which are, finally, the object of investigation of the theological discipline that we call spiritual theology.

Conclusions

By exploring the three fundamental meanings of the notion of spirituality, I have tried to present what the Roman Catholic tradition can offer to the evangelical movement. The meaning of spirituality as ‘spiritual life’ led us to an area of authentic, qualified and mystical experience. The meaning of spirituality as lifestyle led us into a variety of ways of living in the Catholic Church, especially in the Religious Orders and the Church Movements.

Finally, spirituality as a theological discipline led us to the place of the spiritual life and lifestyle in theological investigation.

I hope that this reflection can enrich everyone who is seeking to live their lives on the cutting edge of spirituality, i.e. evangelical spirituality, without causing anyone to lose the richness of their own spiritual life or putting it in doubt.

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Notes

- 1 For example, in 2007 the International Conference on Spirituality in Prague, organised by the Czech-Moravian Psychological Society, the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Charles' University in cooperation with the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, which concentrated on the psychological aspects of spirituality.
- 2 E.g. K. I. Pargament, 'The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality? Yes and No' in *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 9 (1999) 3-16; P. Ríčan, *Psychologie náboženství* (Praha 2002) 43-44.
- 3 This is the edited text of a paper given at the 2008 conference of FEET, the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians.
- 4 See R. Lazzarini, 'Sul concetto di spiritualità' in *Chiesa e spiritualità nell'Ottocento italiano* (Verona 1971) 31-52; J. Damián Gaitán, 'Espiritualidad y espiritualidades' in *Revista de Espiritualidad* 43 (1984) 673-697; E. Pacho, 'Definición de la "espiritualidad". Respuestas y tratamientos' in *Burgense* 34/1 (1993) 281-302; K. Waaijman, 'Toward a Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality' in *Studies in Spirituality* 3 (1993) 5-57.
- 5 M. I. Rupnik, *Nel fuoco del rovetto ardente. Iniziazione alla vita spirituale* (Roma 2000) 8-9, who quotes Irenaeus: 'The men are spiritual by participation in the Spirit, but not by privation and elimination of the flesh' (*Adv. Haer.* 5.6.1).
- 6 A. Guerra, 'Natura e luoghi dell'esperienza spirituale' in B. Secondin and T. Goffi (eds.), *Corso di spiritualità. Esperienza - sistematica - proiezioni* (Brescia 1989) 25-55, esp. 41-47.
- 7 W. Zeller, *Theologie und Frömmigkeit* (Marburg 1971-1978); E. Beyreuther, *Frömmigkeit und Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Pietismus und zur Erweckungsbewegung* (Hildesheim 1980); J. J. Degenhardt, R. Lettmann and H.-M. Linnemann (eds.), *Glaube und Frömmigkeit* (Bielefeld - Kevelaer 1986); J. B. Staněk, 'Zbožnost a spiritualita' in *Křesťanská revue* 1 (1996) 6-11.
- 8 This is my own attempt to define 'spiritual life'.
- 9 See the good apology for the fact that experience is a normal element of faith in S. Ros, *La experiencia de Dios en mitad de la vida* (Madrid 2007) 21ff.
- 10 J. Mouroux, *L'expérience chrétienne. Introduction à une théologie* (Paris 1952); Guerra, 'Natura e luoghi'.
- 11 There are three constitutional elements in every authentic experience: the self-communicating God, the perceiving human being and their interaction. The first element guarantees the objectivity of the experience and (with the third element) distinguishes 'experience' from 'impression'; cf. F. Ruiz, *Camínos de Espiritu. Compendio de teología espiritual* (Madrid ⁵1998) 439ff.
- 12 See Guerra, 'Natura e luoghi', 48ff.
- 13 For this notion, see Ruiz, *Camínos de Espiritu*, 33.
- 14 The first and most important qualified experiences occur in Holy Scripture. See for example the classic study by L. Bouyer, *Introduction à la vie spirituelle* (Paris 1960) 27-57: 'La vie spirituelle et la parole de Dieu'.
- 15 G. Moiola, 'Mistica cristiana' in S. de Fiores and T. Goffi (eds.), *Nuovo dizionario di spiritualità* (Cinisello Balsamo ⁴1985) 986-988.
- 16 We can say that the Christian dogma is *normative* and *formative* for the mystical experience; cf. P.-W. Scheele, 'Dogma e mistica' in *Sentieri illuminati dallo Spirito* (Roma 2006) 139-152.
- 17 This is my own attempt at defining Christian mysticism. This theological description needs to be completed by psychological description, because typical for Christian mysticism is the close connection between its theological and psychological elements. From the psychological point of view we need to add that 'this particular communion is perceived as the immediate, passive (receptive) experience of affectively apophatic (ineffable) knowledge which transforms human being and living'. Another attempt at defining Christian mysticism is L. Borriello, 'Dal mysterion alla mistica' in *Sentieri illuminati dallo Spirito*, 123-138.
- 18 It is important to discern clearly if an experience is really mystical. The Catholic Church has the proper discipline for doing this, called *mystology*; see Ruiz, *Camínos de Espiritu*, 459ff.
- 19 John of the Cross (1542-1591), *Dark night of the Soul*, 2.18.5.
- 20 A first orientation on the types of Christian mysticism can be found in J. Sudbrack, *Mystik. Christliche Orientierung im religiösen Pluralismus* (Stuttgart 1988).
- 21 The theological literature on mysticism in a Catholic environment is immense; I mention the most representative works: W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London ⁴1918); M. Grabmann, *Wesen und Grundlagen der katholischen Mystik* (München ²1923); C. Butler, *Western Mysticism* (New York

- ²1927); P. E. More, *Christian Mysticism* (London 1932); A. Ravier (ed.), *La mystique et les mystiques* (Paris 1965); A. Resch (ed.), *Mistica e misticismo oggi* (Roma 1979); *Vita cristiana ed esperienza mistica* (Roma 1982); E. Ancilli and M. Pappozzi (eds.), *La mistica. Fenomenologia e riflessione teologica* (Roma 1984); G. Ruhbach and J. Sudbrack (eds.), *Grosse Mystiker* (München 1984); W. Brixner, *Die Mystiker* (Augsburg 1987); L. Borriello et al., *Dizionario di mistica* (Città del Vaticano 1998); *Sentieri illuminati dallo Spirito*.
- 22 See for example P. Tillich, *Systematische Theologie I* (Stuttgart 1958) 167ff.; F. D. Maass, *Mystik im Gespräch* (Würzburg 1974) or the study on Theresa of Avila by J. Moltmann, 'Teresa d'Avila e Martin Lutero' in *Rocca* 41 (1982) 46-51.
- 23 For example, Hjalmar Ekström, Dag Hammarskjöld and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
- 24 See examples of this dialogue: G. Lefebvre, 'Théologie mystique et oecuménisme' in *Actualité de Jean de la Croix* (Bruges 1970) 155-179; A. Dumas, 'Théologie mystique et oecuménisme', in *Actualité de Jean de la Croix* (Bruges 1970) 181-198.
- 25 The Catholic Church has the slogan *Varietas in caritate et caritas in varietate* ('Variety in charity and charity in variety') which is used especially for the sphere of the religious spiritualities; cf. A.G. Matani, *La spiritualità come scienza. Introduzione metodologica allo studio della vita spirituale Cristiana* (Cinisello Balsamo 1990) 62.
- 26 A. Matani, 'Spiritualità (scuole di)' in E. Ancilli (ed.), *Dizionario enciclopedico di spiritualità III* (Roma ²1992) 2385. More information in G. Colombo, 'La Storia della Spiritualità e le Scuole di Spiritualità' in *Rivista di Ascetica e Mistica* 10 (1965) 443-461; R. Blatnický, 'Il concetto di "scuola di spiritualità"' in *Rivista di Pedagogia e Scienze Religiose* 5 (1967) 48-108; E. Pacho, 'Le scuole di spiritualità' in Ch.A. Bernard (ed.), *La spiritualità come teologia* (Cinisello Balsamo 1993) 65-74.
- 27 Essentially I agree with Matani, 'Spiritualità (scuole di)', 2386; I only omit the spirituality of the Devotio Moderna which, I think, is hardly a school of spirituality.
- 28 The literature on Church Movements is immense; reliable sources are J. Sauer, *Lebenswege des Glaubens* (Freiburg 1978); A. Favale (ed.), *Movimenti ecclesiali contemporanei. Dimensioni storiche, teologico-spirituali e apostoliche* (Roma ²1982); A. Guerra, 'Movimientos actuales de espiritualidad' in S. de Fiores, T. Goffi and A. Guerra (eds.), *Nuevo Diccionario de Espiritualidad* (Madrid 1983) 970-982; C. Dagens, 'Les mouvements spirituels contemporains. Jalons pour un discernement' in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 106 (1984) 885-899; B. Secondin, *Segni di profezia nella Chiesa. Comunità, gruppi, movimenti* (Milano 1987); J. P. Cordes, 'Nouveaux mouvements spirituels dans l'Eglise' in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109 (1987) 49-65; J. Castellano, 'Movimenti ecclesiali' in *Dizionario enciclopedico di spiritualità II*, 1682-1694.
- 29 See G. Mattai, 'Religiosità popolare' in *Nuovo dizionario di spiritualità*, 1316ff.
- 30 This is my own definition, inspired by D. Borobio and cardinal Pironio as quoted by G. Caprile; cf. D. Borobio, 'Religiosidad popular en la renovación litúrgica: criterios para una valoración' in *Phase* 15 (1975) 346-347; G. Caprile, *Il Sinodo dei Vescovi 1974* (Roma 1975).
- 31 Cf. J. Rovira, 'Orientamenti e criteri per il rinnovamento della religiosità popolare' in *La religiosità popolare. Valore spirituale permanente* (Roma 1978) 151-175. This volume informs well on the question of popular piety and contains a precious bibliography.
- 32 For a good presentation of the 'Mystical problem' or *Querelle mystique*, see under 'Mystical movement' in C. García, *Teología espiritual contemporánea. Corrientes y perspectivas* (Burgos 2002) 15-61.
- 33 Cf. A. Guerra, *Introducción a la teología espiritual* (Santo Domingo 1994) 27.
- 34 See *Ordinationes* in the Apostolic Constitution *Deus scientiarum Dominus* of Pius XI, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1931, 271-281.
- 35 García, *Teología espiritual contemporánea*, 63ff.
- 36 In 1980 Augusto Guerra wrote about spiritual theology as the 'non-identified science'; see his 'Teología espiritual, una ciencia no identificada' in *Revista de Espiritualidad* 39 (1980) 335-414; in 1994, he mitigated his affirmation and wrote about 'not sufficiently identified science'; see his *Introducción a la teología espiritual*, 10.
- 37 See J. Manuel García, 'La teología spirituale oggi. Verso una descrizione del suo statuto epistemologico' in *La teología spirituale. Atti del Congresso Internazionale OCD* (Roma 2001) 205-238.
- 38 The actual *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also has these four parts: the confession of the faith, the celebration of the Christian mystery, the life in Christ and Christian prayer.
- 39 The frame of *doctrinal theology* is preceded by the branches of *positive theology* (i.e. biblical sciences and patristics) and followed by *disciplinary-practical theology*; for this division of the theological disciplines see M.-J. Congar, 'Théologie' in A. Vacant, E. Mangenot and È. Amann (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 15 (Paris 1903-1972) 493-496.
- 40 For the relation with systematic theology, see for example L. Malevez, 'Théologie contemplative et théologie discursive comme science' in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 86 (1964) 225-249; M. Dupuy,

‘Expérience spirituelle et théologie comme science’, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 86 (1964) 1137-1162; D. Baumgardt, *Mystik und Wissenschaft. Ihr Ort im abendländischen Denken* (Witten 1963); E. Schillebeeckx, ‘La nouvelle tendance de la dogmatique actuelle’ in *Révélation et théologie* (Bruxelles 1965) 364-368; S. Cannistrà, ‘Teologia Spirituale e Teologia Dogmatica’ in *La teologia spirituale*, 501-512.

For the relation with theological ethics, see for example J. Castellano, ‘Spiritualità e vita morale’ in *Persona, verità e morale* (Roma 1987) 561-579; C. García, ‘Vida moral y perfección cristiana’ in G. Del Pozo (ed.), *Comentarios a la Veritatis splendor* (Madrid 1994) 517-539; M. O’Keefe, *Becoming Good, becoming Holy. On the Relationship of Christian Ethics and Spirituality* (New York 1995); D.J. Billy, ‘Mysticism and Moral Theology’ in *Studia Moralia* 34 (1996) 389-415; M. Vidal,

Moral y Espiritualidad. De la separación a la convergencia (Madrid 1997).

- 41 The second assertion is from R. Gula, ‘Morality and Spirituality’ in J. Keating (ed.), *Moral Theology. New Directions and Fundamental Issues – Festschrift for James P. Hanigan* (New York and London 2004) 162; the first one is from my colleague at the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles’ University in Prague, the systematic theologian C.V. Pospíšil.
- 42 P.V. Kohut, *Co je spirituální teologie?* (Kostelní Vydří 2007) 68.
- 43 Ch.A. Bernard, *Teologia spirituale* (Cinisello Balsamo 1997) 65.
- 44 For the double meaning of *Maran atha – Marana tha*, see M. Black, ‘The Maranatha Invocation and Jude 14:15 (1 Enoch 1:9)’ in B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (eds.), *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (Cambridge 1973) 189-196.
- 45 Cf. Kohut, *Spirituální teologie?*, 75.