

Presidential Address

DANCING BEFORE THE LORD: THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AS GRACEFUL PARTNERS

Music and dance marked key moments in the experience of Israel from almost the very beginning. When the Israelites had walked dryshod through the Red Sea,

the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea." (Exod 15:20-21 NRSV)

And centuries later when they brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem "David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod" (2 Sam 6:14). No partnered promenade for the King: in fact, the display of his bare and leaping body offended his wife, Michal, daughter of King Saul! These exuberant performances reveal in the dancers an immediate engagement with the experience being celebrated, yet the account of each performance carries the weight of theological reflection. Miriam and the women recapitulate in music, in dance and song, the great thanksgiving hymn sung by Moses and all the people. Their dance gives physical form to that music (Exod 15:1-18). David explained that he, the King, performed before the Lord as a humble entertainer—and Michal's criticism earned her the dreaded curse of a life of barrenness. As David's dance made visible his right relationship before God, the curse on Michal made visible that to ignore such right relationship is to live an empty life (2 Sam 6:20-23).

Music and dance offer a metaphor for the complex and often tangled relationship between theology, especially theological anthropology, and Christian spirituality. In our time that relationship is taking new forms. Twenty some years ago when I first began to teach at the Graduate Theological Union I offered a course in the history of Christian mysticism. In order to take it, one Lutheran pastor needed permission from the governing synod of his church, a permission he obtained only with difficulty. He told me that some members of the synod had felt the course topic carried too many overtones of "excessive Roman interiority." By contrast, this past April I was invited to address a Lutheran seminary's spring pastoral conference. The topic? Discernment of spirits, a distinctly "interior" subject. Two decades have seen a profound shift, one that parallels a development within Roman Catholicism, where it was most forcefully presented even earlier

in *Lumen gentium*, chapter five: "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness." In the interim, Christian Spirituality has sprung up as a growth industry. Put more soberly, we are witnessing Christians reclaiming serious attention to life in the Spirit as proper to the Church in all her members. Thus, Christians are thinking of themselves differently, and so have come to understand spirituality differently than was the case even one generation ago. No longer is spirituality understood simply to refer to "pious practices"—if ever it did. Rather, it connotes an entire way of life, and a way of life proper to anyone by virtue of baptism. I believe the change reflects the ongoing shift in the *location* of theological anthropology within the theological project, combined with a more recent parallel shift in the *experience* of lived Christianity (For the moment I will let "the experience of lived Christianity" stand as a definition for Christian spirituality.)

Theological anthropology has been moving steadily toward a central position in theology from the time of the Enlightenment. Protestants like Friedrich Schleiermacher and, somewhat later, Catholics like Karl Rahner have taught us to begin from reflection on the human situation before God. The *content* of the discipline of theological anthropology corresponds with the human situation so understood; thus it includes the themes of creation, *imago Dei*, freedom, sin, suffering, grace, and salvation and its *methods* include among others those of philosophy, phenomenology, historical criticism, and both linguistic and rhetorical analysis. The relocation of theological anthropology has tended to heighten stress on the incarnation, not only in christology but also in soteriology, sacramental theology, and ecclesiology, while an effect on trinitarian theology has been a sharpened emphasis on relationality.

Meanwhile, among people I know—graduate students, people who invite me to give talks, Catholic and Protestant associates, friends, colleagues, and those I serve—among all these groups I have observed a renewal of baptismal faith. The hunger to live the life of the Spirit is unbounded by denomination, race, or gender. It appears to me as a new and unexpected realization of Paul's insistence on baptismal equality: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). The pervasive interest in spirituality can be read as one indicator of the seriousness with which increasing numbers approach their faith commitment. Christian spirituality is the name applied both to the lived experience and to the academic discipline which directly studies that experience.

Definition of spirituality is notoriously difficult and remains a contentious issue among scholars in the discipline. Bernard McGinn has identified the three principal approaches as theological, anthropological, and historical/contextual.¹

¹Bernard McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 1 (1993): 1-10, surveys the field to its date of publication. Sandra Schneiders, "Spirituality as an Academic Discipline: Reflections from Experience," *ibid.*, 10-15, reviews what she has learned in her fifteen years experience as founder of

He sees the disagreement as rooted in the fundamental ambiguity of the term, suggesting that it may indeed be "one of those terms where exploration will never yield a clear and universally acceptable definition."² So he concludes:

What I would insist on at the present is that all three options remain in conversation, though this conversation will doubtless take different forms depending on the context, that is, whether it takes place as a part of the humanistic study of religion or in specifically religious educational institutions.³

Theology, anthropology, and history contribute to the understanding of spirituality, though the weight one assigns to each will depend on the context in which one works.

For clarity in what follows I must place myself in the ongoing debate. It is relevant to my position that I am a Roman Catholic, that I teach and write at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, and in the doctoral program in Christian Spirituality at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. I understand spirituality in its most generic sense to be concerned with the human response to the transcendent. In the specifically Christian sense I understand spirituality to be concerned with the conscious human response to God in Jesus Christ Who gives us the Spirit Who in turn leads us to the Father. The "us" is important; for the Christian, there is an ecclesial dimension to one's response. Clearly in my definition I am indebted to my colleague, Sandra Schneiders, and I do intend the evident anthropological bias in my approach.⁴ So much for my position. However,

the GTU program in spirituality; she concludes by defining the academic field of Christian spirituality "as the interdisciplinary study of Christian religious experience as Christian, as religious, and as experience for the purpose of understanding it theoretically and allowing that understanding to serve as an intellectual resource for the living of the spiritual life and a basis for productive interchange among the spiritual traditions of the world" (15). Later contributions to the debate include Philip Endean, "Theology out of Spirituality: The Approach of Karl Rahner," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 3 (1996): 6-8; Mark McIntosh, "Lover without a Name: Spirituality and Constructive Christology Today," *ibid.*, 9-12; J. Matthew Ashley, "The Turn to Spirituality? The Relationship between Theology and Spirituality," *ibid.*, 13-18; Anne M. Clifford, "Re-membering the Spiritual Core of Theology: A Response," *ibid.*, 19-21; Elizabeth A. Dreyer, "Spirituality as a Resource for Theology: The Holy Spirit in Augustine," *ibid.* 4 (1996): 1-12; John A. Cavadini, "The Holy Spirit and Culture: A Response to Elizabeth Dreyer," *ibid.*, 13-15.

²*Ibid.*, 7.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Sandra Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: The Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 6 (1998): 1, defines spirituality in the general sense as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives." Turning to Christian spirituality, she writes:

In Christian spirituality these formal categories are specified by Christian content: the horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ,

wherever one positions oneself, it remains true that the practice of Christian spirituality is the content which the academic discipline of Christian spirituality studies.

As to method, spirituality requires a multidisciplinary approach. In the Graduate Theological Union doctoral program the constitutive disciplines are scripture and history. Also requisite is some knowledge of one or another of the "problematic disciplines," "problematic" because of their importance to addressing a specific problem.⁵ I think here of a student who this spring successfully defended a Master's thesis on the role of trauma in the mystical experience of Ignatius of Loyola, John of the Cross, and Alphonse Rodriguez⁶. Her work demanded immersion in the constitutive discipline of history and the problematic discipline of psychology. But what of theology, in particular, what of theological anthropology? To interpret what was happening to each of these men required of the student some understanding of the theology of human freedom, of grace, and of suffering.

This brings us to theology's role in spirituality, and to the particular role of theological anthropology. It is beyond debate that theology is essential to any work in spirituality, though scholars continue to argue the nature of the relationship. In my opinion the two relate as partners. However the partnership is not like the one we see in the tango, where the net effect is to make one dancer appear as clearly dominant and the other subservient. It is more like the waltz, where each partner's moves contribute something distinct to a whole in which the two appear as collaborative. While the partners might not want light shed on every dance, this particular dance could use some illumination. Investigation of the relationship between theological anthropology and spirituality can illumine the relationship between the broader field of theology and spirituality. Theological anthropology and spirituality present themselves to my view as "made for each other." If spirituality is concerned with the human person's conscious experience of God, then it would seem that the theological discipline which studies the human situation before God might be of particular significance in the project of spirituality. I turn now to examples of *how* the relationship between theological anthropology and Christian spirituality manifests itself in three different cases which I will treat unequally. In the first, the leading partner is theological anthropology, in the second spirituality leads, and the third offers us only a quick

and the project involves the living of his paschal mystery in the context of the Church community through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Living within this horizon of ultimate value one relates in a particular way to all of reality and it is this relationship to the whole of reality as a Christian which constitutes Christian spirituality. (3)

⁵See *ibid.*, 5.

⁶Lynn Bridgers, "Trauma and Transformation: Traumatic Experience and the Transformation of Three Spanish Mystics" (master's thesis, Graduate Theological Union, 1998).

glimpse of a dance now in progress. One caution: the first of these cases is taken from the patristic period and so predates the division of theology into subdisciplines like christology and theological anthropology. While for purposes of analysis I will attend to what we today think of as the theological anthropology of the figure under study, I do not intend to impute late twentieth century categories to a fourth century writer.

Early in his career Athanasius, the feisty and often fiery Bishop of Alexandria, set out to explain Christ and the meaning of redemption to a broad, popular audience.⁷ But to do this requires some examination of the human condition. Athanasius knew well—none better!—that Christian belief in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, unites the divine works of creation and salvation. The very One through whom all things were made chose to be born of Mary for us and for our salvation. So we are at the center of the story; in Athanasius's words: "we were the cause of his incarnation, and for our salvation he had compassion to the extent of being born and revealed in a body."⁸ Any further explanation of why this should be so opens the whole story of creation. Athanasius mentions three of the accounts of creation current in fourth century Alexandria only to discard them in order to give his own reading of the Genesis story.⁹ He rejects the theory that the universe came into being by chance, which in his view would eliminate at one stroke both providence and an ordered world. Equally he rejects Plato's teaching that God made the world from preexistent matter, on the grounds that such an approach reduces God from creator to craftsman, whose undoubted creativity nonetheless is limited by the available material. Finally he rejects the Marcionite view that the creator is another being than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To do so he uses an interesting argument built on Matthew 19:4-6, which reads:

[Jesus] answered: Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

The movement of the passage is from the original creation of humans as male and female, through marriage where "the two shall become one flesh," to the ban on divorce—"what God has joined together, let no one separate." Athanasius

⁷Written no later than 337, the work is accessible in a good Greek and English edition: *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. and trans. by Robert W. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971). For a discussion of the unity of the work, its date, and intended audience, xx-xxiv. Further references will be to each of the two main sections of the work by initial, then to chapter, line, and page in the Thomson edition. Athanasius outlines his purpose in CG 1.42-45, p. 4.

⁸DI 4.8-1, p. 142.

⁹DI chaps. 2-3, pp. 136-42.

rests his argument on the unarticulated identity between the Creator God and the God who blesses marriage, an identity also assumed in the Gospel passage. Now, even so compressed a review of rejected creation stories foreshadows the wondrous unity Athanasius finds at the heart of salvation history: on the one hand, fleshly and sexed humanity is not a cosmic accident but a providential choice, a creation of God—and that same human, drawn from nothing, has as saving destiny participation in the divine!

Athanasius returns to the Genesis account of creation. Commenting on Genesis 1:26, he tells us:

Of all those on earth [God] had special pity for the human race, and seeing that by the definition of its own existence it would be unable to persist for ever, he gave it an added grace, not simply creating them like all irrational animals on the earth, but making them in his own image and giving them also a share in the power of his own Word, so that having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational, they might be able to remain in felicity and live the true life in paradise, which is really that of the saints.¹⁰

The image of God is, for this Father of the Church, located in rationality. Think of the Word of God, God's only-begotten Son, as the perfect Image of the Father. The Word shines with the Father's glory and men and women who remain turned toward the Word catch the refulgence of that glory. Through participation in the Word they shine with the Light of the Father in whose life they share. But to turn away from the Word is to turn from All and to turn toward nothing-at-all. When human beings turn away from God they turn toward that from which they came, and so are drawn back into nothing.¹¹ It is this insight which gives tremendous power to the Athanasian use of "corruption." Athanasius describes the situation after the entry of death and corruption:

¹⁰DI 3.17-24, p. 140.

¹¹Athanasius writes:

For the transgression of the commandment turned them to what was natural, so that, as they had come into being from nonexistence, so also they might accordingly suffer in time the corruption consequent to their nonbeing. For if, having such a nature as not ever to exist, they were summoned to existence by the advent and mercy of the Word, it followed that because human beings were deprived of the understanding of God and had turned to things which do not exist—for what does not exist is evil, but what does exist is good since it has been created by the existent God—then they were also deprived of eternal existence. But this means that when they perished they would remain in death and corruption. For man is by nature mortal in that he was created from nothing. But because of his likeness to him who exists, if he had kept this through contemplating God, he would have blunted his natural corruption and would have remained incorruptible. (DI 4.17-29, pp. 142-44)

Death held greater sway and corruption stood firm against humanity; the race of human beings was being destroyed, and humanity which was rational and which had been made in the image was being obliterated; and the work created by God was perishing.¹²

It is in this context that Athanasius develops his teaching on the incarnation. The Word of God took a body like ours, a body liable to the corruption of death, and He went down into death. Following us, the Incarnate One (who is one of us) leaps into the bottomless darkness of corruption. He catches up to us, snatches us to Himself, arrests His own fall, turns—and moves back toward light and life, taking us with Him.¹³ So we come to what may be the best-known lines penned by this writer: "The Word became a human being that we might become divine; and he revealed himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and he endured insults from us that we might inherit incorruption."¹⁴

What we have here is the outline of a theological anthropology which rests on a particular understanding of the tight association between creation, incarnation, and salvation. The Word who assists in creation becomes incarnate to save us. This position assumes humans are made from nothing, in God's image, an image involving participation through rationality in the Word of God. In addition, human beings are destined (so long as they live in the image) for incorruptibility. Put positively, this means that humans are destined for that unending sharing in the divine life which is divinization. Within theological anthropology there are a range of remaining questions including those of the composition of the human person, the value of the flesh, the understanding of suffering, and the meaning and nature of sacramentality as it impinges on the understanding of the human person.

This sketch outlines the human journey from God—to God. It opens a case study in the history of theological anthropology. Students of spirituality will use the insights received from such work, but will look for further insight from any available indications of the experience of a life lived based on these assumptions. While Athanasius wrote no directly autobiographical piece, in his *Life of Antony*¹⁵ he presents the desert patriarch as a model of the monastic life. Extremely influ-

¹²DI 6.1-4, p. 146.

¹³He did this in loving-kindness in order that "as human beings had turned to corruption, he might turn them back again to incorruption and might give them life for death, in that he had made the body his own, and by the grace of the resurrection had rid them of death as straw is destroyed by fire" (DI 8.31-35, p. 152).

¹⁴DI 54.11-14, p. 268.

¹⁵*The Life of Antony in Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. and intro. by Robert C. Gregg, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1980) 29-99. See in the introduction especially: "Antony's Discipline: The Shape of Spirituality," 6-11. References are to this edition.

ential, the *Life* set the pattern for later Christian hagiography, a pattern which includes both a biographic structure and a set of recurring motifs. Chorpenning lists the motifs: "the saint as a devout youth, demonology, miracles, virtues, the themes of martyrdom, monasticism, prayer, poverty, almsgiving, and so on,"¹⁶ commenting that as the pattern later becomes normative the themes will evolve into commonplaces. Certainly the motifs occur in the *Life of Antony*, and the spirituality presented there offers strong parallels with the anthropology just described. One striking instance occurs when Athanasius describes Antony's return from the inner mountain. When the monk had spent twenty years in isolation and many wanted to imitate him, his friends came and forcibly tore down the door of his refuge. Athanasius tells us that "Antony came forth as though from some shrine." His body was neither fat nor emaciated, and his soul was serene, resting at a point of balance. He did the works of the Lord, healing, casting out demons, teaching, comforting, reconciling, and "urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world above the love of Christ." Many followed his example and took up the desert life. Even a cursory reading of the chapter¹⁷ suggests that Antony was transformed through his experience, becoming a Christ figure. A more careful reading indicates that Athanasius saw Antony as becoming divinized, and entering into the life of incorruptibility even here on earth. The student of spirituality will analyze the text more fully, and will complement study of this work with examination of the rest of the Athanasian corpus, including his correspondence. For example, the *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*¹⁸ advises on the appropriate use of particular Psalms in various life situations, while the *Letters to Serapion*¹⁹ illuminate the Athanasian understanding of sanctification. Here, as in the *Life of Antony*, adequate insight into the underlying spirituality depends on comprehension of the theological anthropology.

A full study of Athanasius's spirituality is a task for another time. The partnership between the two academic disciplines is evident. In the case of Athanasius the student of spirituality works from the *foundational disciplines*, utilizing primarily knowledge of the history of the period. She also works from a *problematic discipline*; to cope with the problem of unearthing evidence of experience sixteen centuries removed, she uses her skill in *rhetorical analysis*, looking behind the text for any evidence of its author's lived spirituality, and

¹⁶Joseph Chorpenning, "St. Teresa's Presentation of Her Religious Experience," *Carmelite Studies: Centenary of Saint Teresa* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1984) 170.

¹⁷*Life of Antony*, chap. 14, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸In *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, 101-29.

¹⁹*The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. and annotated by C. R. B. Shapland (London: Epworth Press, 1951) is the most convenient English translation. The *Sources chrétiennes* edition (*Athanase d'Alexandrie: Lettres à Sérapion sur la Divinité du Saint-Esprit*, trans. and intro. by Joseph Lebon [Paris: Cerf, 1946]) does not include a Greek edition.

looking before the text for any evidence of the lived spirituality of those to whom it is addressed. But always the student of spirituality works *with* the *partner discipline* of theology, most particularly theological anthropology. If we return to the metaphor of the dance, in the case of Athanasius theological anthropology appears to be the lead partner.

But is such a situation unexpected in a period when all theology was viewed in relationship to spirituality? A younger contemporary of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, asks what is to be made of the newly baptized whose postbaptismal life shows no change from its previous, sinful patterns. Gregory answers his own question thus:

If, when the bath has been applied to the body, the soul has not cleansed itself from the stains of its passions and affections, but the life after initiation keeps on a level with the uninitiate life, then, though it may be a bold thing to say, yet I will say it and will not shrink; in these cases the water is but water, for the gift of the Holy Spirit in no way appears in the one who is thus baptismally born.²⁰

Gregory's point is the importance of coherence between lived experience and sacramental theory, between spirituality and sacramental theology. Gregory's brother, Basil of Caesarea, quite agrees. He argues from the consequences of baptism to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, on the principle that only a Divine Being can divinize a human being and divinization—the putting off of the carnal life and the putting on of the spiritual life—is the evident consequence of baptism.²¹

One might object that this first case is slanted toward a positive relation between the two disciplines because the period from which it is taken favors such relation. The second case I have chosen is quite different. Mistrust of the experience with which spirituality is concerned and the gradual separation of spirituality from theology, with the further separation of theology into distinct subdisciplines: all this is a consequence of scholasticism run amok. By the time Teresa of Avila began her Godward adventure, not only had spirituality and theology parted company, but experience itself was suspect. Her situation offers a challenging second case: she was untrained in theology and at the same time unusually gifted in the practice of Christian spirituality. The very extraordinariness of her gifts served to heighten in her advisors their distrust of her experience. One result is that today her writings present valuable insight into the role

²⁰Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, chap. 40, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. and annotated by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (repr.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 5:508.

²¹*Basile de Césarée: Traité du Saint-Esprit*, trans., ed., intro., and annotated by B. Pruche (Paris: Cerf, 1945) makes available the Greek and French text of *De Spiritu Sancto*, where in chaps. 25-26 Basil discusses the consequences of baptism for Christian life and the implications for our understanding of the Holy Spirit.

of reflection on experience in the practice of Christian spirituality, while opening questions for exploration within the discipline of theological anthropology. First, I will review her own account of the situation with detailed attention to the part played by reflection on experience and the difficulty of obtaining validation from capable people, an exercise in the foundational discipline of history. Second, I will analyze the contribution that Teresa's reflection on her experience made to the history of spirituality. Third, I will point out the move from spirituality to theological anthropology which is required to complete an adequate study of Teresa's spirituality in this area.

Teresa's enduring regard for the work of theologians and preachers is evident in the opening of the *Way of Perfection*, where she urges her Sisters:

Let us strive to live in such a way that our prayers may be of avail to help these servants of God who, at the cost of so much toil, have fortified themselves with learning and virtuous living and have laboured to help the Lord.²²

She goes on to reflect at length on the importance of scholars' work for the Church and the need for holiness in the learned. Their task (our task!) is to teach, to strengthen people and give them courage.²³ A central work of Teresa's enclosed nuns is to pray for two intentions: first, "that there be many of these very learned and religious men who have the qualifications for their task...", and second, that in their work "the Lord may have them in His hand so that they may be delivered from all dangers."²⁴

Over time, Teresa had recognized how difficult it could be to find a truly learned confessor. She describes the problem:

I have always been attracted by learning, though confessors with only a little of it have done my soul great harm, and I have not always found men who had as much of it as I should have liked. I have discovered by experience that if they are virtuous and lead holy lives it is better they should have [no learning] at all than only a little; for then they do not trust themselves (nor would I myself trust them) unless they have first consulted those who are really learned; but a truly learned man has never led me astray.²⁵

There was good reason for her concern. As a young woman of about twenty she had entered the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila on November 2, 1535. During a period of illness following her profession the young religious

²²E. Allison Peers, *The Way of Perfection of St. Teresa of Avila* (New York: Doubleday, 1946) chap. 3, p. 46. Further references are to *Way* with chapter and page number.

²³See *Way* 3, pp. 46-47.

²⁴*Way* chap. 3, pp. 47-48.

²⁵E. Allison Peers, *The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila: The Life of Teresa of Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1944) chap. 5, p. 84. Further references will be to *Life* with chapter and page number following.

began the practice of mental prayer and enjoyed her first mystical experiences. She sought evaluation of the experiences because she was fully aware of the danger of delusion and rightly expected to be taught and helped by qualified guides. Unfortunately at the outset she had bad direction whose effects she felt for over seventeen years in which her prayer was reduced to struggle. Her account of those years echoes both Paul and Augustine. Teresa's version goes like this:

On the one hand, God was calling me. On the other, I was following the world. All the things of God gave me great pleasure, yet I was tied and bound to those of the world. It seemed as if I wanted to reconcile these two contradictory things, so completely opposed to one another—the life of the spirit and the pleasures and joys and pastimes of the senses.²⁶

Despite the tension of being drawn between two attractions over many years, in the end Teresa continued to try to pray. She remarks:

I know quite well that by that time it was no longer in my power to give up prayer, because He who desired me for His own in order to show me greater favours held me Himself in His hand.²⁷

After the fact she saw what the problem was:

I sought for a remedy, and took great trouble to find one, but I could not have realized that all our efforts are unavailing unless we completely give up having confidence in ourselves and fix it all upon God. I wanted to live, for I knew quite well that I was not living at all but battling with a shadow of death; but there was no one to give me life and I was unable to take it for myself. He Who could have given it me was right not to help me, since He had so often brought me back to Himself and I had as often left Him.²⁸

Her years of struggle taught Teresa the centrality of trust in God in spiritual growth. It was a lesson fully learned only by degrees.

As can be the case, the turning point, when it came, was unexpected. Teresa saw an image of the wounded Christ—and it moved her soul. In tears she asked Him "to give me strength once for all not to offend Him."²⁹ Reflecting on the event later, she saw its importance was "that I had quite lost trust in myself and was placing all my confidence in God."³⁰ Again, trust. Soon after Augustine's *Confessions* came her way, and, reading the scene in the garden, she heard the

²⁶*Life* chap. 7, p. 105. See the parallels in *Romans 7* and *Confessions* 8.5. Chorpenning applies his work on genre to both the *Life* and the *Interior Castle*, suggesting that Teresa intentionally used the genre of hagiography to structure her work; it is possible then that the parallelism here is intentional.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Life* chap. 8, p. 114.

²⁹*Life*, chap. 9, p. 115.

³⁰*Ibid.*

Lord speak to her in her heart. As strength grew in her she felt new love for God, but, as she remarks "I think I had not yet quite prepared myself to want to serve Him when His Majesty began to grant me favours again."³¹ The increase in extraordinary gifts woke in her a two-edged response. She was frightened because she was aware of recent well-known cases in which women had been deluded. Yet in prayer she had inward assurance that what was happening to her was of God. She continued to move between fear and trust until dread of offending God drove her to seek advice.³²

Thus begins what would be for Teresa a repeated search, leading in the first few years of her conversion to a pair of advisors who concluded she was indeed deluded by the devil. They referred her to a Jesuit confessor whom she describes as "a servant of God and a very prudent one, too."³³ He and then St. Francis Borgia both confirmed the work of the Spirit in her. Her Jesuit guides urged her to begin prayer from meditation on the Passion and then follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. As her experience began to include locutions and visions, once again Teresa was warned that her troubles came from the devil and her own imagination, but this time she pointed to her growth in strength and virtue, changes her confessor attested to.³⁴ She recognized that some of the difficulty her advisors had with her lay in their different experience, noting that "as God was not leading these persons by that way, they were afraid and thought that what I saw was the result of my sins."³⁵

In a number of ways Teresa's difficulties with confessors foreshadow the situation of many who seek direction today, people who, like Teresa, combine within themselves lively hunger for God and ignorance of academic theology. The director or spiritual companion's role is to listen with ears sensitized both to the Tradition and to the speaker, so as to enable the one seeking direction to recognize God's action in his life. A poorly trained director does not have access to the Tradition and is limited to her own experience. So Teresa's comment remains applicable: "as God was not leading these persons by that way, they were afraid and thought that what I saw was the result of my sins."

Mistaken advice remained a problem for most of Teresa's life. Some years after her second conversion the Franciscan St. Peter of Alcántara assured her once more that her prayer came from God, but suggested that for her greater security she should report doubts to her confessor. When she followed this advice she continued to be warned that the devil was deceiving her, and she continued to be tempted to believe it could be so. In her own opinion, God was leading her through alternating feelings of fear and trust:

³¹*Life*, chap. 9, p. 118.

³²See *Life*, chap. 23.

³³*Life*, chap. 23, p. 227.

³⁴*Life* chap. 25, p. 239, and chap. 28, p. 245.

³⁵*Life* chap. 28, p. 265.

In reality, none of my advisers was able to make me feel either afraid enough or secure enough to believe in him rather than in the feelings which the Lord implanted in my soul.³⁶

Clearly Teresa of Avila experienced a disjunction between her experience and the advice she received from her learned associates. Ultimately she learned to trust her experience as itself God-given.

Near the end of her life, while the desire on her part for recourse to advice remained present, the situation seems to have changed, probably for two reasons: first, because she had matured in her spiritual journey, and second, because she had developed the vocabulary to express her experience more clearly. Until now I have been making extensive use of material from her *Life*. The first draft of that work had been finished in June of 1562, about five or six years after her second conversion. Teresa completed the *Interior Castle* eighteen years later in 1580. Anyone who has submitted a manuscript for critique will relate to what happened next—in effect, an extended editorial consultation. Teresa, Gracían, and the Dominican theologian Diego Yanguas met for two months in the parlor of the Discalced Carmelite convent in Segovia and reviewed the manuscript, line by line. Gracían left only a terse account of the discussions, but from the evidence of the autograph there were very few changes, and none were of doctrinal significance.³⁷ A remarkable outcome!

An analysis of Teresa's life studied from this perspective yields these insights into the role played by reflection on experience in Christian spirituality. First, her perseverance in prolonged struggle as she felt herself drawn two ways led to her second conversion, but the struggle may have been neither so long nor so bitter had she received adequate guidance. Her experience was neither understood nor supported. Second, after her second conversion Teresa's experience alternated between fear and confidence. As she developed a pattern of contemplation with faithful return to meditation on the Passion of Christ, she also developed skill in assessing, on the one hand, the advice she was given and on the other hand, her own inner movements. As her contemporary, Ignatius of Loyola, made clear, good discernment of the movement of the Holy Spirit consults the alternation of inner movements. Teresa's experience is a solid confirmation of that Ignatian teaching, aided doubtless by her various Jesuit guides. Third, in the final phase of her life illustrated here by the editorial conference on the *Interior Castle*, Teresa continued to seek and value the opinion of others. It is extremely significant that she never adopted that brand of self-sufficiency which is rooted in arrogance. Her reliance on consultation is a

³⁶*Life* chap. 30, p. 279.

³⁷For analysis of the work of this extraordinary editorial committee see the introduction to *Interior Castle of St. Teresa of Avila* trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1944) 15-17.

thoroughly relational mode of proceeding. One might even see it as trinitarian, though I am not prepared to defend that insight here. In summary, through her insistence on the role of experience in the journey to God, Teresa validated that role at a time when experience was suspect, in particular mystical experience and most particularly mystical experience in women.

However, while Teresa was never trained as a theologian, she is, after all, a Doctor of the Church. A complete study of the material reviewed here requires exploration of at least four questions within the discipline of theological anthropology. First, Teresa repeatedly identifies herself as a sinner, a serious sinner. Is this to be understood as an historically conditioned commonplace, or is there theological content? How does she understand sin and forgiveness, and how do these understandings affect her spirituality? Second, mortification and suffering are recurring themes of hers. Again, what theological significance should be attached to them? Could the insights of social history shape theological understanding in this area? Does Teresa's own understanding of mortification and suffering change at all as she develops? How do her positions in this area affect her spirituality? Third, the related meanings of grace and trust need exploration. What did it mean for Teresa to say "I must completely give up confidence in myself and fix it all upon God"? Fourth, what theological assessment of the human person supports her understanding of union with God? In these areas, at least, comprehension of her spirituality will be helped by the support of the correlative discipline of theological anthropology. The one discipline opens into the other; spirituality is lead partner in the dance.

Very briefly, I turn now to the third and final case, which I will present more as a vignette. Currently the two disciplines, Christian spirituality and theological anthropology, have vital roles on the ecumenical stage. The core issue dividing Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Teresa's day was justification, an issue in theological anthropology. Today, as I suggested at the outset of this paper, Lutherans and Catholics alike are experiencing a rebirth in the spiritual quest. Paralleling that rebirth is the movement toward reunion. As we meet here today, member churches of the Lutheran World Federation are completing action taken on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. This proposed international statement, long in preparation, addresses mutual understandings on justification between the Roman Catholic Church and churches of the Lutheran tradition. The last large member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America last summer accepted the conclusion describing the consensus reached on the doctrine of justification. It also accepted that the condemnations in regard to justification in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the present teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. If all agree—and few remain to vote—the Lutheran World Federation will forward the agreement to the Vatican, which has

already solicited responses from the National Conferences of Catholic Bishops.³⁸ It is possible that relatively soon we will see the formal lifting of the mutual condemnations drawn up in the sixteenth century on the teaching of justification.

How has this come about? In the language of the document, "our common way of listening to the Word of God in Scripture has led to such new insights."³⁹ Common listening—not separate but joint—lies at the heart of what is happening, and a shift from confrontation to dialogue has supported the change. The very structure of the document, moves topic by topic from what we confess together through mutually acceptable understandings of that topic proper to each church. Such a structure models dialogical encounter. It is neither possible nor desirable to study even one section of the document here. I want only to highlight the parallel between its slow progress over many years to its present stage of growing affirmation and the gradual shift from "I don't know if I can study mysticism" to "Teach us about discernment of spirits." Changing spirituality and changing theological anthropology seem once again to be performing as partners, but the dance is at present unfinished, unlike this paper which is indeed drawing to a close.

Working as an historian who is also an historical theologian with a strong interest in Christian spirituality I have reviewed the problematic meaning of spirituality itself and its equally problematic relationship with theology. I have offered my own working definition of spirituality and one viable methodology. Because I think that two disciplines which focus on the human person as related to God have something to say to each other, I have offered three case studies in which theological anthropology and spirituality impinge on one another. In the case of Athanasius I illustrated how study of anthropology leads to questions in spirituality, while in Teresa's case study of an aspect of her spirituality leads to questions about her anthropology. In the third instance, the situation between Lutherans and Roman Catholics seems to evidence the continuing partnership of the two disciplines. These cases do not amount to proof of a position. Rather they shed light on a relationship viewed as a graceful partnership.

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³⁸Since this address was presented on June 14, the Lutheran World Federation has approved the document and on June 25 Cardinal Edw. Cassidy announced for the Vatican "that it will sign a joint declaration with the world's Lutherans affirming that Catholics and Lutherans share a basic understanding of how human beings receive God's forgiveness and salvation," "Press Conference Statement," *Origins* 28 (16 July 1998): 130. Movement toward the signing continues following an "Official Catholic Response to Joint Declaration," *Origins* 28 (16 July 1998): 130-32.

³⁹*Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 1997, #1.