

Christianity and Its Mystical Heritage: Philosophico-Hermeneutical Perspectives and Relationality to Spirituality

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At the close of the last century, scholars of religious studies, working in a secularized background, focused their attention on mystical phenomena and attempted to exhaust all empirical explanations particularly in the realm of psychology, sociology and even history. Likewise, monographs, focusing on a particular mystic or mystical tradition from the perspective of history, language (philology and literature) and interpretation of thought (mainly theology and philosophy), appeared. Studies on mysticism are countless, but the models of interpretation are quite few and usually repeat what has already been said or reduce their exposition to a particular mystic or to a particular author.

The present essay does not aim to replace said models, but only to call the attention of scholars and all people concerned to the dearth of such models and to propose some concrete paths towards the production of a comprehensive model of interpretation, taking into account the realities and challenges of this new millennium.

Initial Considerations of the Christian Tradition of Mysticism: Towards a New Evangelization

Given our historicity and limitations we necessarily focus on a particular vein of mysticism: the Christian tradition, without necessarily focusing our attention on any particular group or personage within this very rich tradition. The Christian tradition is a deep tradition; it is a tradition of radical and tremendous depth. It is a tradition that echoes the words, life and testimony of Jesus Christ and constantly invites us to put out in the deep: to live out fully the confession in the words, life and testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind within the Church He has founded and upon which He has poured forth His Spirit.

The Christian tradition has been responsible for the development of great intellectual traditions such as the patristic tradition, scholasticism (particularly Thomism with all its legitimate variants), personalism, certain trends of existentialism, and the like. But above all, the Christian tradition has brought about a way of life conscious of its roots and directions, a profound experiential context, a responsible response to the human questions in search of the breadth, depth and height of reality and self-fulfillment.

Christians need not look out of their faith and tradition – given the exodus of many Christians to the more trendy oriental traditions and their “New Age” proselytizing forms – for the answers of their queries that have wounded their inner beings.¹ They need

¹ It is worth taking into consideration in this light the following words: ‘Christianity’ is in the first place an Oriental religion, and it is a mystical religion. These assertions sound strange today, in an age when it is generally assumed that to be a Christian means to lead a good life. As for prayer, what does that amount to but a set of exercises which are both pointless and tedious? Nevertheless, whilst our consumer society has lost all feeling for mysticism, on the fringes there are thousands of people thirsting for it. When we see the shallow syncretism, the sentimental fascination with anything Eastern, and the bogus ‘gurus’ crowding round for the pickings, it is easy to sneer. But instead of laughing, the churches ought to be examining their consciences. Whose fault is it that so many have to resort to Tao or Zen in order to rediscover truths which were actually part of the Christian heritage right from the beginning? Who has hidden from the fact that of all Oriental religions Christianity is best and most complete; that mysticism is as necessary to humanity as science, if not more so? Intellec-

not stray from the path who is Jesus Christ Himself, "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6).² They need not wander of in search of the absent one. For He is present among us. 'I am with you always...' (Mt. 28:20) God, the most transcendental and immanent, the most profound answer to our questions is alive in the Christian tradition. 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here...' (Lk. 24:5) He is alive. He is 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit...' (Mt. 18:19)

The basic awareness or intellectual cognizance that God is 'alive' or is truly present and active in our history is necessary in order to be a Christian. A person can be a Christian without fully understanding or analyzing the total implications of such a presence or without undertaking any scientific or systematic study of his faith. However, from such an awareness, we can grow into better Christians. Such awareness, in other words, is a point of departure in order to enrich our basic notion of Christianity. It also serves to introduce us to the very essence of Christianity bereft of pretensions of exhaustingly studying it in all its richness and history. That is not the purpose of such an awareness. Its true aim is to provide certain fundamental principles of interpretation. In other words, the purpose is hermeneutical. With no pretensions of giving a full-blown interpretation, it at least

tual research may be exciting, but it will not lead us to the secret of life. Nor will the truth be found through consumerism, though of course we must eat. Nor will it be found through action, although action is inevitable if we are to restrain our tendency to exploit one another. The researcher, the consumer, the politician are merely the avatars of a much deeper human nature. Intellectual knowledge, possession, action, all express a desire which transcends them. The human being is a craftsman – *faber* – and rational – *sapens* – qualities which we share with the higher animals (the difference between us being one of degree and not of kind), but more importantly than that, we are mystical. In other words, our roots are in fact religious and artistic, and therefore non-rational, or rather supra-rational. As soon as our material needs are satisfied, deeper needs assert themselves." J-C Barreau, Preface to O. Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism. Texts and Commentary*, transl. T. Berkeley & J. Hummerstone, London: New City Press, 1995, 7.

² All Scriptural quotations are taken from this translation: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha. An Ecumenical Study Bible. Completely Revised and Enlarged. New Revised Standard Version*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

presents a central perspective from which the whole gamut of Christianity can be viewed, interpreted and understood.

We are interested in the totality of the Christian life in its finitude and culpability – given its call towards infinitude made concrete in terms of participation within the context of union and communion with God – without necessarily entering into its minute details. Our interest in the totality of the Christian life becomes concrete in presenting and proposing a particular central viewpoint from which we can proceed on our own into our explorations into the minute details of Christian living. However, we cannot prescind from understanding Christianity as a relationship between the Absolute, which we call God, and man. This relationship, especially from a biblical viewpoint, is understood as a covenant, an alliance. It is understood in terms of faithfulness that brings about union, communication, mutual possibility of a living relationship within the interior or in profundity in an exchange of knowledge, fidelity and love.³

In this light, the experience and testimony of exemplary Christians, known as mystics or saints⁴, are important. It is not that those who are officially canonized or recognized by means of doctorates, accolades and the like as mystics or doctors are the only available or legitimate guides. To be a Christian means to be in the communion of the saints. We are all saints, despite our personal characters, lifestyles and limitations, because we all tend and desire to be holy, to be one with the Mystery as a people, as a community redeemed and called to share fully in the fountainhead of all holiness and sanctity.

In other words, we are essentially a mystical community, a saintly community. To be a saint is to be a mystic and vice-versa. However, to be a Christian is to tend to be a saint, to be a mystic. The mystical life is the very root of our Christian faith, living

³ H.U. Von Balthasar, *Theologie und Spiritualität*, in: *Gregorianum* 50 (1969), 571. See also the suggestive essay of C. Izquierdo, "La teología, intellectus et affectus fidei," in: *Ciencia Tomista* 86 (1995), 307-327.

⁴ On the authority of the saints in theology, I find the monograph of W. Thompson truly suggestive, *Fire & Light. The Saints and Theology*, New York-Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987.

and identity. We are essentially a saintly, a mystical people. We are the mystical body of Christ. We are the saints as the Apostles called the brethren in their days. Thus, we are called to give experience and testimony to our brethren. We are obliged by love to experience and testify. A Christian has always been a saint and a mystic. Unfortunately, he was not always conscious of this in the long periods of history for fear of misunderstanding certain esoteric implications or due to the clericalization of the Church in times past or given the lack of sufficient intelligence then to appreciate profoundly the fullness of Christian existence and living.

Experience and Mystery: The Challenge of Communication and Initiation Towards a New Evangelization

Christian mysticism can only be comprehended not only in terms of undergoing the dynamic process and ascetical stages towards union in a singular movement (experience), but also necessarily demands the communication of such a process with the aim of initiating (testimony). Mysticism is perfected in mystagogy, in the initiation of others by means of communicating the mystery. Communication does not only mean writing or speaking. It above all means solidarity, accompaniment, fraternity.

To communicate with the aim of initiating constitute a genuine introduction. An introduction is necessarily mystagogical. In this work, we will allude to this mystagogical nature without effectively being mystagogical. Rather, our introduction in this work will be of another level: intellectual given that the whole range of our presentation will be hermeneutical conceptualizations and reflections with reference to what is existentially mystagogical.

The concepts of *Experience* and *Testimony* provide us with the necessary coordinates to chart our study. Experience is the root, the fountainhead of all Christian living and spirituality with the mystics as privileged witnesses. In other words, their teaching, their writing provide us with incomparable testimony on the experience. A sustained reflection on these two concepts would doubtless bring about the clarification of a point of view that is fundamental in relation to other hermeneutical approaches to the various questions of Christian mysticism. However, a thorough study is beyond the limits of this essay. For the moment, it is

enough to take them as points of departure. In fact, what we are after is the establishment of firm points of departure with the aim of enabling ourselves to pose the question 'What is a Christian and how can we understand Christian living today with intellectual and spiritual honesty?' Furthermore, at the same time, it is imperative, within our present context, to be able to set directions and to lay grounds for answering this query.

Consequently, it is necessary to rediscover, within our milieu, what Christian mysticism really is by establishing transcendental hermeneutical principles, that without losing their transcendence by making encyclopedic attempts, but by honestly presenting the perspective, the viewpoint, the prism through which we can honestly find answers to our questions. The responses to the questions cannot exhaust all possibilities. Exhaustion necessarily involves a definitive or dogmatic posture which could annul all inspiration for further quests and which could outdate Christianity and enclose it within a specific era.

Christianity is not outdated. However, some dominant paradigms or models of comprehending it are truly outdated. Christianity needs to find ways to make itself relevant to the contemporary question. However, this is only possible if Christianity is in touch with its very essence, with its very hidden wealth and treasures that no contingent or temporal paradigms or models could alter in spite of its pretensions for epistemological or institutional dominance. This would entail a new mentality, a new level of praxis that would define a new epistemological perspective. Evangelization is the great horizon of praxis of Christianity.

In this light, doubtless, Christianity stands in need of a new or rather renewed evangelization, based on dialogue, based on comprehending and sympathy with the thirst of man for the Absolute, based on a continued and unending quest aware that contingent responses can and must always be improved upon, but with the assurance of a perennial perspective that does not exhaust nor limit but inspires for further explorations.

The new evangelization is fruit of such a perennial perspective that does not exhaust nor limit. In fact, it is a contingent response that must be improved upon. Nevertheless, it works within the right perspective, with the right focus, with the right direction.

This new evangelization is based on something ancient and yet ever new: the novelty of Christ, of the God who became Man who revealed that the One and True God is not a solitary God, but a God who is a Family, a Community who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Christ, this God walks with humanity in the history of salvation and establishes a family, a community which is the Church, who is called to live according to the ideals set by Christ, which is the new world order of Christ that would transform the world into the family and kingdom of God. Christ as a novelty within salvation history or within the narrative of the human search for the absolute stems from the conviction 'that the Christ-event has significance, has 'meaning' for the whole of history and that it is a constituent part of the history of salvation for all time.'⁵

As such the new evangelization must open new paths, must reveal new perspectives, must bring about new themes such as the necessity of living a life according to the theological⁶ virtues within varying contexts, the church and its relation to the kingdom amidst new social and political questions and issues, man in

⁵ K. Rahner, "Profane History and Salvation History," in: Id. *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XXI, transl. H.M. Riley, New York: Crossroad: 1998, 12.

⁶ Admittedly, 'theological' is a neologism in English. My use of "theological" has special reasons. What is "theological" is what comes from God or the movement from God to man. In theology, God is the great revealer. Hence, the principle of all theology is the self-revelation of God (Rahner), which is the act of God allowing Himself to be experienced. When we speak of "theological" activity, it means that we are referring to any activity that parts from God's act of self-revelation and how we participate, specifically as theologians, in God's self-revelation by means of our efforts to understand, clarify, analyze, study, apply and assimilate what God has revealed. "Theological", on the other hand, refers to any movement from man towards God. In this light, upon speaking of the three virtues of faith, hope and charity it is more appropriate to label them as "theological." The term underscores man's efforts, within the context of grace, to reach God, to view all things from the privileged perspective of the participation in God's life. The "theological" presupposes the "theological." Without the latter, the former would not exist. However, the "theological" as a human concept encompasses the "theological", since the latter is the root, main ingredient, starting point. Likewise, 'the theological' is a category that refers to the religious question, since it expresses the very essence of man's religious aspirations parting from God's initiative to draw mankind to Himself by the experiential act of self-revelation.

this technologically driven world and his Christian values, the unfavorable ambiance for Christian living and spirituality in this secularized world, the importance of a sustained anthropological viewpoint and methodology in order to understand the relationship between man and the world together with its theological (or theological orientation) and christological criteriology, itineraries of contemporary man towards God, mystagogy as apostolate and its pastoral derivatives, spiritual formation together with the traditional philosophical and theological formation, mystagogy in spiritual direction and accompaniment and the challenge of an ever-growing human solitude, psychological challenges to the notion of maturity, etc. All in all the question raised from the standpoint of the theological virtues is the very issue of Christian existence 'founded in Christ, in God revealed in Christ (faith), oriented towards the future plenitude (hope) and acting and shared in the present within human communion and in love for Christ (charity).'⁷

The aforementioned are all Christian concerns that the new evangelization seeks to address. The particular responses are contingent. But the perspective is perennial. The perspective is geared towards the fountainhead, towards the mysterious origin (or the origin as Mystery) as a spring not only for inspiration, but for continued strength not only for oneself but also for others. This, in effect, is what Christian mysticism is all about. The mystery is revealed in Christ, in the life of Christ whose episodes become the mysteries or the diversification of the same Mystery in various moments, diverse shades, vivid contexts as narrated evangelically.

But mystery – Rahner tells us – is not to be identified with a statement which is senseless and unintelligible for us. If, moreover, the horizon of human existence which grounds and encompasses all human knowledge is a mystery, and it is, then man has a positive affinity, given at least with grace, to those Christian mysteries which constitute the basic content of faith. Besides, these mysteries do not consist in a rather large number of individual propositions which are unfortunately unintelligible. The only

⁷ J. Alfaro, *Existencia cristiana*, Rome: Ed. Polygraphata, 1974, 8. Translation mine.

really absolute mysteries are the self-communication of God in the depths of existence, called grace, and in history, called Jesus Christ, and this already includes the mystery of the Trinity in the economy of salvation and of the immanent Trinity. And this one mystery can be brought close to man if he understands himself as oriented towards the mystery which we call God.

Hence there is really only one question, whether this God wanted to be merely the eternally distant one, or whether beyond that he wanted to be the innermost center of our existence in free grace and in self-communication. But our whole existence, borne by this question, calls for the affirmation of this second possibility as actually realized. It calls out to his mystery, which remains a mystery. But it is not so distant from this mystery that this mystery is nothing but a *sacrificium intellectus*.⁸

Spirituality and Mysticism: Relationships and Contextualities

Mysticism, which is not just a current or just one of the traditions within Christianity, but is the very hidden essence, the very profound dimension of Christianity in itself, is a call for us to rediscover what Christianity really is. As the every essence of Christianity, it signifies the very life of Christianity in as much as it is intimately connected with the Μυστεῖον, or the very mystery or the very fountainhead of Christian living.

Mysticism in its very origins, from the word μύω means to close one's eyes and mouth before the very mystery. To close one's mouth implies keeping the very secret or avoiding the divulgation, in other words, the very trivialization of the transcendent mystery. To close one's eyes is to turn away from a superficial way of living characterized by distance from the transcendent mystery and to open one's eyes or vision to a new way of living, of seeing things: all from the viewpoint of the intimacy of the transcendental mystery. Mysticism is in effect, within Christianity, living closely to the very profound and transcendental depths of Christian

⁸ K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, transl. W. Dych, New York: Crossroad, 1994, 12.

living consisting of the very life of the One and Triune God in its indwelling in man.⁹

A rediscovery of mysticism is needed for such a new evangelization. This new evangelization must have a firm criteriological basis: the depth of Christian life in as much as it is lived. That is why mysticism should be understood within the context of spirituality. The rediscovery of mysticism necessarily entails a rediscovery of spirituality and its role. Likewise, spirituality, in itself, must always point to mysticism not just its goal or full realization, but its point of departure that underlies every phase, every step, every level of its realization, of its existential execution, of its historical development.

Without spirituality, mysticism would be reduced to its extraordinary phenomena, to the esoteric elements that have fascinated New Age man, to the superficial promises diluted in magic, the occult and other distortions. Spirituality is the very dynamic of Christian life in as much as it is lived, in as much as it qualifies human experience in a theological manner deeply rooted in Christ, empowered by the Spirit and journeying towards the Father. The mystics are the best witnesses and authorities on this matter. Our Christian mystics, by their very lives and teaching, not only constitute the best existential commentary to our Scriptures nor do they only provide the best confirmation and best ways of enlightening us on the teachings or doctrines of our faith, but they reveal to us the very soul of our Christian faith from which this very soul can grow and mature into the very spirit, the very mani-

⁹ Cf. W. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, London: Methuen, 1899; Id., *Mysticism in Religion*, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1948; Several Authors, "Mystik" *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. XXIII, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994; H. de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum*, Paris: Aubier, 1949; Id., *Exegèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, Paris: Aubier, 1959, Vol. IV, 396-408; P. Sainz Rodríguez, *Espiritualidad española*, Madrid: Rialp, 1961; L. Bouyer, "Mystique; Essai sur l'histoire d'un mot", in: *Supplément à la vie spirituelle* 3 (1949), 3-23; M. de Certeau, *Mystique*, in: Several Authors, *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 11, 522; R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism. Sacred and Profane. An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957; F.C. Hoppold, *Mysticism. A Study and an Anthology*, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970; L. Dupré, "Mysticism", M. Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. IX, New York: Macmillan, 1987, 245-261; S. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

festation, the very historical process of our Christian faith within the categories of space and time. The call of Christ to His fishermen apostles: *Duc in Altum!* Is a call to rediscover this very soul. It is a call to discover the basis of the following of Christ.

Spirituality without mysticism is pure superficiality. Mysticism provides spirituality with its rootedness in the Mystery and its transcendental direction. Mysticism is not just the aim of spirituality, as if it were separated from spirituality in terms of being an extraordinary goal. This view is tantamount to reduce mysticism to its extraordinary manifestations. Mysticism is the very life of spirituality. It is the very root, the very power, the very essence that makes human existence into a Christian way of living. It qualifies the natural life of man in a theological and supernatural dynamic process of life and love.

Mysticism makes spirituality a serious matter, because it is rootedness in the Mystery and transcendence towards union and communion towards the mystery. It involves commitment, the commitment to live according to the Mystery, in a dynamic process which is in itself a calling from above that is heard within or within one's depths. Spirituality makes mysticism deeply rooted in its profound essentials of living out the will of God and projected towards participating in the divine life-especially amidst tendencies of phenomenically trivializing the Mystery in itself, while mysticism gives spirituality its depth, its direction, its dynamism, its very purpose of being. Mutually, spirituality and mysticism provide depth and transcendence to one another. Spirituality gives mysticism a vital and dynamic depth and transcendence making mysticism truly a life process not separated from the human history of salvation, whereas mysticism provides spirituality with its essential depth and transcendence thus opening the horizon of plenitude, fulfillment at the same time giving spirituality a firm source, a strong power base for being and realizing itself not in terms of the Greek being as being (as emanation of the parminedean One or $\eta\upsilon$ or the dynamic flux of Heraclitus or the Plotinian processions), but in terms of being as created, of reality as being mediated by God's experience wherein there is a formidable yet loving distinction and relationship between Cause and effect, between Creator and effect; wherein there is space for freedom, for liberty of realizing oneself, for participation, for taking part,

which in turn presupposes a generous and loving sharing movement of grace from above which marks the movement from the Infinite to the finite (and culpable.)

In this light, spirituality makes mysticism a serious matter, saving it from trivialization and esoteric abuse. Likewise, mysticism makes spirituality a serious matter, saving it from existential inertia and inactivity and lack of direction and purpose.

Christianity as a Commitment in the Light of Spirituality and Mysticism

Christianity is a serious matter. It necessarily involves a serious decision that must avoid trivialization, inactivity and directionlessness and purposelessness at all costs. It is in itself a call to a serious and lifelong commitment. No one is just a Christian. More than this, he is becoming a Christian. To become a Christian means to be committed to the dynamics of spirituality. The goal of being a Christian presupposes the root of the Christian calling in the Mystery and is commitment to answer the calling of the Mystery, with a profound examination involving one's whole being, within the immanence of history, in a transcendental move. Being a Christian is an everyday question. It is a question that cannot be answered once and for all. It calls for serious renewal. A Christian cannot afford not to be serious about his faith and his commitment. That is why I find a serious study of the Christian mystics necessary for the Christian of today. The Christian can no longer just be passive and ignorant or just leave all the speculations to his pastors, theologians, philosophers and other scholars. The Christian of today, serious in his faith, must be a thinking Christian. He must be in search for answers. He must continuously and unceasingly ask questions, demand replies, scrutinize matters, plunge himself into the depths of his very own queries and the great mysteries he has to live with as a Christian.

A Christian must be convinced of the cause of Christianity and must act from this belief in his world. The great Christian mystics are the best models we can offer. Instead of providing with a biographical sketch or anthology with the corresponding introductions, commentaries and studies of these great men and women, this book seeks to introduce the reader to the experience

that these men and women had of their faith, of the dynamic principles of how they lived Christianity. This work is only an introduction. The question of being truly a Christian is a question that only each individual can answer. The Church, the *ecclesia*, the assembly gathered in the Name of the Lord only provides the concrete and historical setting, characterized by deep communion and commitment, for the definitive and responsible existential response of each individual, of each member. After all, one's conscience is the ultimate norm of morality and authenticity in being a Christian.

In this case, codes, cults and creeds (the three essential elements of any religious confession) are just aids and echoes of the Church; they are the somehow necessary support systems that are available in the name of communion. The mystics did not leave us with definitive answers, but they showed us the proper and valid ways of trying to answer this existential call. There are many great introductions to the Christian mystics. But I am convinced that not many have tried to introduce the defined and still existentially definable essence of being a Christian through the Christian mystics. This is the challenge for us today. In the present essay, I wish to lay some basic hermeneutical principles in validly understanding mysticism from a genuinely Christian perspective in the light of the present-day situation with regards to experience, particularly religious experience. Such hermeneutical principles are helpful in confronting the historical situation of today in Christian living and spirituality.

The German philosophers of communication¹⁰ all agree that the degree of communitarian consensus somehow determines the truth of something. If this is true, it is then our fervent hope that the readers interested in Christian spirituality and mysticism would give me their approval. In the same vein, it is our wish that they would be led to ask further as to the proper settings and presuppositions. The Christians of today are called to accompany their fellow Christians along the path and to share with them how

¹⁰ Within the context of the critique of modernity, see: J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of modernity. Twelve Lectures*, transl. F.G. Lawrence, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.

much they understood and assimilated, as vibrant members of the Church, Christianity. This in effect is what the great mystics did in their lifetimes and what they continue to do through their writings, their teachings. For those who are not Christians at all or who may be what Rahner called "Anonymous Christians"¹¹ (for they too are Christians in spirit, in fact, many Buddhists to me are more "Christians" than some of us baptized Christians), this work is my way of initiating dialogue with you and perhaps with your help we can rediscover together your own traditions and even the hidden essences of my (our) very own Christian tradition, which is truly for everybody.

¹¹ See K. Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," Id., *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 6, Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969, 390-398; Id., "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church", Id., *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 11, New York: Seabury, 1974, 161-178; Id., "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christians'", Id., *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 14, New York: Seabury, 1976, 280-294; Id., "On the Importance of Non-Christian Religions for Salvation," Id., *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 18, New York: Crossroad, 1983, 288-295. Also see the interesting article of J. Ratzinger, originally written on the occasion of K. Rahner's sixtieth birthday in 1964 and updated in 1997: "Einheit und Vielfalt der Religionen. Der Ort des christlichen Glaubens in der Religionsgeschichte," Id., *Glaube, Wahrheit, Toleranz. Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 2003, 14-37.

However, a word of caution is in order with regards to this expression of Rahner. It runs the risk of being the expression of a superiority complex of Christians when confronted by men of goodwill from other faiths and traditions. The following words of H. Küng are worth taking into consideration on this regard: 'What looks like tolerance proves in practice to be a kind of conquest by embracing, a co-optation by admission of validity, an integration through relativization and loss of identity.'

A variety of this inclusivism can be found – paradoxical as that may sound – in *Christianity* too Karl Rahner's theory of the 'anonymous Christian' is in the final analysis still dependent on a (Christian) *standpoint of superiority* that sets up one's own religion as the a priori true one. For, according to Rahner's theory, which attempts to solve the dilemma of the "Outside the Church" dogma, all the Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists are saved not because they are Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, but because in the final analysis they are Christians, 'anonymous Christians,' to be precise. The embrace here is no less subtle than in Hinduism. The will of those who are after all not Christians and do not want to be Christians, is not respected by interpreted in accordance with the Christian theologian's interest. But around the world one will never find a serious Jew or Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, who does not feel the arrogance of the claim that he or she is 'anonymous' and, what is more, an 'anonymous

This does not entail that we all become “instant mystics,” especially in terms of extraordinary experiences, phenomena and the like. But it is important to note that mysticism underscores the very essence of Christianity. From the beginning, all Christians have been immersed in the life of the Spirit, into the very root of the Mystery of the Indwelling of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The very essence of Christian living or of the Life of the Spirit is to live consciously and constantly this very immersion, growing in the Life of the Spirit as spirit tending towards God by means of a Christian life, incarnated especially in Faith, Hope and Charity (the theological virtues) in perfection. In the same vein, we are called to put phenomena, signs and the like in the right place. They are only accidental in Christian mysticism. They do not constitute the essence of Christian mysticism. They only embellish, enhance, highlight the reality of the experience of the Mystery and most reports of such signs and wonders are mainly hagiographical in character, not historical or strictly biographical. This is due to the prevailing mentality and worldview in the construction of the narrative of the mystic or saint's life.

Likewise, it is a call for Christians to really think, to really take Christianity seriously and to see for themselves that mystics were not extraordinary persons, in spite of the phenomena they experienced, but were ordinary Christians serious in living their faith and making others experience the breadth and depth and height of the same. There are many Christians “by name only” in this world. These people may not find what is written here interesting, but perhaps curious. This work is also for them hoping that their curiosity would spark in them the interest in seriously pursuing their faith. And faith has to be pursued intelligently. The medieval scholastic axioms based on St. Anselm: *Fides quaerens intellectum* and *Credo ut intelligam* are still valid and meaningful

Christian.’ Quite apart from the utterly perverse use of the word ‘anonymous’ – as if all these people did not know what they themselves were – this sort of speculative pocketing of one’s conversation partner brings dialogue to an end before it has even gotten under way. We must not forget that followers of other religions are to be respected as such, and not to be subsumed in a Christian theology.’ *Theology for the Third Millennium. An Ecumenical View*, P. Heinegg, trans., New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland: Doubleday, 1988, 236.

to this day.¹² The mystics are witnesses to an intelligent pursuit of faith. They made use of reason and acknowledged the limit of reason by realizing that faith cannot be conquered by rational exploits, but rather all rational exploits should be conquered by faith, which is openness of one's whole being to the mystery in terms of abandon and confidence. The witness of the mystics draws from the wealth of experience and is communicated to us as a testimony of salvation.

In this light, we must develop this introduction to Christianity. Ours is not an encyclopedic introduction in thematic terms. Ours is more of a hermeneutical venture, i.e., with the aim of presenting and highlighting the fundamentals of Christian mysticism or the Christian mystical experience, again bereft of phenomenological precision and detailed discussion (especially of phenomena and events) as principal perspective from which the whole gamut of Christian living can be understood as a struggle to transform existence into life, from being there (*dasein*)¹³ to being there for someone, with a purpose, with meaning. And this purpose and meaning is Christ as contextualized within His community, within His mystical body of saints and sinners (or sinners wanting to be saints in their own lives), of mystics, though bereft of extraordinary signs, are living signs of a committed discipleship and whose experience and testimony constitute an effective apostolate.

¹² Cf. B. Davies & G. Evans (eds.), *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. In relation to this question, it is important to understand the medieval milieu, see: E. Bréhier, *The Middle Ages and The Renaissance*, transl. W. Baskin (London-Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1936); G. Leff, *Medieval Thought* (Middlesex-Maryland-Victoria: Penguin Books, 1958). From an augustinian viewpoint, see my essay: "Ad Unum Deo Tendentes: Conversion and the Path of Augustine's Ascent to God," *Search* 13 (2003), 197-220.

¹³ Cf. above all: M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. J. Stambaugh, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996. See the following authoritative studies for a clarification of the heideggerian notion of 'dasein' in this work: H.L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the World. A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, Division I, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991; C.B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; M. Inwood, *Heidegger*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Such an apostolate can only take place in concrete situations, in definite milieus, in specific circumstances which constitute a living narrative, a true testimony of experience or a manifestation of experience in its testimonial narrative.

Experience and the Mystical Dimension of Human Experience: The Great Christian Narrative of the God-Man

History¹⁴ is nothing more than the experiential narrative of which man is the protagonist (mover), hero (goal) and recorder (author, writer). History is not just a process of what takes place, but is also the narrative wherein this taking place becomes a mediation in terms of experience. Mediation is becoming real in reality. It is also reality becoming real. Its narrative signifies not what takes place, but the taking place in itself ontologically captured as becoming developing towards being. In its plenitude,

¹⁴ I have taken into account the following reflections: R. Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l' Histoire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1981; N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, New York: Meridian Books, 1962; H. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, Paris: P.U.F., 1961, Id., *L'évolution créatrice*, Paris: P.U.F., 1959; E. Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt. Erläuterungen zu Hegel*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972; R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970; E. Colomer, *Hombre e historia*, Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1963; O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950; J. Danielou, *The Lord of History*, London: Longmans, 1958; A.C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968; C. Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History*, New York: Omega book, 1962; W. Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning In History*, New York: Harper and Row, 1962; M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1959; P. Gardiner (ed.), *Theories of History*, London: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1959; G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, New York: Dover Publications, 1956; I. Kant, *On History*, Indianapolis: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1977; K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949; H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, London: The Penguin Press, 1969; J. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, London: Bless, 1959; A. Millán Puellés, *Ontología de la existencia histórica*, Madrid: Rialp, 1955; K. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964; E. Rivera de Ventosa, *Presupuestos filosóficos de la teología de la historia*, Zamora: Ediciones Monte Casino, 1975; O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961; A. Toynbee, *A Study of History, Vols. I and II*, New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1957; H. Urs Von Balthasar, *Theology of History*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963; G. Vico, *The New Science*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

mediation is realization not in the sense of consciousness, but in the process of the real in becoming reality and reality in becoming real.

A Christian necessarily views his history as the great narrative of God entering into human experience. This history takes place in the world. The world, thus, becomes, man's companion in this great narrative in as much as man, because he is the searcher, the protagonist of this history. The Christian believes that in this search it is God who takes the initiative to meet man. The fullness of this meeting or encounter was Jesus Christ, the God-Man. This meeting has had a salvific and liberating effect which has led many Christians, in the desire to authentically live out their confession authentically amidst the circumstantial and historical challenge, to adopt a critical posture before many of the institutions, including the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the incarnation of positivistic and institutionalized Christianity removed from its essentials.

In light of this, many reforms were initiated and organized by charismatic men and women who drew on their experience, the radicality and intensity of their encounter with God as men and women in spite of the defects or shortcomings of the institution. Their life-testimony has highlighted God's entering into human experience. Through them the transcendental God has tangibly intervened in the course of human history, whose "definitive meaning... is hidden in God and the loving recognition of this incomprehensibility is the supreme act of history, which can and must come forth in it if history is to find its consummation."¹⁵

¹⁵ K. Rahner, "Profane History and Salvation History," Id., *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XXI, transl. H. M. Riley, New York: Crossroad, 1988, 9. The entire two paragraphs on this regard are worth citing in this footnote in order to contextualize the fragment we have placed in the main body of the present work: "If we are convinced that God, the Lord of history, is a God of eternal meaning and love, then history must ultimately be something more than a chaotic confusion compounded of senselessness, absurdities, and meanness. It cannot really be that only a few fragments of finite meaning are being tossed about in the churning sea of meaninglessness which are sufficient to satisfy us in the banality of our everyday life without our really knowing where they are coming from or why this sea does not in the end swallow them up. The bravely hopeful song of praise to the meaning of history must not pass this over in silence either. The actual completion of the personal history of freedom takes place only in the

God's entering into human experience is God making Himself experientiable to man. He becomes man's experience: not just a mere object of experience, but the very experience since man, in all actuality, man is God becoming experientiable. Man himself is God's experience.

In other words, man is the experientiable mode of being God.¹⁶ This thesis, aside from postulating that man was created in God's image and therefore capable of an intimate, interpersonal relationship with God in terms of communion and intimacy, presupposes the fact that experience is proper to finitude: particularly, rational. Because it is rational, this finitude is culpable.¹⁷ Thus, in man God becomes experientiable, God has an experience culmi-

unconditional, loving acceptance of God as he is. Only through this does the ultimate meaning of history arise. According to the teaching of Christianity, however, this God is the eternal God who cannot be encompassed, the one who is incomprehensible in his essence and in his freedom, and this incomprehensibility will only yield itself to knowledge when knowledge is dissolved in love. The ultimate meaning of history will only be brought about and attained when God in his grace grants it to free, finite subjects to abandon themselves in love in the incomprehensibility of God without the will to return once again to the false autonomy of themselves. One can only bring about and come into possession of the meaning of one's own existence when the quest for an autonomous meaning to be possessed and enjoyed for oneself is forgotten in one's love for God who is loved for himself even in his incomprehensibility.

If Christians possess a hopeful universal optimism that history will reach a meaningful completion and if at the same time they know that this will only be possible when all in this completion abandon themselves in love, then the question necessarily arises in their mind, when they see on all sides the frightful pervasiveness of human egoism, as to how this is going to be possible. One might apply here a variation of a saying of Jesus that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a human being to enter the kingdom of heaven. But with Jesus one can also say that what is impossible for human beings is possible for God. (Lk. 18:24ff.) Here of course the theologian can reflect on how this possibility on God's part can be realized through the freedom of human beings, on how somewhere, despite all empirical evidence to the contrary, the evil human heart can attain the one good of the love of God.", Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁶ From a philosophical perspective, I am in debt to X. Zubiri, *El hombre y Dios*, Madrid: Alianza, 1988. See my study: "La experienciabilidad de Dios en el mundo hombre como modo finito de ser Dios," in: *Philippiniana Sacra* 36 (2001), 103-125.

¹⁷ Cfr. P. Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, Paris: Aubier, 1960.

nating in Jesus Christ. This thesis, on the other hand, underlies man's divine vocation: to participate, to take part (only to take part and not the whole) in the Divine Life. This is possible because in a sense God became man, God took part in man's nature. God only took part for He became man in Jesus Christ except in terms of culpability or sin. This sets man apart from the rest of creation. His is a finitude that is culpable or consciously sinful and hence, consciously in need of salvation, consciously in need of God's intervention in the very structure of human existence in order to save it and make it participate in the very essence of the divine life occupying, at the same, a distinguished place before the rest of creation.¹⁸

The following paragraph from Karl Rahner must be understood within this perspective we have just expounded on briefly:

Man is a mystery. He is more than this. He is *the* mystery, not only because he is open to the mystery of the incomprehensible fullness of God, but also because God has expressed this mystery as his own. Assuming that God wanted to express himself in the empty void and that he wanted to call his Word into that void, how could he do anything other

¹⁸ "1. Created in God's image, human beings are able to relate to God, to enter a relationship of interpersonal communion and intimacy. This is not just an incidental feature of human nature: relation to God enters essentially into the structure of human existence; it is a condition of life and death. In vital relationship to God human beings flourish; when the relationship breaks down, they wither and die.

2. Being in God's image also means relationship to the rest of creation. Before the gates of cities in the ancient world it was customary to erect an image or statue of the ruler. The image let all travelers entering the city know that they were coming under this ruler's writ and law. The motif in Gen 1:26-28 of human beings created in God's likeness reflects this practice. Human beings image the Creator before the rest of creation. They are viceroys, as it were, exercising dominion in the Creator's name. The dominion is not one of selfish exploitation. The aim is to further the goodness, order and development of the world, to bring it to full achievement of its goal through respect for the sovereignty of God.

This is the biblical vision emerging out of Genesis 1. It suggests that the way human beings relate to the world and accept responsibility for it, enters essentially into their relationship with God.", B. Byrne, *Inheriting the Earth. The Pauline Basis of a Spirituality for our Time*, Homebush: St. Paul Publications, 1990, 17.

than create in man an inner hearing of his Word and express his Word in such a way that the self-expression of that Word and its being heard become one. The fact that this indeed happens is itself a mystery. The unexpected, incalculable element that is both astonishing and self-evident (it is only self-evident because the mystery in the last resort makes the conceptual aspect understandable and not *vice versa*) is also a mystery. God's becoming man, then, is the absolute mystery and it is also self-evident. It is almost possible to imagine that the strange, historically contingent and hard aspect is not the reality in itself, but is the fact that this absolute and self-evident mystery has taken place, then and now, in Jesus of Nazareth. Our longing for the absolute nearness of God, which is incomprehensible in itself, but which makes it possible for us to endure everything, may, however, make us aware that this nearness is not to be found in the claims of the spirit, but in the flesh and here on earth. In that case, we shall find that proximity of God in no other place but in Jesus of Nazareth, above whom God's star is placed and before whom we can have the courage to kneel and pray: 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'.¹⁹

This, in a nutshell, is the underlying principle in order to comprehend the Christian Experience of God. It is possible to experience God (and not just have an experience of Him) because of Christ. Because God became man in Jesus Christ, man is the experience of God and God is the experience of man.

The very reality of Jesus Christ gives a radical twist to the indwelling of the Trinity in man's being. Jesus Christ is the living theophany of the One and True God. He is not only the revealer of the Trinity, but is its Second Person in the flesh, in person who calls us and leads us to the Father and fills us with the Spirit, the transcendent Spirit of God so that we may live this inhabitation concretely and that this inhabitation would go beyond our very own historicity and temporal concreteness. In Jesus Christ, God makes Himself experienced in the concreteness of a situation,

¹⁹ K. Rahner, "Jesus Christ and Christology," K. Rahner & W. Thüsing, *A New Christology*, London: Burns & Oates, 1980, 17.

culture or milieu or in immanence and in transcendence, in its projection, in its universality.²⁰

Experience is very important here. It is the origin, context and principle of what Edward Schillebeeckx labeled as "The mystical or theological depth-dimension of human existence".²¹ In fact, we cannot understand mysticism in other terms than an authentic and profound experience of God that leads to a deeper and more radical commitment of man to himself, to the world and to God in his journey, which is experiential in nature.

Unfortunately, experience has been identified with phenomena related to and constitutive of experience without going to the essentials of what experience is: a mediation of reality (substantive) to become real (quality) and of the real (substantive) in order to become reality (substantive). It is, as already stated, origin, context and principle of everything that is real and of all reality in terms of human finitude and culpability.

Philosophy and Mysticism: Levels of Meaning and Relevance²²

One of the most impressive monuments that I have ever seen in the course of my travels is the Parthenon of Athens, Greece dedi-

²⁰ Cf. the following studies on the Trinity from the viewpoint of Christian spirituality and mysticism: S. Guerra, "El misterio trinitario como tema teológico-espiritual", in: *Revista de Espiritualidad* 60 (2001), 49-73; P. Coda, *Uno in Cristo Gesù. Il battesimo come evento trinitario*, Rome: Città Nuova Press, 1996; P. Ferlay, *Père et Fils dans l'Esprit. Le mystère trinitaire de Dieu*, Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1979; R. Maisonneuve, *Les mystiques chrétiens et leurs visions de Dieu un et trine*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2000.

²¹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, New York: Crossroad, 1993, 66-98.

²² For introductory perspectives, see A. Molinaro & E. Salmann (eds.), *Filosofia e Mistica. Itinerari di un progetto di ricerca*, Rome: Pontificio Ateneo San Anselmo, 1997; L. Borriello & M.R. del Genio, *Esperienza Mistica e Pensiero Filosofico. Atti del Colloquio "Filosofia e Mistica."* Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003.

cated to the ancient protectress of the city, the goddess of wisdom and of the hunt, Athena. Its present state speaks more than a thousand words with regards to my present reflections. It is for me, especially in its ruined state overlooking the once proud center of western civilization, symbolic of man's continuous breakaway and struggle with the divine which commenced with the breakaway of the *logos* (λογος) or reason from the *mythos* or (μυθος) or myths, with the liberation from the *poiesis* of fables, tales and legends. With that first breakaway, philosophy was born: still within a theological context (speaking about God), but breaking free from the *mythos* with the predominance of the *logos* which reduced those personages of the myths to causes, principles and forces identified as the *arché* (ἀρχή) the *urstuff*, the beginning.²³ Among the pioneers in the philosophical breakaway was Socrates, who was executed for being a philosopher. And it is worth hearing, at this point, a fragment of what French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty says of him: "He [Socrates] is there in life, at the assembly of the people, and before the tribunal, but in such a way that one can make nothing of him. He gives them no eloquence, no prepared rhetoric. By entering into the game of respect, he would only justify the calumny against him. But even less any show of defiance! This would be to forget that in a certain sense the others can hardly judge otherwise than they do. The same philosophy obliges him to appear before the judges and also makes him different from them. The same freedom which brings him among them frees him from their prejudices. The very same principle makes him both universal and singular. There is a part of him by which he is the kinsman of them all. It is called *reason* and is invisible to them. For them, as Aristophanes says, it is cloudy, empty chattering. The commentators sometimes say it is all a

²³ Cfr. W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947; F.M. Conford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, N.P., 1912; T. Irwin, *Classical Thought*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 6ss.; J.A. Estrada, *Dios en las tradiciones filosóficas. Vol. I: Aporías y problemas de la teología natural*, Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1994, 29ss.; O. Muck, *Philosophische Gotteslehre*, Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1983; E. Coreth, *Gott im philosophischen Denken*, Stuttgart-Berlin-Koln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2001.

misunderstanding. Socrates believes in religion and the City, in spirit and in truth. They believe in them to the letter. He and his judges are not on the same ground. If only he had been better understood, one would have clearly seen that he was neither seeking for new gods, nor neglecting the gods of Athens. He was only trying to give them a sense; he was interpreting them."²⁴ *Logos* or reason became differentiated from *mythos* because of its hermeneutical (interpretative) function. The predominance of *mythos* simply meant acceptance and continuous poetic narrative, but without criticism, without interpretation. The *logos* interprets, it seeks meaning. The pre-philosophical men of Greece were not interested in meaning, but in absurdities, in fantasies. At the outset we have to be logical, that is, philosophical. To be philosophical is to be meaning oriented. Man is differentiated from all other living beings for his orientation towards meaning. Man alone can philosophize and needs to philosophize because of his lack of meaning, his lack of wisdom. This is why he is not *ipso facto* a wise man, but a lover of wisdom (φιλοσοφός) or philosopher.

However, it is not enough to be a philosopher or a lover of wisdom. Philosophy must become more philosophical by realizing the transcendence of true wisdom within an experiential framework. In order to do so, philosophy must become spiritual. It must become a way of Life of the Spirit, because wisdom is the fulfillment of the human spirit geared towards transcendence. Philosophy, in its historical and immanent rootedness, must strive for this spiritual (and even theological) transcendence. Only in such a transcendence can the *love of wisdom* be sublimated into the *wisdom of love*.

The same holds true with theology. It draws from the theological or that which comes from God and which is assimilated experientially by the Church. Thus as an activity it is God-Talk. However, it must become more theological by becoming theological, by going back to God in the Life of the Spirit. This implies going

²⁴ M. Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, transl. J. Wild et al., Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988, 36-37.

back experientially to the root of all theological activity: God-Talks. The only path is theologal, wherein we allow God to talk in our lives as we go back to his originative and primordial talk or discourse about Himself, discovering it as the originary or the very origin from an enriched perspective of the realization of the historical and immanent process, with all its dynamism, geared towards transcendence. This path is provided for by spirituality in its mystical rootedness.

Likewise, spirituality cannot thrive alone. In order to be spiritual, it needs the rootedness of the love of wisdom (philosophy) to see things in the concrete from a universalized, sublimized perspective funneled experientially as wisdom. Likewise, it needs to draw on revelation and how this revelation is assimilated and interpreted. This is the only way for spirituality to be able to propose a way of life out of such assimilation and interpretation tempered by the love of wisdom. Spirituality, in order to be more spiritual or truly spiritual, must be deeply rooted in the mystery of God made present in His Spirit. The love of wisdom reminds spirituality of the mysterious character of such a presence. In other words, philosophy gives spirituality its rootedness. Theology, on the other hand, reminds spirituality of the activity of talking of God (God-Talk) so that spirituality would not deviate from the structure of reflecting on the lived experience (*erlebnis*) of God on the part of man. This God, theology insists, is a living, personal and relational God and not just an impersonal principle (or a mere Absolute). Theology also reminds spirituality of the dynamicity of such a relationship between God-man given that without the framework of the activity called God-Talk spirituality could fall into mere psychologism or mere phenomenism, emphasizing the activities and phenomena involving the ego. Without theology, spirituality could also be mere axiology and mere ethics based on pure axiology, hardly with any reference to the transcendental Absolute, revealed as a loving, personal and relational God. Thus, Spirituality, in order to be more spiritual, has need of the rootedness of the love of wisdom, especially with the notion of rootedness in the Mystery (which is the very essence of mysticism) and of the

parameters set by revelation made concrete in God-Talk, which in all actuality is man's participation in God's Talk (God-Talks), the activity by which God allows Himself to be experienced by man. This allowing of self to be experienced by God is the necessary point of departure for theology and spirituality. The data derived from the historical realization of the allowing of God to be experienced by man is the very basis of the dynamism of the Life of the Spirit.

Philosophy provides the ground for the calling (the love of wisdom). Theology provides the activity and the content. Spirituality is the response to the calling, the path created to respond to the calling which comes from the abyss of the Mystery, only heard in profundity (as wisdom), implying the totality of man in his commitment and existential openness (as spirit) and hinged and made concrete in love (in its sublimation as the wisdom of love). This, in effect, is a sketch of the call that is heard as *Duc in Altum!*

Final Reflections: The Role of Spirituality

Spirituality provides Philosophy and Theology the opportunity to draw out from the deep from the transcendence it provides. In other words, Spirituality points out the task of drawing out, for the spirit necessarily means total commitment; and total commitment presupposes depth of insight, experiential openness and willingness, and capability of embracing the transcendental. On the other hand, Philosophy and Theology provide the depth to be explored or from which is to be drawn out the riches of experience. In other words, Philosophy and Theology point out the depth from their immanence of lovingly receiving and living out wisdom, which in history unfolds (*offenbarung*) itself as the Absolute allowing Himself to be experienced and revealing Himself lovingly as God, to be worshipped as Lord and loved as Father. Wisdom is ultimately accepting this revelation to worship the revealer and love Him. This is love of wisdom. The act of loving wisdom then makes sense as the wisdom of love.

Spirituality is drawing out the Mystery, pointed out by Philosophy (as love of wisdom) and Theology (as God-Talk or participation in God-Talks) as livable wisdom and personal participation in the Absolute who allows Himself to be experienced as God revealing Himself to be Lord and even Lover with the love of a Father and the gentleness of a Mother. Upon drawing out this Mystery, the Mystery is revealed not only as the end-product or goal, but as the very underlying force of the act of drawing out, which necessarily presupposes the option to draw out and the related exercises and efforts to do so (*ascesis*).

This is essentially what mysticism is all about. It is the very love of wisdom consummated as the wisdom of love not only as the goal, but as the very underlying force and dynamism. It is God-talks being discovered in its transcendence as truly present in the very immanence of man; not just as the data to be interpreted or the content, but the very possibility and ground of God-Talk.²⁵ □

²⁵ With these affirmations, I am not turning my back on the great epistemological advances that have established the autonomy of philosophy, theology and even spirituality in the academe. Such an autonomy is always to be respected. However, the common experience, taken as aground, is to be underscored. This common experience, which is the same Mystery that arouses wonder (metaphysics or philosophy), that invites to a confessional commitment and even worship in the ecclesial setting (theology) and that is the dynamic force in man's search for meaning and truth in life, which is the very plenitude of being human (spirituality) made concrete in the participation in the same Mystery. This Mystery is the very presence of the Absolute understood by philosophy and theology as God and assimilated profoundly as Lord, Savior, Lover and Father.