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Man as a Spiritual Being

Summary: During the last few decades much has been said about spirituality as well as the human spiritual dimension. The present-day understanding of spirituality generally does not place it within a religious framework. Rather, it is understood as the search for answers to fundamental human questions. This understanding gives rise to several questions: Can we speak of a human spiritual dimension divorced from a religious view of man? What is essential for the spiritual dimension of every person whether religious or not? What role does the Holy Spirit play in Christian spirituality?

The author attempts to answer these questions in three sections. First, he points to the human spiritual dimension alongside the experience of the inner or spiritual life of every person. Then, considering Christian tradition, he demonstrates the importance of understanding a person as a unified being. In the final section he attempts to show how a Christian can only unify himself inwardly and simultaneously orient himself outwardly in the Holy Spirit as love. In this way he can animate his spiritual dimension and realize a genuine and fruitful Christian spirituality.

Keywords: Spirituality, Three human dimensions and uniqueness, Human spiritual dimension, Holy Spirit, Love

Throughout the last decades, many discussions on spirituality and the spiritual dimension of man emerged. Today's understanding of spirituality is not limited to a religion, but is rather based on philosophy, psychology, aesthetics, and science¹, in particular on the search of meaning and integrity of life. Several questions arise in this context:

Is it possible to discuss the spiritual dimension of man divorced from a religious view of man? What is essential to the spiritual dimension of every man, both religious and non-religious? What happens if spirituality is limited only to mental life? What requires special attention when the human being is discussed in the context of the Christian understanding of the human being and his spiritual dimension? What role does the Holy Spirit play in Christian spirituality? Can spirituality be addressed

¹ Cf. P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2012, p. 16-23.

without considering direct relationship to the Holy Spirit?

The discussion addressing these questions will be divided into three sections. In the first section, the importance of the inner or spiritual life for every man with a desire to find the meaning of his life and to answer the fundamental life questions will be considered. At the same time, the author warns of the risks of limiting spirituality to mental life. Then, the importance of observing the human as an integral being having three dimensions: physical, mental, and spiritual will be presented based on Scripture, Christian tradition, and doctrine on humanity. The last section tries to explain how a Christian can unify himself on the inside only through the love of the Holy Spirit and at the same time orient himself to the outside to comprehensively live out his spiritual dimension and put into practice an authentic, fruitful Christian spirituality.

1. The Inner or Spiritual Dimension of Every Human Being

An inner life is the experience of every man, not only a religious one or member of a particular religious tradition. Therefore, as emphasized by Bianchi, it can be claimed that every man „who lives out an inner dimension, lives ‚spiritually’, i.e. lives out awareness, conscience, thinking, and seeking that is characteristic of human beings [...] Inner or spiritual life is a dimension of a human experience as such, in which the meaning of life is sought and found”². The inner life does not contradict the material dimension of life, i.e. life in the body, in history, in the world, in relationship to others and to everything that exists. Moreover, the inner life is the basis of humanization of all humans.

A man who sets out on a journey of the inner life begins to seek answers to the questions of the meaning of life. Sooner or later, every man is faced with a question: „Why evil, suffering, and death?” Every life has a beginning and an end, physical death. Every man is also faced with the horizon of death preventing him from living in an illusion, surreality, or virtual eternity. When man in the reality of his everyday life and work is shaken by a certain event and his existing world is challenged by the fundamental questions, this is known as a spiritual reflection. Asking questions similar to these helps a person so that he does not live on the surface, but enters into the depths of himself and everything that surrounds him. A person can open up to this spiritual journey or he can suppress these questions so that they do not disturb him in the self-sufficiency of his already existent understanding of his life and work.

Simply put, man’s spiritual dimension becomes ever more visible when he begins to ask questions regarding his own integrity and the integrity of the world. It is put into practice when man starts asking himself what is the purpose of his life and work.

Everything that is essential to man is unclear: where does he come from, why does he live, who is he in his essence, what is the purpose of it all? Klun sug-

² E. Bianchi, *Quale spiritualità per l'uomo contemporaneo?*, http://www.diocesi.torino.it/diocesi-torino/allegati/26721/Bianchi_Quale_spiritualita_041010.pdf [25. 4. 2017], p. 1.

gests, it can be argued that spirituality starts at a point when a shock appears in the world of virtual ease and comprehensiveness. „Spiritual life means to accept and live out an attitude of radical questioning”³.

The attitude of questioning does mean that man gives up seeking final answers in the sense of resigned skepticism. Therefore, the motive for questioning must be to seek those answers that are closer to the „essence” or are revealed as essential questions. Authentic questioning is not an end in itself. It must not be the result of irresponsible freedom, but rather the result of „responsibility”: a man’s questioning „answers the question posed by life, it is an answer to its fundamental secret. Thus, life becomes a criterion of questioning and spirituality”⁴. Every spiritual practice has its stone for testing in its life.

In the 5th century before Christ, Socrates encouraged his students with a thought engraved in the front of Apollo’s temple in Delphi: „Human, know yourself.” Knowing yourself is vitally important for man to set out on a journey of inner life, which is never final: every person remains a secret to himself and to others. In the context of knowing yourself and developing inner or spiritual life, it is not easy to distinguish between spiritual and mental. Spiritual and mental realities overlap. A human is more uniform than is believed. A complex relationship exists between the body, psyche, and spirit, which is why it is impossible to set clear boundaries among them⁵. It must not be forgotten that psychology analyzes and interprets psychological phenomena, whereas spirituality in its broadest sense helps man discover the meaning of his life, fundamental guidelines of his life, and its meaning⁶.

Mistaken concepts concerning man’s physical, mental, and spiritual dimension are present not only in philosophy and theology, but also in practical spiritual life. If this distinction is not considered, confusion and many misconceptions of man’s spiritual dimension and thus his spiritual life can arise.

The reader should realize that the modern age often defines man only as a psychophysical reality integrated into a social environment. The concept of „soul” has been slowly merged with the concept of „psyche” and has thus obtained an entirely psychological flavor. Human has become a subject of psychology, sociology as well as politics and economy. Špidlik and Rupnik warn that this mentality has gradually penetrated the Catholic Church resulting in a misconception of spirituality in general and of Christian spirituality in particular, which is something people are often not aware of: spiritual life has been mixed or even blended with the inner and intimate

³ B. Klun, *Fenomenologija duhovnega življenja [Phenomenology of Spiritual Life]*, in: *Udejanjanje duhovnosti v sodobnem svetu [Actualization of Spirituality in the Contemporary World]*, ed. P. Repar – S. Repar – A. Božič, Ljubljana 2012, p. 77.

⁴ B. Klun, id., p. 77-78.

⁵ Cf. E. Prijatelj, *Synthesis Identities of human self: from the standpoint of Guindon’s personal identity formation approach* *Synthesis* 26 (2011) 2, p. 271.

⁶ Cf. E. Bianchi, *Quale spiritualità per l’uomo contemporaneo?*, http://www.diocesi.torino.it/diocesitorino/allegati/26721/Bianchi_Quale_spiritualita_041010.pdf [25. 4. 2017], p. 2-3.

mental life, limited to the world of thought, will, and sentiment⁷.

In this way, *spiritual* life becomes *mental* and is limited only to the life of thought, will, and emotions. Considering the inner or spiritual life as a complete equivalent to a non-material and ethereal life is a pitfall in any circumstances. If man's spiritual dimension is considered an equivalent of his intellect, that is his area of thought and ideas, then man is fostering a spirituality that does not lead him to religiosity, but to idealism or intellectualism. Ultimately, this brings him to a conviction that by fostering elevated ideas he is becoming ever more spiritual. „If spiritual is a matter of will, we slip into voluntarism: we are spiritual, if our will is in service of great ideals. If we understand spiritual as being emotional, it flows into sentimentalism”⁸.

What can prevent such an improper conceptualization of man's spiritual dimension and his spiritual life? The author will argue that the answer lies in an integral view of the human being. The irreplaceable role of the Holy Spirit also needs to be observed within Christian spirituality. It is important to recall that the understanding of spirituality varies within and outside the context of religion. The quest for answers to man's fundamental questions remains a common feature. Yet, this spirituality cannot be limited merely to man's mental life, it has to observe all three dimensions of the person.

2. Integrity of a Human Being in his Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Dimension

A human is an integral being: physical, mental, and spiritual at the same time. Man's integrity is essential to his spiritual life. Otherwise, there is a danger of straying into the dualistic concept of man that was introduced into Western culture and Christian spirituality by Greek philosophy⁹. In light of this philosophy, some Church fathers considered that the biblical contrasts between the outer and inner man or the man of flesh and man of spirit coincide with the Greek distinction between the body and soul. Such a dualistic view of man tries to emphasize soul before body. Only the activities of the soul are appreciated, whereas activities of the body are deemed irrelevant, even perhaps harmful and evil¹⁰. In this way, the dimension of physicality and history, e.g. the importance of man's history or his life story to his spiritual growth, has been devalued or even excluded.

Such a view leads to excluding the „spiritualism” of Plato's followers and excessive idealists who consider matter only as a „prison” of the soul. Matter is not

⁷ Cf. T. Špidlik, *Osnove krščanske duhovnosti [The Basics of Christian Spirituality]*, Maribor 1998, pp. 22-26; M.I. Rupnik, *V plamenih gorečega grma [In the Flames of a Burning Bush]*, Ljubljana 1995, p. 10-15.

⁸ M.I. Rupnik, id., p. 13.

⁹ Cf. C. Consiglio, *Spirit, Soul, Body: Toward an Integral Christian Spirituality*, Collegeville 2015, p. 7-14.

¹⁰ Cf. T. Špidlik, *La spiritualità dell'Oriente cristiano: manuale sistematico*, Cinisello Balsamo 1995, p. 90.

evil, because it was created by God and is thus something that is good. At the same time, the body was not „added” to the soul only after the sin, but is an essential part of our „self”. Therefore, any exaggeration to the one or the other sides of extreme emphasizing the independence of soul from body and environment is unacceptable.

Excessive spiritualism despises the importance of concrete daily routines to the spiritual life. This is manifested in various ways. „Some people overestimate miracles, they expect extraordinary intercessions by God, whereas on their part, they do not use the regular means available enough to do good. Of course, it good to think of the heavenly bliss. But, we must not forget that heavenly bliss will be a reward for the works of love performed on the Earth. Nothing is more sacred than the prayer which is the companion of work”¹¹.

In this light, it is possible to understand the misconception of the so-called *quietism* (Latin: *quies* = peace) that, above all, strives for the God’s mercy to overwhelm and calm the heart of man. What it forgets is that „God is ‚pure activity’”, therefore God’s life in the hearts of people never suppresses man’s activity, but constantly encourages it. Spiritual experiences may not lead to some sort of spiritual drunkenness, passivity, and laziness”¹².

Vatican II clearly emphasized that the body of man is precious and important for his integral life and work as well as for establishing a personal relationship with the triune God¹³. Through his bodily composition, the man gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator¹⁴. Its doctrine has freed Catholic theology and spirituality from centuries-long imprisonment by the dualist conceptualization of the human being that often lead to a negative view of the body and its involvement in daily personal, community, social, and political life.

Spiritual life is life in the Holy Spirit that „makes spiritual” man’s entire concrete life and work. Everyday life and its woes, joys, efforts, and interest makes sense exactly because „it is made spiritual”. Nothing is excluded and nothing has to be despised.

Both the Old and New Testaments speak of the three dimensions of the human in several places. In the New Testament, Paul explicitly emphasizes this in two places: „May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit (*pneûma*), soul (*psychê*), and body (*sôma*), be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes 2:23). „Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.” (Heb

¹¹ T. Špidlik, *Osnove krščanske duhovnosti* [The Basics of Christian Spirituality], Maribor 1998, 26.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ T. Stegu, *Za svobodo osvobojeni: Krščanska antropologija v katezezi* [Set Free for Freedom: Christian Anthropology in Catechesis], in: *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75 (2015) 3,515-523.

¹⁴ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Second Vatican Council*, Vatican 1965, https://www.accunet.org/i4a/doclibrary/getfile.cfm?doc_id=31 [15. 4. 2017], n. 14,1.

4:12) To Paul, the soul is the source of physical and mental life, whereas the spirit is the source of spiritual life. To him, *pneûma* is a gift of God. In this regard, a distinction can be drawn between a mental (*psychikós*) and a spiritual (*pneumatikós*) man.

Paul's trichotomy was embraced and further developed by many Church fathers. According to the definition of St Irenaeus, a spiritual man „consists” of s(S)pirit, soul, and body. Holy Spirit being the „soul of man's soul”, is joined by his „self”, spirit, and gives strength to everything that is human in man. The trichotomous structure of man, that is man's unity of s(S)pirit, soul, and body, may be imagined in the form of three concentric circles¹⁵. Spiritual life comes from Holy Spirit that influences the human being from the inside and determines his entire mental and physical life. Such a dwelling of the Spirit within the human being is actually the presence of love by God the Father in him as explained by the Paul (cf. Rom 5:5).

Respecting a body that became the temple of the Holy Spirit after baptism leads man to a very demanding spiritual attitude: to use physical strengths and skills to build up an integral spiritual man and to make a more complete expression of love in interpersonal relationships. With such an attitude to his own body, man acknowledges his dignity: his share in the fullness of God's life received at baptism and the call to resemble the body of the risen Christ. The body now lives in the expectation of this redemption based on the model of the redeemed body of the Risen Lord (cf. 1 Cor 15).

Because a human being is created in God's image and likeness (cf. 1 Ms 1:26–27), he is called to become holy together with his body. By being what he is, human being is already oriented toward becoming what he should be. Because he is created in God's image, a person is already called to put his image into practice. Deification of the human being is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, because only he can „renew us interiorly through a spiritual transformation”¹⁶.

3. Holy Spirit as God's Love Unifies on the Inside and Directs to the Outside

In the New Testament, the spirit is the dimension in which God meets the human being. Through it and in it, human being is open to God to this greatest extent. When a human being reflects on his true self he descends to those hidden places of his being where God awaits him and probes his heart, in the place where he decides his own fate before God. Nothing can calm man's spirit more than God Himself through His Spirit. In him, God is revealed to a man's spirit and God's spirit is present in the man. John Paul II. describes it as follows: The hidden breath of the divine Spirit enables the human spirit to open in its turn before the saving and sanctifying self-

¹⁵ Cf. M.I. Rupnik, id., 40-41.

¹⁶ *Catechism of The Catholic Church*, Vatican 1993, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM [18. 4. 2017], n. 1695.

-opening of God. Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, man enters a „new life,” is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a „dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit,” a living temple of God (cf. Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6,19)¹⁷. The Father and the Son come to the human being by the Holy Spirit and dwell in him (cf. Jn 14:23). In the communion of grace with the Trinity, man’s „living area” is broadened and raised up to the supernatural level of divine life. The human being lives in God and by God: he lives „according to the Spirit,” and „sets his mind on the things of the Spirit”¹⁸.

Every Christian is reborn through the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism and receives His strength so that he may live according to the reflections of the Holy Spirit and work empowered by His gifts. He receives the Holy Spirit in its fullness at confirmation in the same way as the apostles received it on Pentecost and the disciples in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:1–2). Christ’s Spirit strengthens him so that he is able to preach his faith by word and example as a Christ’s true witness, boldly speak his name, and never be ashamed of being his disciple. Through Christ, the Heavenly Father gives Christians the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, to remain with them and in them eternally (cf. Jn 14:16–17). In this way, he can walk in the power of the Holy Spirit as a beloved Child of God and can experience life in abundance (cf. Jn 10,10). Christ’s warranty is as follows: „Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (Jn 14:12–13).

The Holy Spirit „teaches”, „reminds”, „introduces”, and „guides” (cf. Jn 14:26; 16:12) every Christian. He is the „anointment” that enables „experiencing” and defines values, judges and chooses (cf. 1 Jn 2: 20–27). He is the Advocate who is coming to help the Christian in his powerlessness and gives him the spirit of adoption (cf. 8,15–26) in his endeavors to follow Christ and to become like the Heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:48). The Holy Spirit enlightens and integrates all dimensions of his life: memory, reason, will, emotions, and body. The Holy Spirit strengthens the Christian and guides his thoughts, decisions, words, acts, etc.

Therefore, Christian spirituality is the art of discerning and observing the presence of the Holy Spirit, the art of collaboration with his work, the art of allowing his presence and work to bring fruit in the life and work of a Christian. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to live Christian spirituality to the fullest and to be a Christian in accordance with the Gospel (cf. Jn 15).

The Holy Spirit works within a man, because the love of God the Father is present in him through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5). This love conveys God’s most personal dimension and transforms a human being into a person through its creative power.

¹⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter »Dominum et vivificantem«*, Vatican 1986. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_18051986_dominum-et-vivificantem.html [20. 4. 2017], n. 58.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

In the center of a Christian's spiritual life, there is an agape-type of concept of God's love that, as emphasized by Rupnik, is a „reality of relationships in the absolute sense, a perfect reality that includes and encompasses everything and that is a personal dynamic in a relationship to everything that exists.”¹⁹ The Holy Spirit as God's love uses its „centripetal” power to unify the Christian on the inside and the „centrifugal”, ecstatic power to simultaneously direct him to the outside world, to relationships with others and with all of creation. Love is capable of combining things that are incompatible with human logic, because everything is tuned into „a single harmony, all ambiguities and contrasts of man, all his mental, physical, and character wounds that chain a person to division and suffering”²⁰.

This love enabled by God the Father through his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that never disappears, although it sometimes appears to be gone. It gives man complete freedom to such an extent that he can ignore it or back away from it or even „crucify” it, but the love is still prepared entirely for him and waits for all of eternity for man to become open to it and embrace it in his life and work. Because of this freedom that God grants to a man in His infinite love for him, God can dwell in him without endangering or limiting him in any way, thus inviting him into a totally free conversation and cooperation with Him in his everyday life and work²¹.

Conclusion

In this final section, it can be confirmed that it is justified to discuss man's spiritual dimension outside the religious view of man, because the experience of his own inner or spiritual life is an experience of every man who sets out on a journey to find answers to man's fundamental questions about the meaning of life and its integrity. Surely, the spiritual life is not only be limited to man's mental abilities. It must also include his physical and spiritual dimension and it must be put into practice in his daily life and work. The originality criterion of any spirituality must be life itself. It must make a man ever more manly and able to overcome the temptations of intimate and individualist spirituality and live his own life according to the requirements of the self-giving love and logic of incarnation, as often emphasized by Pope Francis²².

Such an integral and unified view of man including all his dimensions is made possible especially through the biblical and Christian understanding of man as a three-dimensional being, i.e. physical, mental, and spiritual. The Holy Spirit as love between the Father and the Son poured out into the heart of every Christian (Rom 5:5) enables him to be unified on the inside and direct to the outside in the

¹⁹ M.I. Rupnik, id., 41.

²⁰ M.I. Rupnik, id., 43.

²¹ Cf. M.I. Rupnik, id., 40–42.

²² Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, Vatican 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html [18. 4. 2017], n. 240.

relationships with God, other people, and everything that exists.

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Człowiek jako istota duchowa

Summary: W ciągu ostatnich dziesięcioleci wiele zostało powiedziane na temat duchowości, jak również na temat ludzkiego wymiaru duchowego. Dzisiejsze rozumienie duchowości na ogół nie umieszcza jej w ramach religijnych. Jest raczej pojmowana jako poszukiwanie odpowiedzi na podstawowe ludzkie pytania. Takie rozumienie rodzi kilka pytań: Czy możemy mówić o ludzkim duchowym wymiarze w oddzieleniu od religijnego spojrzenia na człowieka? Co jest istotne dla duchowego wymiaru każdej osoby, czy to religijnej czy nie? Jaką rolę odgrywa Duch Święty w chrześcijańskiej duchowości?

Autor próbuje odpowiedzieć na te pytania w trzech sekcjach. Po pierwsze, wskazuje na ludzki wymiar duchowy wraz z doświadczeniem wewnętrznym lub duchowym życiem każdej osoby. Następnie, rozważając tradycję chrześcijańską, demonstruje znaczenie zrozumienia osoby jako istoty zjednoczonej wewnątrz. W ostatniej części stara się pokazać, jak chrześcijanin może tylko jednoczyć się wewnątrz i jednocześnie orientować się na zewnątrz w Duchu Świętym jako miłość. W ten sposób może animować swój duchowy wymiar i realizować prawdziwą i owocną chrześcijańską duchowość.

Słowa kluczowe: duchowość, trzy wymiary ludzkie i wyjątkowość, duchowy wymiar ludzki, Duch Święty, miłość