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THE INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORK OF SANDRA M. SCHNEIDERS, JON SOBRINO AND DONAL DORR

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Moore McIlhatton

Edward Maloney

Michael Maloney

Sharon Maloney

"Though I know I'll never lose affection

For people and things that went before

I know i'll often stop and think about them

In my life, I love you more"

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THE INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

1. Introduction

Over recent years, much of the focus in moral theology has been on the inward task of asking ourselves what it means to be Christian. Rather than concentrating on the avoidance of external acts deemed sinful, moral theology now gives us the confidence to look within at our own motivation and ask 'what good can I do to live a life closer to Christian values?' Discipleship "is concerned, rather, with making the master's wisdom, dispositions and spirit shape our own character so that we will prefer spontaneously the way of life that harmonizes with the master's."[1]As Christians we are not seeking a life of strict adherence to the law but a life according to the spirit. We are searching for meaning. In moral theology, the development of virtue ethics for example, has allowed the individual to understand themselves better and consequently understand their relationship with God and others more fully. A deeper understanding of inner motivations is a necessary and fruitful step on the path of Christian discipleship and knowing myself better prepares me to understand and help others. Remarkably it is often when a person has done much inner work that the question 'how can I help others?' becomes one which arises naturally from the heart. Solidarity and friendship are no longer virtues done with a sense of duty or obligation or because of strict adherence to the law. They become true and freely - given acts of love and compassion where "living in right relationship with others is not some externally imposed obligation that impedes the good life. It *is* the good life."[2] Therefore, virtue ethics has indeed granted us the opportunity to understand what it means to be Christian disciples in a well-balanced and well - rounded way. However, this naturally leads to further questions such as whether our sense

[1]Richard M. Gula, *The Good Life: Where Morality and Spirituality Converge* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999), 79.
[2] William C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology:True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press), 24.

of responsibility as Christians is mature enough to dare to step out of ourselves, out of our own narrative, out of our own comfortable field of study, to risk truly meeting others?

To be responsible for more than ourselves is a calling that, in theory, is seemingly simple and straightforward, but proves difficult to consistently act upon. This is perhaps due to the fact that many developed countries experience a kind of spiritual poverty: their identity is based on what they *have* rather than in terms of *who* they are meant to be. Our best response is to become truly authentic human beings, made possible as stated by the coming together of our morality and spirituality:

> the freedom - for excellence perspective holds that the point of human freedom is not simply its exercise, but its use for the flourishing and happiness of the human person . . . from this perspective freedom is more like a skill to be developed than a binary capacity that is either on or off like a light switch . . . [there is an] awareness that true freedom is not only doing what one wants, but wanting what is genuinely best"[3]

Furthermore, it is genuinely wanting what is best for all. Covenantal love "cultivates a moral character marked by the virtues of justice and solidarity . . . a capacity for empathy and imagination is necessary. . . we cannot be moral persons until we learn to appreciate what is not our self."[4] Such a yearning for justice is desperately called for in our world today as "injustice is a failure of moral imagination. In order to move from injustice to justice, we must be able to reimagine the world. The conversion to justice demands that we be able to see, think and imagine differently."[5]If human beings are not mere amalgamations of clinical, cold – hard facts then neither can the study of human experience or Christian discipleship, be reduced to detached observation on an individual level or in relation to major social and ecological issues. Figures such as Mark O' Keefe are examples of theologians who write

[3] Mattisson, *Introducing Moral Theology*, 53.
[4] Ibid., p.49-50.
[5] Paul J. Waddell, "Reimagining the World: Justice" in *Virtue: Readings in Moral Theology* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2011),189.

extensively on the issues facing morality and spirituality, the deeper implications of which have still to be comprehensively researched. As Mark O'Keefe argues, "one might expect that, in their efforts to aid the growth of an authentic Christian existence, the two disciplines would be marked by mutual interchange. Such is not the case – at least not in a sustained and systematic way."[6]. However, what is of greater significance and is the main inspiration of this work, is the fact that research on the relationship between spirituality and theology, and not strictly moral theology, is still only budding. Therefore, this dissertation proposes that it is no longer just the case that only moral theology has much to gain from a relationship with spirituality but theology as a whole.No longer just in the case of individuals, or in the case of moral theology alone but, in order to freely reimagine the world for the benefit of all, it is theology as a whole which must dare to step outside of itself, out of its neat and compartmentalised existence. It is my contention in this dissertation to argue that the best space for Christian discipleship to breathe and grow further, is where theology and spirituality meet. According to Philip Sheldrake, "the study of spirituality is slowly finding a place within the theological academy [however] some [ ] suspicion is rooted in the long tradition of separation between theology and spirituality."[7] However, "no attentive observer of the contemporary cultural scene can fail to recognise the breadth and power of the "spirituality phenomenon" in virtually every part of the world . . . there is no denying its grip on the contemporary imagination."[8] Here, captured at once, is the fear and yet deep sense of excitement at the possibilities of an integration between theology and spirituality. For spirituality is indeed growing as more people search for a space to express themselves and for a space to imagine a better world. Spirit and spirituality are words that challenge us:

[6] Mark O'Keefe, "Ethics and Spirituality – Past, Present, Future" in *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy* (Eugene: Paulist, 2005), 9.
[7] Philip F. Sheldrake, *Explorations in Spirituality: History, Theology and Social Practice* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2010), 56.
[8]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy." *Theological Studies* 50 (December 1989) 676-697, here, 696.

> [As we face the] loss of political will in the face of power elites and their short - term interests, their greed, their bone – grinding grimacing greed, spirit and soul [are] words that demand radical and active involvement in history and politics; that demand engagement and activism; that demand a socially and ecologically engaged mysticism. Words that seek change, seek a re- enchanting of the world. A disenchanted world, our secular inheritance, our violently shadowed inheritance, is easy to pillage and exploit, easy to rape and destroy because its magic and its beauty have been stolen by a materialistic and deterministic ideology that is blind to anything it deems unreasonable, with a deeming that dances to a damning death it thinks is a better, more rational life…modernity and its parent the Enlightenment have shaped perceptions of life and world in the West today and in so doing has shaped – misshaped? – our attitudes to the things of soul and spirit: their reality, their needs, and their unique personal and social modes of expression.[9]

The "building of a spirituality sings a story that reveals more than the need for skill and technique, more than tools for an audacious spirit. The story of spirituality also sings of a capacity for deep contemplative reflection that is of its very nature performative, transformative and self-implicating."[10] To begin to build the new story of the possible integration of theology and spirituality, first it is necessary to go back and uncover the history of the relationship. Therefore, this dissertation begins with an initial investigation into the historical relationship between theology and spirituality.

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one gives a historical overview of the relationship between theology and spirituality. By looking at some of the major shifts, namely the movement from unity to separation, a worrying disconnect is highlighted within the history of the relationship between spirituality and theology. An analysis of this disconnect sets the scene and enables an investigation into the recovery of this relationship and the possible implications of a new integration. In order to research the movement toward harmony between spirituality and theology, it is important to first set this movement within a wider historical context. Therefore, this chapter offers a theological and

[9] Jack Finnegan, *The Audacity of Spirit* (Dublin: Veritas, 2008), 10-11.
[10] Ibid., 25.

evaluative approach analysing the previous relationship between theology and spirituality. Whilst not an exhaustive account of history, chapter one gives an overview of particular eras which have defined this relationship and which have led to our current disposition. In particular, from early Christianity and the movement from unity in the area where 'spirituality' which "used to be called ascetical and mystical theology, began as part of an undifferentiated reflection on Christian sources and their application."[11] From its seemingly unified beginnings, chapter one moves to focus on the divorce of spirituality and theology in the high Middle Ages when the West was characterised by growing divisions within theology and the gradual separation of spirituality from theology ensued: "It was, at heart, a division between the affective side of faith (or participation) and conceptual knowledge."[12] The chapter then offers an analysis of the more recent complementary relationship between moral theology and spirituality. In this respect Richard Gula highlights the academic belief prevalent at the beginning and middle of the twentieth century that the over emphasis of an act-centred morality is at an end and he argues that "after Haring's work, there has been no turning back on the major thesis that morality is the response to the spiritual experience of God's enabling love."[13] This allows the chapter to lead up to current debates about the exact relationship between theology and spirituality. The "increasingly serious attitude toward spirituality in the academy is due in no small measure the fact that the major theologians of the conciliar era have made explicit the roots of their constructive work in their own faith experience and their conscious intention that their work should bear fruit in the lived faith of the Church as well as in its speculation and teaching."[14] This is a fitting conclusion to chapter

[11] Philip Sheldrake, Spirituality and Theology (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 36.
[12] Ibid.,43.
[13] Richard M. Gula, "Morality and Spirituality," 166.
[14] Sandra Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy." *Theological Studies* 50 (December 1989) 676-697, here 677.

one especially due to the fact that one of the inspirations that unites the three chosen theologians was the Second Vatican Council.

In order to explore the potential of theology integrated with spirituality, in chapters two, three and four I compare the deeply held convictions of three theologians in particular, namely Sandra M Schneiders, Jon Sobrino and Donal Dorr respectively. Working out of distinct geographical locations and quite different cultural contexts makes for an intriguing comparison between the three theologians; they indeed share many viewpoints on the relationship between theology and spirituality and yet differ at times too. Currently, "spirituality stands at the junction where the deepest concerns of humanity and the contemporary concern with interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural exchange, interreligious dialogue, feminist scholarship, the integration of theory and praxis and the hermeneutical turn together. If the present of spirituality as an academic discipline is somewhat confused, it is also very exciting."[15] This dissertation, in addition to exploring the implications of the integration between theology and spirituality, seeks to address the confused, exciting present of theology and spirituality that Schneiders has observed.

Sandra M. Schneiders is a North American theologian. This research however, does not intend to contribute to the voluminous literature on New Testament scripture for which Schneiders is generally known. I have chosen to focus on Sandra M. Schneiders' work not merely because she is widely respected as one of the most influential figures concerning the study of Christian spirituality but because Schneiders' work on the relationship between theology and spirituality has implications for feminist theology, another area Schneiders has written on substantially. Schneiders observes that "women who are both Christian and

[15] Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy,"697.

feminist face not only theological problems but also, and especially, problems in the area of spirituality, i.e. their lived experience of the faith."[16]Schneiders' contribution to the subject of spirituality will also highlight the movement in spirituality from unity to separation to integration and also illuminates this encounter as a particular participation in a living tradition that these individuals (engaged scholars of spirituality) incarnate and mediate. Furthermore, Schneider's own argument for a hermeneutical approach is one which is key to an integrative endeavour.

Jon Sobrino is a Jesuit theologian who has lived in El Salvador for over forty years. For many, the social justice angle is a given for liberation theology but a deeper analysis of Sobrino's *Principle of Mercy* offers a new vision of how to approach the connection between theology and spirituality. Also, of interest for example is Sobrino's addition of *orthopathy* as a way of responding to the good news of Jesus. Although I have indeed chosen a liberation theologian in Jon Sobrino, this dissertation is not explicitly about liberation theology. Rather the aim is to research what Jon Sobrino's work on *mercy* and *orthopathy* in particular have to contribute to the integration of theology and spirituality.

Donal Dorr is an Irish theologian and missionary with vast experience writing on the subject of spirituality. I have also selected Donal Dorr's work on the basis that he has written extensively on the subject of theology and spirituality. In addition, Dorr has written widely on social justice issues and the area of Catholic Social Teaching. Examining the role of mission in today's world, Dorr states that the "constructive aspect of our mission is to share in the redemptive work of Jesus by helping to *transform 'the powers' themselves* . . . A genuinely spiritual struggle does not take place in some disembodied other-worldly realm but in and through our engagement in the social, economic, political and cultural structures which shape

[16] Sandra Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Church*, New York:Paulist, 1999.

the way people live.[17] Whereas Sobrino works out of the praxis model of contextual theology, Dorr's analysis often works out of the transcendental/anthropological model, " In the same way that Bernard Lonergan speaks of metaphysics, a contextual theology will not appear primarily in books, but in men's and women's minds."[18] The differences and similarities between Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr's own contexts and understanding of these issues provides a wealth of material to compare and contrast which will in turn enable a meaningful analysis and this is why I specifically chose theologians working out of different locations and contexts.

Having looked closely at the three chosen theologians and their arguments for the integration of theology and spirituality, the final chapter endeavours to imagine and illustrate what a truly integrated approach could look like for the twenty first century. This chapter proceeds to show what the fruits of an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach to spirituality can offer theology. Spirituality is found to be the integrating dimension for theology; a "unifying field that brings together a wide array of concepts, ideas, beliefs, practices, literacies, narratives, texts, discourses, rituals, skills, techniques and understandings."[19] While for some this approach may seem alarmingly broad, vast and expansive, such an integration should not be viewed as a negative or with trepidation. In the final chapter, it is demonstrated that a spirituality fit for the 21st century, is one that can be both global and inclusive and more importantly, unlimited and unhindered in approaching questions about God and our relationship with God. Asking questions and more importantly,listening to the inner voice is a radical act; it is an act of conversion which is a foundational belief shared by Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr. However, it is also a form of discourse and practice that "calls incessantly for healthy self-scrutiny and critical

[17] Donal Dorr, *Mission in Today's World* (Dublin: Columba, 2000), 112-116.
[18] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 103.
[19] Jack Finnegan, *The Audacity of Spirit*, 88.

reflection."[20] It is for this reason that philosophy is put forth as a dialogue partner for theology. Schneider's initial introduction to this integration however, inspired a further focus. To be precise, it is Schneider's analysis of Ricouer's work on hermeneutics that holds a possible potential for the study of spirituality. The final chapter seeks to demonstrate that our understanding of ourselves, of God and of our role in the universe can only be positively enhanced and deepened by such an approach. For how can any fixed definition or system "be given to the search for and the attempt to give *living* expression to humankind's deepest existential anxieties?"[21] Such restrictions or limitations no longer serve us well in our faith journey. Therefore, we need "an imaginative approach today that respects the reality of spirit and its inherent need to express dynamic, self-present, probing creativity."[22] In addition and imperative to a new approach, according to Sobrino and Dorr, is the need to foster a sound ecological awareness. For Sobrino, honesty and mercy in the face of reality is key and facing that reality, in all its complexity is pivotal to spirituality. For Dorr, nothing short of an ecologically spiritual revolution will suffice. I believe in order to inspire a new way of 'being' in the world, it is important to consider the natural sciences and mythology as an important dialogue partner for theology. For this reason, the final chapter moves to propose the natural sciences and mythology as two possible examples of dialogue partners which prove conducive to the spiritual enterprise. Therefore, the final chapter is divided into three main sections. Firstly, the argument for this approach is made by looking at philosophy as a partner for theology. The chapter then proceeds to posit the natural sciences and mythology as key partners for theology in an integrated endeavour. It is hoped that this proves to be a step toward an imaginative approach and an audacious spirituality.

[20] Ibid., 107.
[21] Ibid., 106. Italics added.
[22] Ibid.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Dermot Lane argues that one of the lessons learned in the twentieth century was that there was no such thing as "pure" theology, "Christian theology arises out of a critical interaction between traditional faith and contemporary experience, between religion and culture, between church and society."[1] Theology is similar in this sense to history as it is done from a certain place and in a certain time, "Theology may be done *for* the whole people of God, but it originates *from* specific local incarnations of that multi-generational community."[2] In addition, it is argued that the study of theology need not be detached and objective, "the modern expectation that a scholar of religion must be detached and objective is now recognized as an inappropriate ideal for theology."[3] A living and dynamic theology is always grounded in spiritual experience argues Sheldrake, "If it is to be complete, theology needs to be *lived* just as much as it needs to be studied and explained."[4] If this is true, then to be *lived* unequivocally denotes a sense of experience. It becomes dynamic when an individual's own experience is

[1] Dermot A. Lane, "Theology in Transition" in ed. Dermot A. Lane *Catholic Theology Facing the Future: Historical Perspectives* (Columba: Dublin, 2003), 3.
[2] Terrence W. Tilley, "Catholic Theology: Contextual, Historical, Inventive" in ed. Dermot A. Lane *Catholic Theology Facing the Future: Historical Perspectives* (Columba: Dublin, 2003), 132.
[3] Ibid., 49.
[4] Phillip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology* (Darton, Longman and Todd: London 1998), 3.

coupled with the realization that such an experience is reliant on a multitude of factors; the very people we are depends on a variety of interlocking components.

Through the realization that values are transmitted through groups, it is evident that "we gain our moral bearings from the communities we are born into and deliberately choose, beginning with family and extending to peers, other adults, religious and professional communities . . . In groups, we find our identity and the inspiration and accountability to lead a moral life."[5] Our understanding of reality is undoubtedly influenced by our 'big picture' beliefs, "one's understanding of the way things really are concerning inner wordly activities is importantly shaped by one's beliefs about the way things are concerning God and God's relationship to humanity. In other words, what one believes about God, shapes how one regards inner wordly activities, and how one judges whether or not they are being done well."[6] Spiritual realities arise from actual human experiences; they are not 'merely second order practices logically derived from pre-existing belief systems and doctrines.'[7] As garnered from the Scriptures and Tradition, the first Christians tried to live their lives according to the way and example of Jesus. They experienced Jesus' abiding presence with them as Spirit, they then expressed this experience of the living Christ, and their new existence "in Christ" through

[5] William C. Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development", in Ed. Charles E. Curran. *Conscience*. *Readings in Moral Theology No. 14*. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004), 133. Moral theology has consistently highlighted the nature of man as social being drawing on the Second Vatican Council document, *Gaudium et Spes*: "Human existence does not precede relationship, but is born of relationship and nurtured by it. To be a human person is to be essentially directed toward others. We are communal at our core . . . Personal existence, then, can never be seen as an "I" in isolation, but always as "I" and "you" in relationship." Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed By Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 67. What Richard Gula articulates here is the undeniable fact that man is a social being and does not and cannot function in isolation. This assertion has been made from Shakespeare through to Freud but it is perhaps in Church teaching that it is stated most succinctly: "But God did not create man a solitary being . . . by his innermost nature man is a social being; and if he does not enter into relations with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts." (GS #12) Furthermore, in moral theology, it is argued that the point is that "each of us has not merely a few social roles but many . . . In the normal course of events, almost everything we do is done by virtue of membership in one or another of these societies. It is a tendency of human action to be communal and social in nature." Germain Grisez and Russell Shaw, *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 60.

[6] William Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology:True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008) 72.

[7] Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 25.

prayer and through their attempts to live in obedience to God the Father in the pattern of Jesus. Doctrine and life certainly went together but a way of life came first. It is not that the early Christians were unconcerned with *truth*, it is just that the quest for truth was not a matter of detached speculation.'[8] Rather the truth that they were concerned with was how to cultivate and nurture a fruitful relationship with Jesus Christ as a follower or disciple and how to grow in community with one another. Such service of one another involves above all else, to love one another; "Knowing and loving are the fundamental operations that characterize the human person made in God's image and likeness, which is why humans strive to know and to love God to the extent that they are able . . . the mystics insisted that love has a superior role in the path to God."[9] In addition to the central role love plays on the path to God, nothing can be loved unless it is known, so knowing, especially knowledge gained in faith, cannot be neglected.[10] Subsequently, different ways of viewing the interrelationship of love and knowledge emerged. Therefore, who God is and how God is made known are questions at the heart of faith and are connected to our religious experience. It is for this reason that Sheldrake makes the claim that "attempts to speak about our understanding of God (theology) and our efforts to live in the light of that understanding (spirituality) cannot be separated."[11] Therefore, if *truth* for the early Christians was not merely a matter of detached speculation, understanding that the nature of the relationship between theology and spirituality began from an initial state of unity is imperative. It is from this foundation, that a historical outline can be drawn which will trace the relationship from one of unity to one of separation, systematization and detachment with an appreciation of the reasons behind the shift. Furthermore, this outline will

[8] Ibid.
[9] O' Collins, "The Origins and Scope of Biblical Spirituality", 34.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Phillip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology* (Darton, Longman and Todd: London 1998), 3.

bring us through to the twentieth century, where such an appreciation will serve to underpin the arguments made for the re- integration of theology and spirituality.

According to writer Walter Benjamin, the critic inquires about the truth whose living flame burns brightly over the logs of history.[12] In attempting to better understand questions of faith and of God, the development of the relationship between theology and spirituality throughout history is a worthwhile and fruitful endeavour. However, it is not without difficulty which is in no small part due to the vast expanse of history to be covered in the form of many, diverse and varied 'eras' and 'traditions,' but also because of the multifaceted and manifold controversies which arose from the particular eras it is necessary to highlight. As such, this chapter aims to trace the development of the relationship between theology and spirituality as it unfolded from an initial state of unity, through to a separation from which it struggled to recover, to one where a new kind of reconciliation or reintegration can be imagined. In order to frame these particular developments however, it will not be possible to give an exhaustive account of history. For the purposes of this dissertation therefore, an account and appreciation will be given of the Patristic and Monastic periods, the High Middle Ages and Scholasticism, and the Enlightenment and Age of Reason periods as they pertain to the relationship between theology and spirituality. Following this analysis, a more detailed account of the paradigm shifts concerning theology and spirituality in the Twentieth Century will be provided in order to provide the background and platform from which to analyse the integration of theology and spirituality further.

[12] Walter Benjamin. *Illuminations* (Great Britain: Pimlico 1999), 11.

1.1 A Time of Unity

At the beginning of Christianity, the New Testament already contained a theology but it is neither systematic nor dogmatic. The experience of following Christ is oft and best exemplified in Paul, as someone who encountered Christ and altered his life dramatically, "A passionate love for Christ possessed Paul and he wanted to share that love with as many others as possible . . . 'For me' Paul declared, 'living is Christ' Phil.1.21)"[13] Similarly, in the Gospel of John, the theme of living in Christ is introduced as remaining or abiding and staying with Jesus, "The verb *menein* conveys more than the superficial meaning of stopping or hanging around somewhere. The two men [Andrew and his companion] initiate a relationship of staying/abiding' with and, in fact, 'in' Jesus. He will be disclosed to them as the 'true vine' in whom they will allow themselves to be incorporated."[14] This living 'in' Christ was very characteristic of early Christian Spirituality. Following this way of life in Christ truly defines discipleship. In its essence, "such a following is not individualistic but is essentially communal, within the community of believers, sustained by a common life, shared rituals and expressed ideally in mutual love and acceptance. In fact, the heart of Christian spirituality is precisely a way of life rather than an abstract code of a priori beliefs."[15] In living in Christ, every aspect of the Christian disciple's life will be changed, utterly transformed, "For the true disciple of Jesus there is no separation between prayer and action, between surrendering to the Father's will in prayer and in active service of one another."[16] It is out of this all-encompassing

[13] Gerald O' Collins, "The Origins and Scope of Biblical Spirituality" in Eds. Richard Woods and Peter Tyler *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality* (London: Continuum, 2012), 27.
[14] Ibid., 29.
[15] Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 39.
[16] Mark O'Keefe, *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1995), 11.

experience of life *in* Christ that the first great theological synthesis, the Patristic period, began to emerge in the third, fourth and fifth centuries.

Beginning as part of an undifferentiated reflection on Christian resources and their application, theology was a single enterprise, "the unity of theology implied that intellectual reflection, prayer and living were, ideally speaking, a seamless whole. Patristic theology involved the constant reading of Scripture which was then shaped in the liturgy and in critical dialogue with Greek philosophical culture."[17] Patristic theology was not an abstract discipline or endeavour lived separately from pastoral theory or practice, "the unifying feature was the Bible and the patristic approach to Scripture ultimately developed, in the West, into a medieval theory of exegesis. Thus theology was a process on different levels, of interpreting Scripture with the aim of deepening the Christian life in all its aspects."[18] Theology was a complete and all-inclusive enterprise aimed at wholly living out one's Christian calling. This "is what Vagaggini calls the Gnosis-Wisdom model, a theology whose purpose is to lead believers to a *gnosis* that is not abstract knowledge but a vision of a reality that transforms the whole person."[19] Reflecting on Scripture and on the demands of a Christian way of life, the theology and spirituality of the patristic period was utterly Christocentric. Through this perspective, there could be no separation between a person's inner striving and their life of prayer and worship.

Of Origen, arguably one of the great pioneers in theology, it is said that "he set up the loom on which the patristic synthesis was woven, because he basically invented the theological method. You might say that his great contribution was not so much the content of his thought

[17] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 36.
[18] Ibid., 37.
[19] Fritjof Capra and David Steindl-Rast, *Belonging to the Universe: Explorations on the Frontiers of Science and Spirituality* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 50. Here, the authors are referring to Cyprian Vagaggini, an Italian theologian who belonged to the Camaldolese Benedictine community in Italy. He was also a significant figure at the Second Vatican Council.

as it was his method, a certain way of reading Scripture, a way of reading the Bible on many different levels. Origen is a central figure of the first great theological paradigm, the Gnosis-Wisdom model of the Patristic era."[20] In addition, from the patristic period comes an interest in identifying levels in the Christian life. Although "various patristic and medieval theologians identified diverse numbers of stages- from two stages (Evagrius' distinction between the practical life and gnosis) to thirty such stages (St John Climacus' degrees) gradually the identification of these stages came to be identified as the Three Ways."[21] The three ways were identified as beginner, proficient and perfect, following Origen and Evagrius or as purgative, illuminative, and unitive, following Pseudo-Dionysius. Origen's influence on Evagrius of Pontus is evident in his approach to biblical interpretation. Evagrius wrote a series of ascetical texts which integrated the practical teaching of the Egyptian monks with a theology based on Origen's work. Evagrius' "emphasis on identifying distracting "thoughts" and his teaching on "pure" or imageless prayer brought Origen's spiritual theology into the monastic tradition in a powerful, though controversial, manner . . . Evagrius' spiritual theology reads as emotionally cool, stressing the rational mind's self-realization in prayer."[22]

It is also well established however, that Augustine's work significantly reshaped Western theology and spirituality as "his brilliance and eloquence so quickly dominated the Latin Christian world that by the time of his death he had reoriented Western theology and spirituality."[23] Columba Stewart conclusively states that Augustine's spiritual theology was shaped by two principal themes: " the primacy of charity, both divine and human, and the insights into God's nature and the human search for God that he found in Latin translations of

[20] Ibid.
[21] O'Keefe, Becoming Good, Becoming Holy, 12.
[22] Columba Stewart, "Christian Spirituality during the Roman Empire" in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* ed. Arthur Holder (Chichester: Blackwell, 2011), 80-81.
[23] Ibid., 82.

Plotinus' Neoplatonism."[24] Augustine affirmed that "God's presence is spiritual, and can be sought by turning within the self to what is also immaterial and spiritual, the rational mind."[25] This does not translate to mean that theology should be only an intellectual endeavour. As Sheldrake clarifies, to be a theologian in this patristic period meant that a person had contemplated the mystery of the Incarnation and possessed an experience of faith on which to reflect. For Augustine, "God is known not by *scientia* but by *sapienta* [ ] not by objectification and analysis but a contemplative knowledge of love and desire."[26] The core of patristic theology was to be described as 'mystical' in that every Christian was drawn into the divine mystery through belonging to the Church.

The unity between knowledge and love or knowledge and contemplation found its ultimate expression in monastic theology, from Gregory the Great in the sixth century through to Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century.[27] In addition, this patristic - monastic style of theology drew its inspiration and method from the traditional meditative way of reading scripture known as *lectio divina*. Taken as paradigmatic, Laurentia Johns observes one overarching monastic attitude, reverence and one overarching practice, *lectio divina*:

> predating monasticism, exposure to the 'voice' and words of God is as ancient as the Jewish and Christian revelations themselves . . . the regular, attentive, prayerful listening to the Word of God, both as proclaimed publicly in the liturgy and inwardly appropriated by personal reading, *lectio divina* is not so much a technique as an attitude, or rather, a cluster of attitudes which can be seen as a nexus of monastic spirituality's main features: a respect for silence and that openness to 'the other' already mentioned which presupposes humility, docility and a willingness to be challenged. The Word of God acts as a lamp, lighting up the dark areas of the heart and gradually purifying them and illuminating them.

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.,83.
[26] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 37.
[27] Ibid.,38.

> Together with prayer and the sacraments, the practice of *lectio divina* helps, over time, to refashion in the practitioner the likeness of Christ, the Word himself. The ancient craft of refining precious metals by removing surface dross until the face of the refiner appeared on the metal's surface captures something of this mysterious inner process.[28]

Unpacking this approach further Sheldrake argues that, "medieval readers of Scripture based themselves on a theory of interpretation that can be traced back to Origen. In broad terms, this proposed four 'senses' of Scripture or dimensions of meaning."[29] These senses or dimensions involve the literal, historical sense but also three other more spiritual senses. The allegorical sense helped to reveal the theological meaning of the text, the moral sense asks how the Scriptures should be applied to Christian life and the anagogical sense offered a mystical or eschatological meaning. Augustine seems to have favoured a figurative or an allegorical reading of scripture. However, Augustine does not reject a literal meaning but rather "that the literal meaning . . . is the necessary foundation of any deeper interpretation . . . Augustine is always looking for the spirit in or behind the letter. Rich in meaning, for Augustine the Scriptures ultimately find their ongoing fulfilment in Christianity. Alongside this placing of the spirit over the letter, Augustine's focus was not solely the historical, literal sense of Scripture but rather of the continuity between Old and New Testaments finding fruition in Christian life. These senses or dimensions were also expressed on the stage illuminated through the development of dramatic art or specifically, the theatre. Dramatic performance in medieval Europe was heavily influenced by the Catholic church's central role in the life of the community.[30] Community effort was involved in translating and spreading the message of

[28] Laurentia Johns, "Monastic Spirituality" in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality* Eds. Richard Woods and Peter Tyler, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 76-77.
[29] Sheldrake, *Theology and Spirituality*, 38.
[30] Despite being responsible for closing the Roman theatres in the sixth century, due to an opposition to secular theatre and the so-called vices associated with it, the resurgence of theatre in Europe in the tenth century was, in fact, inspired by the church itself : "The four major dramatic forms, or four dimensions, were connected with the church, its rituals and its calendar of religious observances, liturgical drama enacted as liturgy of the Catholic

Christ from the Scriptures with a dynamism which made it relevant to the age. God's relation to creation is one which energises and nurtures and this was to be mirrored in the work of the early Christian communities. In this respect the approach was one of both unity and dynamism.

1.2 Signs of Separation

Around AD 1200 a major shift took place with regard to Christian spirituality. Changes in society and in the church provided the context for the new mysticism of the late medieval and early modern periods. Urbanization, growth of the middle class and improvements in literacy marked this stage, "In the church, the papacy's emergence as the centre of ecclesiastical power and the arbiter of religious reform was important. A rapidly changing society no longer found the enclosed monastic life lived far from urban centres as the prime spiritual ideal, so new forms of religious life appeared that advocated the apostolic life (*vita apostolica*) of poverty and preaching of Gospel throughout the world."[31] The most important of these new forms were the Franciscan and Dominican orders originating at the start of the thirteenth century. In addition, the centres of theological discourse were shifting too, "the centres of theological enquiry increasingly moved during the twelfth century from the monasteries to new cathedral 'schools' that eventually gave birth to the great European universities."[32] However, the seismic shift was one that was not merely a matter of geography. The "new scholarship in the narrow sense created centres that existed primarily to foster teaching and learning. The new

mass; cycle plays, illustrating scriptural history and performed by craft guilds on the feast of Corpus Christi; morality drama, enacting the symbolic structure of Christian life; and plays written and performed in schools and universities, sometimes imitating classical plays." Drama and theatre often arose in relation to religious observance. Interestingly though, "this drama that functioned to illustrate the liturgy of the Catholic mass or to 0dramatize the lives of saints for example were produced through community effort rather than by specialized theatres in the modern sense." This highlights the level of integration which existed between church and community in the spiritual lives of the people, it was a reciprocal relationship. W.B. Worthen ed. *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* (Berkeley: Thomson, 2004) 3,199.

[31] Bernard Mc Ginn, "The Mystical Tradition" in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, 37-38.

[32] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 39.

theology gradually gave birth not only to distinctions between disciplines such as biblical theology, doctrinal theology and moral theology. It also produced a belief that the discipline of the mind could be separated from the discipline of an ordered lifestyle or *ascesis*."[33] Alongside this separation, an increased dependency on texts materialised and "resulted in spiritual lives measured against textually fixed rules and ideas rather than the needs of the moment. A canon of devotional manuals gradually absorbed and replaced oral traditions and discarded works deemed too audacious; the tightly circumscribed act of reading became the most common and acceptable contemplative practices."[34] The spirituality that had been passed on thus far, "an embodied, sensual and orally communicated spirituality that incorporates reverence for the sacredness of place, space and sound"[35] was slowly being discarded in favour of a narrower focus on texts.

1.3 The Divorce of Theology and Spirituality

Text centred spirituality reached out beyond the monasteries to cathedral schools and newly founded universities in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The High Middle Ages in the West witnessed growing divisions within theology and the gradual separation of spirituality from theology. This "division went deeper than method or content. It was, at heart, a division between the affective side of faith (or participation) and conceptual knowledge."[36] Consequently, by the end of the Middle Ages, the 'spiritual life' had become marginalized from theology and culture in general. Sheldrake points out that although late medieval religion

[33] Ibid., 39-40.
[34] Ulrike Weithaus, "Christian Spirituality in the Medieval West (600-1450)" in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, 110.
[35] Ibid., 120.
[36] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 43.

was not completely individualistic, "there is no doubt that religious practice became more personal and internalized. It also began to demand a new specialized language, distinct from theological discourse as a whole, capable of expressing its separate existence."[37] Furthermore, Weithaus notes that the tendency to systematize the spiritual experiences of previous generations of mystics continued to grow, driving the divisions between the laity and the university-trained scholars even deeper. The tensions inherent in an exclusively academic approach to spiritual matters, according to Weithaus, find their most poignant expression in the biography of Jean Charlier de Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris and a spiritual and theological author. A sense of such tension can be gleaned from a letter extract Gerson wrote to his colleagues in Paris:

> I am afraid . . . that I will enter into the same vice of which I vehemently accuse others. And what is this you ask? There are those who by all kinds of trifles and clumsy novelties clutter up parchment and the minds of their listeners . . . We do write, but our sentences have no weight, our words no number or measure. For all that we write is flabby, mean, slack. We do not write what is new. Instead we repeat what is old but treat and transmit it in a new way.[38]

Despite Gerson's attempts to infuse academic life with spirituality, frustration and disillusionment ensued and Gerson spent the last ten years of his life in contemplative seclusion. By the end of the Middle Ages, there were few significant thinkers who stood against the separation of theology and spirituality. Furthermore, the newly forged link between religious orders and university level teaching inevitably gave birth to an intellectualist shift in spirituality. The "Dominicans entered the universities initially to educate their own members to be effective preachers. Gradually, however, they developed an intellectual ministry – indeed

[37] Ibid., 44
[38] Weithaus, "Christian Spirituality in the Medieval West", 119.

were the originators of the idea that the intellectual life was a spiritual path."[39] Through such developments, the High Middle Ages is the place where 'thinking' became a mastery of the facts rather than attention to a vision of truth expressed multifariously.

By the sixteenth century the relationship between theology and spirituality was strained to breaking point. Like many reform movements throughout Christian history, Lutheranism in particular, sought to call the church back to a faithful understanding of Christianity and to practices consistent with that right teaching.[40] The divisions in Western Christianity in the aftermath of the Reformation would encourage theology to concentrate on dogmatics further side-lining and marginalizing spirituality. In the Reformation, the struggle to complement the individual approach to the Bible with a true respect for the role of tradition, required a balance which was never adequately struck. Roman Catholic dogmatic theology "opposed not only the supposed unbalanced subjectivity of Protestants but also spiritual reformers and mystics in its own ranks . . . the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, were suspected of unorthodoxy because of the emphasis on inner freedom and personal inspiration."[41] In addition to effectively encouraging theology to concentrate on doctrines, the Reformation traditions became suspicious of attention to the spiritual life, "by the sixteenth century the relationship between mystical theology and theology in general was at best ambiguous and at worst antagonistic."[42]

The Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the growth of empirical and scientific enquiry as the way to truth and certainty. This deepened the split between theology and spirituality as Sheldrake highlights:

[39] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 81-82.
[40] Jonathan Linman, "Reform Spirituality: The Lutheran Tradition" *in The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, 130.
[41] Ibid., 44.
[42] Ibid.

> theology tended to espouse a defensive intellectual positivism and emphasize that it was a "scientific" discipline. That is to say, faith was increasingly expressed in propositional and conceptual terms. The value of abstract intelligence was overestimated. Consequently, the experiential dimension of human life was to be questioned continuously throughout an analytical journey toward what could be proved. The notion that theology was a science became linked to the belief that scientific enquiry could generate value-free knowledge.[43]

All of which Sheldrake notes, pointed theology towards a position of isolation from context or personal feeling. Providing a key example of this liberal response to rationalisation and modern science, Friedrich Schleiermacher, through his theological writings, "sought to provoke a compelling vision of the Christian faith to 'cultured despisers' who were likely to believe religion and its traditions to be superstitious and repressive. His response was an ingenious synthesis of Christian spirituality and modern philosophy that took shape through exploring the religious consciousness."[44] We cannot know God from experiments, claimed Schleiermacher, "True religion is sense and taste for the Infinite."[45] One can only know another from the extent to which they are open to another person and in this regard, experience and revelation both have an important part to play if we are to try to know God. Reacting against the approach to religion favoured by the Enlightenment which produced a deist God, remote from the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, he made an appeal to religious experience, believing that religion was: "more to do with intuition and feeling than mere logic."[46] For Schleiermacher, 'feeling' denoted knowledge through participation during which the individual soul experiences a sense and taste for the infinite, his definition of true religion.[47]

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[43] Sheldrake, *Explorations in Spirituality*, 59.
[44] Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart Sicking, "Christian Spirituality in Europe and North America since 1700" in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, 146.
[45] Friedrich Schleiermacher. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965), 32.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 145. Eminent poet William Wordsworth, in *To My Sister*, depicts a similar sense of such 'feeling':"Love, now a universal birth, from heart to heart is stealing, from earth to man, man to earth: it is the hour of feeling." See James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 101.

In his speeches in *On Religion*, Schleiermacher wished to show the educated, the cultured, of his own time that what they despised and rejected in religion was the mere external and dispensable husk concealing the real essence of religion. Removing oneself from experience of God and solely relying on intellect is dismissed by Schleiermacher and is even thought of by him as somewhat ignorant. In "the hands of those who do not understand how to unbind it, let them break it up and examine it as they may, nothing but the cold dead mass remains."[48] In this respect Schleiermacher's work shares common themes with William Wordsworth. In *The Tables Turned*, Wordsworth asserts that nature brings intelligence but we tend to ruin such knowledge by dissecting it, strikingly similar to Schleiermacher's argument of what we do to religion and therefore worth quoting:

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.[49]

Significantly, Schleiermacher brought back to the foreground an aspect of the God question which the Enlightenment had lost sight of. The immanence of God was once again the main focus and the importance of human experience of God in the world was re-emphasized; "although the world is not identical with God, at the same time neither is it utterly independent of God, or totally unconnected with God."[50] In putting all his emphasis on the immanence of

[48] Schleiermacher. *On Religion*, 13. See also, James C Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 98.
[49] Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 101
[50] Ibid., 22.

God however, he appeared to neglect somewhat the divine transcendence of God. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that he was addressing a situation where God's immanence in the world was under the 'reasoned' scrutiny of Enlightenment thinking and so, to bring balance, his argument was bound to lean in this direction. Schleiermacher's enterprise can be understood as "the reassertion of the importance of the divine immanence and religious experience."[51]

It was through Schleiermacher's rediscovery of the immanence of God in the world of nature and history that made possible once again a more deeply felt personal experience of God, "God was no longer banished from the world, remote and inaccessible, but was experienced as present in the most common, prosaic events of everyday life."[52] Indeed, there have been difficulties with Schleiermacher's approach to the God question. However, "whether one agrees or not with his method of trying to put religious thinking back at the centre of thinking people's concerns, is not as important as to realise how right he was to see that Christian faith must debate with the best elements of whatever culture it finds itself in contact with, if it is not to face extinction or a future of public irrelevance."[53] In this respect, after the French Revolution, new approaches to moral theology were developed. John Michael Sailer and John Baptist Hirscher were, it is argued, the most distinguished pioneers in the effort to provide a vital renewal to moral theology:

> They realized that a casuistic approach in the age of rationalism and enlightenment sought to establish clear limits for precepts and obligations. In contrast, Sailer and Hirscher sought to recover the evangelical foundations of moral theology, not only for the benefit of confessors but also to help ordinary Catholics live truly Christian lives . . . [Sailer] sought to set out the full life of perfection rooted in Christian virtues and in the Sermon on the Mount. In contrast to the cold and sterile atmosphere of the Enlightenment, Sailer wanted to cultivate a theology of the heart . . . Hirscher's moral theology was deeply rooted

[51] Henry. *On not understanding God*, 153.
[52] Ibid.,112.
[53] Ibid., 159.

> in the biblical theology of the kingdom of God. He was a man of deep psychological insights, and in that regard he presented a more complete system of thought than Sailer.[54]

R. Kevin Seasoltz states that in the footsteps of these two great figures came the distinguished faculty from the newly founded School of Tubingen, which emphasized that the primary goal of moral theology was to facilitate the implementation of grace in the efforts of Christians to respond to the Lord's call to lead a perfect life.[55]

1.4 Manuals of Moral Theology

By the end of the eighteenth century, the moral manuals made their appearance in theology, "whereas the casuists of the sixteenth century saw each new case as an occasion for further investigations, in the later centuries, cases were simple conundrums to be dispatched by these varied principles. As a result, the principles seemed to be ahistorical, even eternal, and certainly always a part of the method of moral theology."[56] From the sixteenth century through to the twentieth century, "the morally upright stance was fairly minimal: avoid sin."[57] Moral manuals were widely used in Catholic seminaries right up to the Second Vatican Council. Moral manuals developed out of the community of clerics to which one belonged.[58]

[54] R. Kevin Seasoltz, *A Virtuous Church: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Liturgy for the 21st Century* (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 95.
[55] Ibid., 96.
[56] James F. Keenan,SJ, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (London: Continuum, 2010), 4.
[57] Ibid.,5.
[58] Three texts in particular were widely used and of significance: Thomas Slater's *A Manual of Moral Theology for English- Speaking Catholics,* Jesuit Henry Davis's *Moral and Pastoral Theology in Four Volumes* and Capuchin Heribert Jone's *Moral Theology*.

Demonstrating the division still evident in the relationship between theology and spirituality by reducing moral theology and natural law, it is acknowledged that:

> if readers were looking to learn how to become better disciples, they should look elsewhere: to the manuals of ascetcal, devotional, or mystical theology, where they would find the 'high ideal' of Christian perfection.' Moral theology, he added, 'proposes to itself the humbler but still necessary task of defining what is right and wrong in all the practical relations of the Christian life . . . Slater concluded the stunning preface bisecting the natural law's fundamental principle, 'Do good and avoid evil.' The first step on the right road to conduct is to avoid evil.' By referencing the doing of the good, that is, Christian perfection to ascetical manuals, Slater held that the natural law has only a singular task: to guide us to avoid evil.[59]

Manualist theology at the beginning of the twentieth century operated out of a very legalistic world. The principles of which were indelibly linked to a vision of moral truth that was fairly certain, universal, ahistorical and remote. As the twentieth century progressed, the congregations in the Vatican defined more matters affecting moral theology: "the Vatican became more and more authoritarian and attached various penalties to crimes and serious sins, which were outlined in the 1917 Code of Canon Law . . . In spite of the positive developments in psychiatry and psychology, as well as in the other social sciences, the manualists tended to look upon the ordinary Catholic simply as a wounded and ignorant penitent."[60]

Crucially though, with regard to the relationship between theology and spirituality, the manualists held back any hopes for re-integration as "there was little or no room for innovation; the manualists were unsympathetic toward those theologians who urged a more effective

[59] Ibid., 12.
[60] Seasoltz, *A Virtuous Church*, 97-98.

integration of moral theology with dogmatic, ascetical, and devotional theology. More and more the manualists receded from sound theology into a narrow interpretation of canon law."[61]

A revival of a purified form of Thomist theology did succeed in bringing about some re-engagement between the subject matter of spirituality and theology. However, unfortunately, the form this re-engagement took had severe limitations; the starting point for 'spiritual theology' was the principles governing dogmatic theology, "the overall approach was one of precise categories and definitions. Despite the experiential subject matter, the theology was static and the method was deductive. Divine revelation and rational knowledge were the major sources because a 'scientific' study of the spiritual life needed universal principles."[62] The relationship between theology and spirituality, although still strained and governed by a rational approach, reached a significant turning point at the beginning of the twentieth century. What "we find in the twentieth century, then, is the enormously complex move from defining moral theology as "the fixed science of human action to becoming a guide for the personal and communal development of the conscientious disciples of Christ."[63] The static and deductive method of moral theology, which allied closer to canon law than to spirituality, finally gave way to a more dynamic approach.

1.5 A Return to the Sources

Ressourcement theology was concerned with a return to the sources. The aim was to rediscover forgotten or neglected dimensions of the great tradition found in the scriptures but

[61] Ibid.,98.
[62] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 54.
[63] Keenan, *A history of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 6-7.

particularly, "*Ressourcement* theology used rather a 'genetic' method, a return to the sources that studied first the biblical witness and then the subsequent history of doctrinal development . . . [tracking] the living tradition and what it embodied for growth and change for church teaching and practice."[64] The biblical and liturgical renewal were, "completed by a patristic rejuvenation. The movement towards fuller contact with patristic thought is perhaps the most interesting and challenging of the various currents of renewal in moral theology in the early part of the twentieth century, as it provides an authentic witness to the faith in a way that is sensitive to the ever-changing needs of humanity."[65] Yves Congar, best known for his contribution to Vatican II, "adopted *ressourcement* as the standard for church reform understood as an urgent call to move from a 'less profound to a more profound tradition; a discovery of the most profound resources."[66] There was a concerted effort on behalf of moral theologians to attend closely to the proper theological and biblical underpinnings for their writings and teaching. They concentrated less on philosophical and abstract truths and instead sought to be more positive than negative and to treat Christian morality as a personal response to God's discipleship. As a result, Catholic moral theology was both deeply personal and social. By the 1950's Bernard Haring came to epitomize the new approach taken by reform-minded moralists.

1.6 An Ongoing Renewal in Catholic Moral Theology

The shift which resulted in the integration of spirituality and morality occurred prior to the Second Vatican Council in no small part due to the work of Bernard Haring entitled *The*

[64] Gerald O'Collins SJ, "*Ressourcement* and Vatican II" in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* Eds., Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 375.
[65] Gabriel Flynn, "Introduction: The Twentieth Century Renaissance in Catholic Theology" in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal Twentieth – Century Catholic Theology*, 4.
[66] Ibid.

Law of Christ.[67] In the 1950s, Catholic moral theologians split over theological methods; some stayed with the manualist tradition while others began looking for a moral theology that was more positive, theological and attuned to human experience. Bernard Haring sums up the interests of the latter, "Moral theology as I understand it, is not concerned first with decision making and discrete acts. Its basic task and purpose is to gain the right vision, to assess the main perspectives, and to present those truths and values which should bear upon decisions to be taken before God."[68] For Haring, moral theology is not only interested in decisions and actions; it may raise the question 'what ought I to *do*?' but more importantly it asks, 'who ought I to *be*?' Haring's view is that we have to become responsible and creative persons in the discipleship of Jesus Christ, those who want to live creative freedom and fidelity in Christ ought to understand themselves, above all, in relationship with God, with fellowmen, themselves and all of creation, "It is not so much new ideas as new relationships that change people, communities and societies. Only one who understands his or her self in a relationship of response and dialogue with God and fellowmen can reach that selfhood that is truly free to love and to be faithful in a creative way."[69] "The renewal of moral theology was not only a matter for moral theologians. Dogmatic theologians, men like Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, and the notable theologians of other churches, have explored the salvation dimension and the prophetic strength of the deposit of faith. Biblical renewal helped to bring moral and dogmatic theology together again:

> A great turning point for the whole of Catholic theology came through the encyclical *Divina afflante Spiritu* of Pius XII in 1943. It opened for biblical scholars and all theologians an era of liberty and thus of greater fidelity to the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council has given great impetus to the renewal of Catholic moral theology. The deepened self-understanding of the Church set

[67] Bernard Haring, *The Law of Christ* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1965).
[68] Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 83.
[69] Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: Volume 1* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1978), 85.

> forth in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, which should be read in the perspective of the prophetic tradition of Israel and the Church, the *Decree on Ecumenism*, surely one of the most prophetic documents of Church history, the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, which can mean liberation form a proponent "knowledge of dominion", and, finally, the short but forceful appeal for a profound renewal of moral theology in view of the lofty vocation the believers in Christ (*Priestly Formation*, 16): all these present a great challenge for moral theology today to enter into a new phase of creativity in freedom and fidelity. These two aspects cannot be severed from each other.[70]

Studying at Tubingen also gave Haring an experience of the reformers. Haring appropriated the insights of three theologians, one being Johannes Stelzenberger who held the chair in moral theology at Tubingen from 1950 to 1965. Instead of "focusing on discipleship or the self-understanding of Jesus, he looked to the kingdom of God."[71] Haring, according to Keenan, also depended on his professor and doctoral dissertation director from Tubingen, Theodor Steinbuchel who provided Haring with a way of appreciating "both graced human freedom and the call to decision making as key elements for realizing the call to pursue moral truth."[72] Many new values emerged after Haring's landmark work *The Law of Christ* namely, sanctity of life, consistent life ethics, the preferential option for the poor, and solidarity. Echoing the unity enjoyed by the early Christians in pursuit of truth, Haring's "wartime experiences convinced him that in crises people realize their true selves and reason from the depths of their commitments. He witnessed to how many uneducated Christians recognized the truth, were convicted by it and stood firm with it. Haring found truth not primarily in what persons said but in how they acted and lived."[73] An authentic faith, for Haring, must include faith experience; a faith response that involves personal choice, interiorization and ultimately, freedom: "Genuine faith, as the Bible presents it, includes faith experience. This is something

[70] Ibid., 56-57.
[71] Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 90-91.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 89.

quite different from all other human experiences. It transcends them and gives them meaning by its character of *wholeness*. In faith, we experience God as the Life of our life and the Lord of all our being, Faith experience is not just in the intellect or the will alone. It seizes one's whole being and gives a sense of completion, of wholeness and salvation."[74] Here, Haring firmly re-establishes that in matters of morality and spirituality, the mastery of intellect, *on its own*, will not suffice, "the experience is quite different from conceptualization, although it does not exclude it. Whoever tries to communicate faith to others through dry concepts only will fail dismally."[75] Haring warned that whenever we synthesize our moral value system in categories unrelated to faith-response, we cause a split between religion and our everyday life. Firmly rejecting the purely empirical enquiry and intellectual positivism of the Enlightenment, Haring reintroduces the themes touched on by Schleiermacher. Faith is far more than subscribing to a code of dogmas: for a Christian, it should be easy to understand that believers are not faced just with a system of teachings but, above all, with Jesus Christ, the living and most real symbol of God's love for humankind:

> This central and most real symbol, and the symbols used in Christ's teaching, touch our intellect, our intuition, imagination, our affectivity, and thus also, more deeply, our will. Symbols are not signs or images apart from the mind; they are dominant patterns in the imagination that mediate experience and create the world to which we belong. It is certainly possible that the symbols that rule the imagination are in fact symbols which reveal the hidden structure of reality, and thus lead people into a reconciled life and make them build a world in keeping with the deepest inclination of their being.[76]

As a Redemptorist, Haring realized that moral theology must be concerned with the care of the whole person and therefore it must be, "theologically demanding, pastorally inclined

[74] Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: Volume 1* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1978), 63.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, 63-64.

and spiritually enriching. The result was the development of a profound synthesis of fundamental moral theology, deeply rooted in dogmatic theology, biblical in its source, and ascetical in its construction of normative and practical guidelines for right moral conduct."[77] In integrating these components, it could be argued that Haring was inadvertently paving the way for the re-integration of theology and spirituality. There was a significant shift from a morality of acts governed by norms toward a personal and social morality governed by the integration of a virtuous life under the inner presence of the Holy Spirit. In short "moral theology is putting morality back together with spirituality."[78] Among the most important Catholic moral theologians of the twentieth century, Haring's call-response structure of the moral life and the themes of conversion and discipleship are key to his work. For Haring "the moral life is rooted in God's love for us. That is where it all begins, continues and ends. After Haring's work, there has been no turning back on his major thesis that morality is the response to the spiritual experience of God's enabling love. His insight, that the dynamics of the spiritual experience contain the moral impulse to pass on what has been experienced, is key to appreciating that morality and spirituality are inseparably intertwined."[79]

1.7 The Re-Integration of Spirituality within Moral Theology

Richard M. Gula asserted that "When we separate morality and spirituality into separate spheres of life, we begin to reduce the moral life to sins . . . we expect morality to provide a set of rules or principles that we only need to apply in order to determine the right way to act."[80] At the core of Gula's argument is the fact that when morality and spirituality

[77] Seasoltz, *A Virtuous Church*, 102.
[78] Richard Gula, "Morality and Spirituality," in *Moral Theology: New Directions and Fundamental Issues*, ed. James Keating (Mahwah: Paulist, 2004), 162
[79] Richard M. Gula, *The Good Life: Where Morality and Spirituality Converge*,3.
[80] Ibid.,4.

work together, we can begin to live the good life, "When it comes to living the good life, character and virtue matter; that is to say, the moral life and spiritual life converge when we begin to explore the sort of persons we ought to become and the sort of lives we ought to live in order to flourish as authentic human beings."[81] For this reason, Gula's work provides an example of, and keen insight into, the re-integration of spirituality within morality.

The meeting point for moral theology and spirituality is found through spirituality's drive toward integrating the whole of one's life around what gives ultimate value and morality's emphasis on the centrality of personal character and virtue. In contrast to an act-centred approach to morality, a morality focused on character and virtue asks, "from what inner place are you doing it? In answering this question, morality meets spirituality,"[82] Spirituality is "the principle of integrating all the diverse aspects of our lives into a coherent identity . . . morality, however, expresses our relationship to God through the whole of our lives in the kind of person we become, the choices we make, the actions we do, and the kind of communities we create."[83] For Gula, this integration is inseparable and the importance of such an endeavour is described as "fundamentally a vocation- a response to what we hear God speak to us . . . living the good life, simply put, is graced living expressing the divine love within us."[84] When we respond to God, in becoming who we are meant to be, we are making an internal and external commitment to God. Who we are cannot be separated from what we do and when it is we cannot respond as appropriately to our call. In Gula's view, Spirituality is concerned with our actions. However, when action becomes the sole focus, then we neglect what nourishes and

[81] Ibid.,5.
[82] Richard M. Gula, "Spirituality and Morality: What Are We Talking About?" in *Readings in Moral Theology No.17:Ethics and Spirituality* Eds., Charles E. Curran and Lisa A. Fullam (New York: Paulist Press, 2014),55.
[83] Ibid., 164-165.
[84] Richard M. Gula. *The Good Life*, 3.

sustains those actions. In understanding that the purpose of life is to live in friendship with God, then there can be no real separation of the moral and spiritual life.

Furthermore, "Covenantal love cultivates a moral character marked by the virtues of justice and solidarity . . . a capacity for empathy and imagination is necessary if we are ever to live the good life. We cannot be moral persons until we learn to appreciate what is not ourself."[85] Covenantal love involves the practice of giving and receiving and this means relationships with others must come into being. We cannot relate to God unless we are able to relate to each other and try to walk in each other's shoes. In *The Call to Holiness* he articulates the point:

> This deeper mystery is God reaching out to us, calling us into relationship (through our spirituality) and to a response (through our moral life). In one instance, it can be our interdependence with all things and our responsibility to care for one another and the Earth. In another it can be our solidarity with all peoples and our responsibility to protect human life. In each instance, we feel drawn out of ourselves and into deeper communion with nature or with humanity; and, in being so drawn, we feel called to be responsible for more than ourselves. In those human moments there is divine communication awaiting a response.[86]

Through practice or experience we come to know the truth in very real terms. This is perhaps one of the reasons why many people's journey in faith begins when a life experience, good or bad, has helped them to see, hear or know the truth in their hearts. "Those who live "by the flesh" experience God's law as a burden . . . a restriction of their own freedom. On the other hand, those who are impelled by love and "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), and who desire to serve others, find in God's law the fundamental and necessary way in which to practice love as something freely chosen and freely lived out." (VS 18). Gula states that "the insight of the covenant is that we are an interdependent community where individual good is bound up with

[85] Ibid.,49-50.
[86] Richard M. Gula, *The Call to Holiness: Embracing a Fully Christian Life* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2003), 110.

the good of the whole."[87] This pinpoints why convergence between morality and spirituality is necessary. Philip Keane concurs arguing that Catholic moral theology still has much to do to understand itself as being not only about individual decisions but also about the conversion of the human heart and the human mind so that we become good moral persons, not only makers of good decisions. To say this in another way, moral theology has before it the task of uniting the moral and the spiritual life into an integrated whole.[88]

Arguing that the moral and spiritual life should no longer be studied as separate entities but in fact, even though distinct, should be treated together as one, Mark O'Keefe observes that although we commonly distinguish between a Christian moral life and a Christian spiritual life, in the daily existence of Christian men and women these 'lives' are of course one. In the actual living of the Christian life, efforts to avoid sin, to grow in prayer, to make good moral decisions, and to grow in virtue are intimately intertwined. Therefore, the study and the expansion of the field of morality and spirituality would seem like the next logical step. However, as O'Keefe continues: "one might expect that, in their efforts to aid the growth of an authentic Christian existence, the two disciplines would be marked by mutual interchange. Such is not the case – at least not in a sustained and systematic way."[89] Such is the importance of inspiring a constant and deeper understanding of our morality and spirituality that the theologian's mission is emphasized as a vocation. Consequently, it is imperative that the interconnectedness between morality and spirituality is explored and developed further. There can be no separation between who we are and what we do; there can be no separation between prayer and action if we are to be true to our covenantal commitment. "The deepest meaning of human existence, in fact, is revealed in the free quest for that truth capable of giving direction and fullness to life."[90] At the

[87] Gula, *The Good Life*, 50.
[88] Philip Keane, "Catholic Moral Theology from 1960 to 2040" in ed. Dermot Lane, *Catholic Theology Facing the Future*, (Dublin: Columba, 2003), 84.
[89] O'Keefe, *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy*, 87.
[90] Ibid.

heart of this statement lies the inescapable tension we are faced with throughout our lives; in our search for truth is it a freedom *for* truth that we are seeking or are we content with a freedom *from* truth? Gula illustrates the long and ever developing journey involved in the former, explaining that the freedom of our moral striving does not mean doing just anything we want to. Rather, the freedom of our moral striving is wanting to do what we can do, "moral freedom is an act of self-determination, an act which, through all the pathways of particular choices, chooses who we want to be, persons either open or closed to the mystery of our lives and of all life."[91] Echoing Haring, he states that we cannot forget the gift of the imagination in moral maturity which is the most inspiring and powerful tool the human person has at their disposal, "The imagination is a powerful moral resource, not to be equated with mere fantasy or make-believe . . . the imagination is our capacity to construct our worlds. By means of the imaginative process, we bring together diverse experiences into a meaningful whole." [92] This is a truth also believed by Patrick Hannon: "A worthwhile moral education must include also education of the emotions and in the use of the imagination."[93]

Ultimately, the relationship which exists between morality and spirituality is a critical-dialogical relationship. Summing up this relationship, Gula highlights the delicate balance which needs to be struck:

[91] Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 82.
[92] Ibid., 145-146.
[93] Patrick Hannon, *Moral Decision Making* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005), 74. The Imagination is classically described by Henry Corbin as "a world beyond the empirical control of our sciences, [the imagination] is a supersensible world. It is only perceptible by imaginative perception and the events taking place there can be lived only by imaginative or imaginative consciousness . . . the active imagination guides, anticipates, moulds sense perception, that is why it transmutes sensory data into symbols. The Burning Bush is only a brushwood fire if it is merely perceived by the sensory organs. In order that Moses may perceive the Burning Bush and hear the Voice calling him… an organ of trans-sensory perception is needed. Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton: Mythos, 1981), 80.

> This means that they shape and reshape one another. While spirituality gives rise to morality, morality in turn reacts upon spirituality to correct or to confirm its direction. A sign of authentic spirituality is the kind of life it engenders. As the biblical criterion would have it, 'You will know them by their fruits' (Matt 7:20). Morality is the public face of one's spirituality, for morality is the place where we express our experience of God and our response to God. Without spirituality, morality gets cut off from its roots in the experience of God and so loses its character as a personal response to being loved by God, or being graced. Then it easily gets reduced to abiding by laws and to solving moral problems. Likewise, without morality, spirituality can spin off into ethereal ideas that never become real. Then the criticisms of spirituality as being about some other life in some other world would be true. But spirituality permeates all aspects of morality. It is the atmosphere within which we form and express our virtue. Recent developments in moral theology give us the context and concepts for understanding this relationship more clearly. We have for too long kept spirituality separate from morality. It is time to put back together what belongs together.[94]

However, the challenging question for us still remains; how can we be faithful to God in our day as Jesus was in his? Creating "a just social order is inseparable from a spirituality expressing a life lived in Christ's Spirit."[95] Therefore, it is imperative that the social justice dimension be to the fore.

1.8 Social Justice Concerns

Since Vatican II, one of the main implications of the re-integration of moral theology and spirituality has been in the area of social justice. Pope John XXIII argued the case and saw the need to rebuild and renew a new moral order. Affirming that progress had been made in

[94] Gula, "Spirituality and Morality: What Are We Talking About?", 58.
[95] Richard M. Gula, "Morality and Spirituality," in *Moral Theology: New Directions and Fundamental Issues*, ed. James Keating (Mahwah: Paulist, 2004), pp. 162-177, here 166.

scientific and technical areas, he argued that the challenge still remains to build communities that are more humanely related:

> Such theories as have been floated have had little impact because they fail to take account of human weakness and suffering and the deep – rooted sense of religion that exists in mankind. That sense is not the result of a feeling due to fantasy, but arises from man's deepest needs; God has made us for himself and our hearts find no rest save in him. There will be no peace until man recovers the sense of dignity that comes from being a creature and a child of God, the source of justice, truth and love . . . The tragedy of the modern world is the urge to construct a social order apart from God – its only true foundation.[96]

Similarly, *Gaudium et spes* recalls that the "conditions of the modern world lend greater urgency to this duty of the Church of bringing all humankind to fuller union in Christ, for, while people of our present day are drawn more closely together by social, technological and cultural bonds, it still remains for them to achieve full unity in Christ."(GS 1) In addition, the Gospel has always and will continue to help Christians to better understand and reflect upon the plight of the poor, highlighting what it means to be poor in every sense of the word. This is exemplified in the example of Jesus in the Gospels and in the letters of Paul. Addressing the Corinthian community, Paul argues that a building up of the 'self' is what will tear this Church apart and instead tries to persuade the Corinthians to use the spiritual gifts that God grants us to provide unity which will lead to enduring faith, hope and agape in the community instead of division. The appeal is not simply to 'imitate' Christ, but to be conformed to what he is because they are already in him. Gula, elaborating on this response argues that, "discipleship is the way of imitation but not of mimicry . . . we must establish strong bonds of solidarity with others who share in the vision and mission of Jesus . . . Christian spirituality is life in the spirit of

[96] Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching*: *The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus* (Leominster: Fowler Wright Books, 1998), 166.

Jesus, and Christian morality is not just the imitation of a good man but the imitation of the divine love expressed in Jesus."[97] But what did all this mean in practice? "Paul's response to the many questions facing him, particularly at Corinth, is to focus and emphasize love for others. Christ died for their weaker brothers (1 Cor. 8:11); therefore, they must be concerned for their welfare." [98] Most important to point out though is the fact that Paul is not merely advocating a kind of early humanism. Paul is convinced that what mortals are themselves unable to achieve, can in fact, be achieved by the spirit of God at work in human hearts and lives. Clearly, love for others and giving oneself up for others must be the hallmark of Christian life.[99]

Capturing the essence of the existing harmony between morality and spirituality, Gula states that "the moral journey begins in that soulful space where we accept God's love for us and awaken to responsibility for promoting the well-being of persons and the community in harmony with the environment. In this way morality reveals one's spirituality. In other words, how we live reveals who we are, what we genuinely value, and how we are integrating life experiences around what we believe gives ultimate value.[100] However, an important question for many other theologians asks how effective can moral theology be if it does not understand the real needs and interests of people? For all the innovation of the twentieth century in moral theology, especially in the area of conscience, most still explore conceptual and philosophical concerns; "in short, the practicality of life, the needs of the poor, the variety of experiences of suffering, and the call to justice were infrequently addressed (exceptions included Marciano Vidal, Kevin Kelly and Enda McDonagh.)"[101] Justice issues are of major concern for many theologians. Philip Keane believes that there are "too many Catholics who do not take the

[97] Gula, "Morality and Spirituality", 171-172.
[98] Ibid., 108.
[99] Ibid., 122.
[100] Ibid., 176.
[101] Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 197

church's social teaching seriously" who are more concerned with questions over sexuality for example, and he believes that "moral theology faces the pressing task of finding ways to articulate the church's social teaching . . . the peace and tranquillity of the entire world will depend in part on a more genuine and wholehearted acceptance of these teachings."[102] Real and active concern for justice is the necessary foundation for Christian spirituality. Concern for justice is essential to Christian spirituality, "prayer and action for justice, contemplation and action, are essential to Christian life, to Christian spirituality . . . spirituality, as Christian, is linked with justice for the poor because Jesus identified himself with the marginalized, with the poor, with victims of injustice."[103]

If indeed there can be no separation between who we are and what we do, it follows that there can be no separation between contemplation and action if we are to be true to our covenantal commitment; spirituality and moral theology must work in harmony to be imitators of Christ by reaching out to those suffering with compassion. However, contemplation affects, and is effected by, theology as a whole and a harmony must exist between theology and spirituality in order to meet, understand and help the real needs and interests of the people. A strong advocate for social justice, Gustavo Gutierrez states that: "As a matter of fact, our methodology is our spirituality . . . Reflection on the mystery of God (for that is what a theology is) is possible only in the context of the following of Jesus. Only when one is walking according to the Spirit can one think and proclaim the gratuitous love of [God] for every human being[104] A reflection on the mystery of God is intrinsic to all of theology and in this respect, is a reflection that needs to be re-integrated with spirituality.

[102] Keane, "Catholic Moral Theology From 1960 to 2040", 90.
[103] O'Keefe, *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy*, 88.
[104]Anne E. Patrick, "Ethics and Spirituality: The Social Justice Connection," *The Way* 63 (1988): pp. 103-116, here 103.

1.9 Conclusion: The Re-Integration of Theology and Spirituality

Anne Patrick maintains that spirituality is becoming an increasingly popular with people because in matters of spirituality we are free to search, experiment and discern without judgement. Firstly, she states that, "at the level of scholarly writing, there is a trend away from narrow, segmented specialization in academic disciplines towards broader, more inclusive efforts to understand and promote religious life," Continuing that secondly, "at the level of religious thought and practice there is in progress a paradigm shift in Christian and particularly Roman Catholic consciousness that parallels the Copernican revolution of the sixteenth century."[105] Spirituality is seen as not only being concerned with prayer and pious practices but with the whole of Christian life. Since Vatican II, Catholics have also come to respect the spiritualities of other religious traditions as well as 'nonreligious' forms of spirituality, "In sum, the compass of what counts under the heading of spirituality has grown considerably in recent decades, and there has been a greater affirmation of worldly values and appreciation for pluralism of experience and perspective." [106]

Contemporary attempts to encourage a conversation between spirituality and theology are absolutely vital. As Philip Sheldrake argues, this conversation would be a rich source for

[105] Ibid., 103-104.
[106] Anne E. Patrick, *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1996.)

the renewal of theology, "It also guarantees the continued development of spiritualities that are rich in tradition while fully attentive to contemporary questions, values and experiences . . . if we learn how to speak from within the experience of the majority rather than as disengaged and superior observers that we will be able to show how the particular riches of Christian theology and spirituality relate to and expand that experience."[107] Christian life is marked by moments where the Catholic social teaching themes of solidarity and love for the common good are displayed. The challenge to Christian spirituality is to show how its vision of God may contribute powerfully to the desire to find communion with others, express compassion for others and transform the world.[108] According to Sheldrake, the Christian tradition has to learn a new language, "It must be able to speak in a world in which lifestyle and immediacy of experience are the central features of the spiritual quest."[109] The currents in contemporary theology suggest that, through the further integration of theology and spirituality, a new imagination will be evoked and a new language is possible.

Such a language will be inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary in nature, ensuring many, varying voices can be heard and therefore better understood. Spirituality has an important role to play in the integration of all aspects of human life and experience. Spirituality as lived experience is, by definition, determined by the particular ultimate value within the horizon of which the life project is pursued. Consequently, it involves intrinsically some relatively coherent and articulate understanding of both the human being and their horizon of ultimate value which in Christian terms is theology. In this respect, even though not the only discipline, theology is the most important single discipline at the service of spirituality and therefore the role of theology must be assessed to understand how it can integrate with spirituality. In addition, theology that is rooted in spirituality can reflect the experience of

[107] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 202.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., 201.

Church in a way that is both dynamic and constant, and as Sheldrake points out, imaginative: "The Christian treasure house contains a rich array of resources that speak to the imagination . . . spirituality has always known this."[110]

Therefore, theology has a unique role to play in the discipline of spirituality. It is important that Christianity finds a voice within the conversation that is beginning to take place about the spiritual renewal of society, "Christianity has to face a problem of conviction and a complex matter of translation. It may have a great deal to share but ways must be found of expressing its riches that are engaging and make sense."[111] In this respect, the next three chapters intend to offer a synthesis of this approach and as such, it seemed necessary and appropriate to study theologians who emerge from different contexts, different continents and entirely different cultural backgrounds. In sum, the following three chapters seek to explore the integration of theology and spirituality as understood by Jon Sobrino, Sandra M. Schneiders and Donal Dorr. It is hoped that through an understanding of their respective fields, a better understanding of the need for such integration will ensue.

[110] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 201
[111] Ibid., 200.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORK OF SANDRA M. SCHNEIDERS

2. Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed intense debate on the subject of the nature of spirituality itself and spirituality as an academic discipline. Sandra Marie Schneiders, widely respected as one of the most influential figures concerning the study of Christian spirituality, has consistently defended what constitutes Christian spirituality. The term "spirituality," for Schneiders necessitates a three-fold reference; reference to a fundamental dimension of the human being, the lived experience which actualizes that dimension and the academic discipline which studies that experience. Schneiders characterizes spirituality as an essentially interdisciplinary endeavour. It is the study of the lived Christian faith where the object of study is accessed through expressions of the particular and aims at knowledge of the individual. Sandra M. Schneider's work endeavours to explain spirituality as a lived experience in which there exists an understanding both of the human being and their horizon of ultimate value, one example of which could be Christianity. Therefore, theology and spirituality are essential to each other and can be viewed as two partners in the search for God. However, Schneider's work also embraces a vision of spirituality that is at all times multi – disciplinary, inter – disciplinary and anthropologically inclusive and hence many and varied are the disciplinary partners that can co-operate together in the search for God. The fully engaged scholar of spirituality "does not simply interpret concrete examples of human encounter with God but also understands this encounter as a particular participation in a living tradition that these

individuals incarnate and mediate."[1]It is necessary for Schneiders to continually state this understanding and this approach to spirituality because of the division that took place between theology and spirituality in the High Middle Ages and therefore preconciliar developments of spirituality must firstly be considered.

2.1 Preconciliar Considerations

The intellectual origins of secular reason lie in the theological developments in the High Middle Ages, Philip Sheldrake argues, with distinctions being made for the first time between disciplines such as biblical theology, doctrinal theology and moral theology. In addition 'thinking' began "to be understood as a mastery of facts and details rather than attention to the truths expressed in symbols."[2] Until the High Middle Ages, theology was not divided into subdisciplines nor was it separated from biblical studies or spirituality.[3] Schneiders captures the essence of the theological endeavour in the assertion that all theology was "faith seeking

[1]Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, eds. Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert (Mahwah: Paulist, 2006), 198.
[2] Philip Sheldrake, *Theology and Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 40.
[3] A brief summary of the term 'spirituality' in this specific context is explored by Schneiders. Its development is traced from its origin in the Pauline neologism "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*), the adjectival from derived from the Greek word for the Holy Spirit of God (*pneuma*), to its modern use in pre-Vatican II Catholicism. Briefly the adjective "spiritual" was coined by Paul to describe any reality that was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Most importantly, he used it in 1 Cor 2;14-15 to distinguish the "spiritual person" (*pneumatikos*) from the "natural person" (*psychikos anthropos*). Paul was not contrasting spiritual with material, living with dead, or good with evil, but the person under the influence of the Spirit of God with the merely natural human being. Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," in *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676-691, here, 685. Offering a similar summary of the origins of the term *spirituality* in this context, Philip Sheldrake's assessment of its history is brief but concise "The origins of the English word *spirituality* lie in the Latin noun *spiritualitas* associated with the adjective *spiritualis* (spiritual). These derive from the Greek *pneuma*, spirit, and the adjective pneumatikos as they appear in Paul's letters in the New Testament. It is important to note that "spirit" and "spiritual" are not the opposite of "physical" or "material" (Greek soma, Latin corpus) but of "flesh" (Greek sarx, Latin caro) in the sense of everything contrary to the Spirit of God. The intended contrast is not therefore between body and soul but between two attitudes to life. A "spiritual person" (see 1 Cor ":14-15) was simply someone within whom the Spirit of God dwelt or who lived under the Spirit of God. The Pauline moral sense of "spiritual" meaning "life in the spirit" remained in constant use in the West until the twelfth century." Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2-3.

understanding; it was also understanding seeking transformation, the transformation of self and the world in God through Christ in the power of the Spirit . . . in other words theology *was* spirituality understood not as an academic discipline but as living faith seeking understanding for the purpose of transformation in Christ."[4]

However, when theology relocated from the monastery to the universities in the High Middle Ages this integrated approach to knowledge was shattered. Schneiders ascertains that in the schools, philosophy became the 'handmaid of theology' which began its long journey into modernity understanding itself increasingly as a 'scientific' rather than a spiritual enterprise;

> The roots of the separation of theology from its spiritual matrix were sown in the Middle Ages as philosophy began to rival scripture in supplying the categories for systematic theology. At the same time the subject matter of spirituality as Christian experience was placed by Thomas Aquinas in Part 2 of the *Summa theologiae*, thereby making it a subdivision of moral theology, which drew its principles from dogmatic theology. In other words, from being a dimension of all theology, spirituality began to appear as a subordinate branch of theology.[5]

'Mystical theology' or the wisdom acquired in prayer through meditation on the Scriptures became, virtually exclusively, a monastic enterprise. As theology entered the

[4]Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, 199.

[5]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," in *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676-691, here, 685. For a fuller historical treatment of this specific topic, see Sandra M. Schneiders "Scripture and Spirituality," *Christian Spirituality* 1, 1-20. In discussing the subordination of spirituality, Carla Mae Streeter argues that "what is subtly implied is that theology is "on its own" academically not to be confused with religious experience. This experience belongs to the monastery or retreat house and is designated as the "interior life." Because of its subjectivity, it is not to intrude on the academy. Spiritual experience refuses to be rationally controlled and may even defy rational classification due to its mysterious, mystical nature." By 1600-1800: "the wedge between spirituality and theology is formalized. The use of interior- life terminology for spirituality prevails and the elite class system dividing "religious" folk from the "laity" is firmly in place. Spiritual theology is now divided into ascetical and mystical theology, studied under morality. In keeping with a growing elitism, ascetical theology is presumed to pertain to the ordinary Christian, while mystical theology attempts to explain the interior lives of priests and those in religious lifestyles. The class system in place is based on unquestioned assumptions about spirituality." Carla Mae Streeter, *Foundations of Spirituality: The Human and the Holy: A Systematic Approach* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012),31

modern period it embraced the increasingly rationalistic ideals and agenda of the Enlightenment. By the nineteenth century it had become, in both Catholicism and Protestantism, a highly scholastic discipline, whereas spirituality was now considered a non-academic practice of devotion or piety or even the cultivation of mystical prayer which was suspect in both branches of Western Christianity.

From the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century the discipline of 'spiritual theology' emerged in Catholic seminaries as a sub-discipline of theology. It derived its principles from systematic and moral theology and was organized according to the scholastic patterns of theology in general. Up until the conciliar era most "scholars in the field were in basic agreement about the general outline, basic content, and method of the field of spiritual theology."[6] The discipline of spiritual theology was deductive in method, prescriptive in character, and concerned primarily with the practice of personal prayer and asceticism. In the early to mid-twentieth century "theology operated in a rarified sphere of scholastic abstraction that was religion's homage to the Enlightenment and was increasingly alienated from the actual religious experience of probably the majority of believers."[7] It is at this time, mid twentieth century, that many scholars began to suspect that there was more to their field than seemed academically viable and there opened up a desire to investigate persons, phenomena, ideas and experiences that did not fit neatly into a recognised discipline:

> Interestingly, both ordinary seekers and curious scholars were often attracted to the mystics of their own and other religious traditions – people whose intense experience of the "beyond" was deeply rooted in religious-theological traditions concerning the Transcendent . . . the ferment around "spirituality" as it was tentatively called led scholars from various theological disciplines, including systematics, church history, ethics, and biblical studies to begin exchanging ideas . . . these scholars of religion were soon joined by so-called "transpersonal" and developmental psychologists, comparative religionists, literary scholars,

[6]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," in *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676-697, here, 686.
[7]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality and the God Question," in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Volume 10, Number 2, 243-250 here, 243.

> secular historians, and others. In a remarkably short period of time a new academic field of research and discourse, spirituality emerged.[8]

By the 1970s and 1980s a new discipline "which gradually came to be called (at least by most of its practitioners) 'spirituality' rather than 'spiritual theology', began to emerge in the academy."[9] Sandra Schneiders firmly establishes that the reasons for these new interests are complex, cultural as well as theological. The interest centred on the experience of the search for meaning, transcendence, personal integration and social transformation which engaged many people in the West in the aftermath of the world wars, the depression, the cold war, the theological and ecclesial upheaval of Vatican II.[10] The explorations of 'inner space' that the development of the human and personal sciences, especially clinical psychology and psychoanalysis, had unleashed also contributed significantly to the new field. Although many people found resources for their spiritual quest in the mainline churches, an increasing number of people did not. They turned to eastern mystical religions, to mind-expanding drugs, to 'new religious movements', to occult practices, or to idiosyncratic syntheses of beliefs and practices. Others began to discover riches in the Christian tradition that had been underemphasized or even deliberately obscured for centuries, for example the mystical literature, monastic practices, retreats, personal spiritual direction, and various kinds of group spiritual practice

[8]Ibid, 244.
[9]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 687.
[10]In her book, *Selling All*, Schneiders the fact that the theological upheavals of the conciliar period left many people, including Religious, so confused about what the Church believed and what trends were worth following that they decided to abandon the whole theological process and decided to wait until the experts had come to some sort of concensus. The abstractness and irrelevance of much of the theology they had been taught in their own formative years led many to turn instead to psychology and the social sciences for resources for their own lives and ministry to others. For Schneiders, a spiritually dangerous situation presented itself out of all this upheaval in that the lack of theological interest and/or expertise of many Religious appointed to formation work during this period colluded with the 'anti-intellectualism' of some candidates emerging from the activist culture of the 1960s to relegate theological formation of new members to a minor place in the formation program, where it was often sporadic and haphazard if attended to at all. For more on this situation see Sandra M. Schneiders, *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), here 56.

which seemed to offer a more personal and authentic religious experience than did the routines of organized religion.

Having considered some of the pre-conciliar developments pertaining to the study of spirituality, the particular situation in which Sandra Schneiders began to explore spirituality further can be analysed. Henceforth, the aims of this chapter are threefold: firstly, to firmly establish Schneider's vision of what constitutes spirituality; this first section provides a pivotal foundation. Secondly, in building on this foundation, Schneider's case for the necessity of the integration of theology and spirituality can be explored. Finally, in understanding Schneider's pioneering and important contributions in these areas of theology and spirituality, this chapter then intends to analyse what such contributions may mean for feminist theology in particular within the framework of the anthropological model of contextual theology. As Schneider's approach is at all times multi – disciplinary and inter – disciplinary, this chapter aims to reflect that in its methodology. In summary, this chapter seeks to demonstrate Schneider's understanding of what constitutes spirituality, the nature of spirituality as an academic discipline and the inherent potential that lies behind the integration of theology and spirituality.

2.2 Situating Sandra Schneiders:

The Second Vatican Council

Examining the origins and inspiration of her work, Sandra Schneiders focuses on the impact that the Second Vatican Council had on her life. Spirituality "as the term is used today, did not begin its career in the classroom but among practicing Christians, mostly Catholics,

whose religious experience intensified in the wake of Vatican II."[11] Inadvertently making a case for the importance of context, Schneiders connects the Second Vatican Council with the social and cultural revolution of the 1960s: "No attentive observer of the contemporary cultural scene can fail to recognize the breadth and power of the "spirituality phenomenon" in virtually every part of the world. In the West various theories have been adduced to explain it . . . some believe it is the proper name for the wholesome breeze that entered through the windows opened by Vatican II."[12] The Second Vatican Council took place in a decade that witnessed the civil rights movement, the election and assassination of John F Kennedy, the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy who were towering advocates for social change, the Vietnam war was under way and the subsequent protests. Particular to Schneider's context in her early years were the student revolts in Berkeley, California and the Detroit race riots which she experienced first-hand. Upon travelling to Paris and Rome respectively to continue studies in theology, Schneiders gained a sense, in Rome particularly, that there was a serious attempt being made to 'put a drag' on the Council and to delay any spread or implementation of its ideas. It is against this backdrop, with resistance to implement the changes offered by Vatican II, that she was drawn to the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Founded in 1962 as a conscious response to Vatican II, the GTU was ecumenical in its mission, bringing together Protestants and Catholics to draw on the riches of the whole Christian tradition. When Schneiders first started out in the convent, the idea that they should be separate from their respective culture and that they should have as little to do with society as they could was an idea continually impressed upon them as a 'norm.' The Second Vatican Council changed all that and argued the opposite; all religious should be interacting with their cultures as the church *in* the modern world, not separate from it. The GTU in Berkeley inspired by this, sought to

[11]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 254.
[12]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 696.

study theology form a wealth of backgrounds and traditions; from Jewish to Buddhist to Islamic traditions, to the study of feminist and black theologies, all incorporating the role of the arts and natural sciences, it was an experiment in theological education which sprang out of the council. Schneiders maintains that this is still the only example of an institutional embodiment of the energies and spirit of Vatican II. [13]

Much has been written about the 'spirit'[14] of the council and a closer examination reveals that through its documents and its themes the council did indeed convey a 'spirit.' In discussing the documents of Vatican II, John O'Malley highlights the fact that the documents all implicitly cross-reference one another. They are coherent with one another and play off one another.[15] Furthermore O'Malley adds:

> Each of them echoes, specifies, qualifies, or enlarges on themes, values and principles found in other documents. In this way, through this intertextual process, an implicit but nonetheless powerful and pervasive paradigm, different from what previously prevailed, was in the making. Recognition of the intertextual character of the sixteen documents is therefore the first step in

[13]Sandra M. Schneiders. "On Vatican II: Spirituality and Religious Life." Accessed on 19/02/2017. http://www.snjmusontario.org/spirit-of-vatican-ii/1429-sandra-schneiders-i-h-m-s-t-d-on-vatican-ii-spirituality-and-religious-life

[14]Even though it is a term widely used, John O' Malley notes that "it became clear that *your* "spirit of the Council" was not *my* "spirit of the Council," but many of us, I believe, still cannot shake the feeling that the expression got hold of something that was both real and important. "Spirit" suggested that the council had an overall orientation or pointed in a certain direction . . . Vatican II took greater account of the world around it than any previous council and assumed as one of its principal tasks dialogue or conversation with that world in order to work for a better world, not simply a better Church. It dealt with war, peace, poverty, family and similar topics as they touched every human being. This is a breathtaking change in scope from that of every previous council." John O' Malley, *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen*? (New York: Continuum, 2007), 62. Bernard Hoban, in an article on what constituted the spirit of Vatican II explains that, the Council envisaged that an effective scaffolding of structures – at parish, diocesan and national level – would facilitate the emergence of a people's church where the lived experience of the people would be considered. This was the 'spirit of the Council': an ethos or a style or a mentality that focusses on respect and service. Where were people at? What were their needs/ What did they think? How did they feel? How might we serve them? But, first, listen to what they say. The spirit of the Council respects every voice. It engages with people where they are. It notes the deeper self-understanding that comes from a deeper knowledge of who we are as, in the words of theologian Kevin T. Kelly, 'relational, sexual, independent social human beings, each of us unique yet sharing a common humanity, and capable of being open to the transcendent. Bernard Hoban, "Being True to the Spirit of Vatican II," in *Spirituality* Number 105, Volume 18 November/December 2012, here 330.

[15]John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (London: Belknap Press, 2008), 310.

> uncovering the paradigm and therefore an essential step in constructing a hermeneutic for interpreting the council.[16]

The intertextual character of the documents and process clearly had an impact on Schneiders. In a similar way, she argues that interdisciplinarity is an essential first step for the field of spirituality. If the "field of theology is to develop we need not only to do serious scholarly research but to become more explicit about our interdisciplinary methodology and how our projects relate to those of other scholars in the field."[17] Highlighting the profound reorientation of the council which revealed this new spirit, O'Malley states that among the recurring themes of the council expressive of its spirit, the call to holiness is particularly pervasive and particularly important.[18] In its general orientation, the ideal Christian drawn in greatest length in *Gaudium et Spes*, is more incarnational and "more inclined to reconciliation with human culture than to alienation from it, more inclined to see goodness than sin, more inclined to speaking words of friendship and encouragement than indictment . . . the result was a message that was traditional while at the same time radical, prophetic while at the same time soft-spoken."[19]

According to Schneiders, the spirit of the council can be summed up in John XXIII's call to 'open up the windows of the church.' This 'opening up' Schneiders argues, was a call not only to let fresh air and new life in but to acknowledge and embrace the fact that when you

[16]Ibid.
[17]Ibid., 13.
[18]Ibid. Carla Mae Streeter captures the seismic shift with regard to the themes in the documents "In its first document on the church, *Lumen Gentium*, the council sounded *the universal call to holiness*. The words rang out like a trumpet blast that shattered the artificial mental constructs that had prevailed for centuries. In its second document on the church, the much less read *Gaudium et Spes* the council offerd a view of the church in the world that to this day is not fully understood . . . these documents place the church *in the midst of the world* as light, joy, and hope for the nations. This new perspective jolted not only the church but the whole human family with the shocking assertion that every man. Woman, and child on the face of the earth is called to holiness," *Foundations of Spirituality: The Human and the Holy: A Systematic Approach* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012), 30.
[19]John W. O' Malley, 311.

open up the doors of enclosed environments, things will enter that weren't there before and we have to learn to engage with what comes in. For Schneiders this means welcoming in and engaging with all persons in the world, bringing in the 'other' who all too often remain outside of the church.[20] Engaging the 'other' whether that means women, people of different sexual orientation, people of different faiths and of no faith, is to engage the world and is to truly live out the call of John XXIII and is the turn to the world that pivotal church document *Gaudium et Spes* envisaged.[21]

Gaudium et Spes (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) is one of the main constitutions of Vatican II and it embodies John XXIII's vision that the Council should address the problems and challenges facing the Church in the mid twentieth century. Reaching out to *all* followers of Christ the document "makes a major new contribution to modern Catholic social teaching by presenting more explicitly developed theological grounds for the Church's social engagement than are found in earlier encyclicals. The Church is concerned with all human struggles for life with dignity, with building up the solidarity of the human community, and with the humanization of all human activity and work. GS also presents practical aspects of Catholic social teaching in the familial, cultural, economic, political and international spheres."[22] Rather than a focus on dogma or excommunication, Vatican II was a persuasive endeavour which invited all people to talk with each other, to communicate. Schneiders asserts that the Church was facing up to a hard task made more difficult by the fact

[20] Uniting all people is a sentiment also applicable to the mission of Pope Paul VI. Becoming Pope in 1963, Paul VI guided the Second Vatican Council after the death of John XXIII. Peter Hebblethwaite notes that "some said that if John's key word was *aggiomamento* [updating], Paul's motto was *avvicinamento* [coming closer to people]. *Pope Paul VI: Christian Values and Virtues,* ed. Karl A. Schultz (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 10.

[21] Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Future of Religion in Australia" at Melbourne College of Divinity Centenary Conference in July 2010 speaks of the significant changes ushered in by John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council and their influence on her. www.youtube.com/watch?=ur3Db8qU97k accessed on 19/02/2017.

[22] David Hollenbach, "Commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*" in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations,* ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 266.

that the Church was already playing catch up, as it had previously marginalized the development of the modern world. Schneiders remarks that postmodernism "is upon us and we haven't figured out how to get out of the Middle Ages."[23] However, this would all change with the spirit of Vatican II being one of humility, inventiveness, energy and creativity.

Schneiders claims that after Vatican II it would be impossible to return or to get back into 'the old fortress' explaining that it is her belief that the only way to engage the world on the scale the council calls for is in community and Schneiders articulates the belief that in learning to engage and dialogue with others, you as the instigator will change as well. However, on this hinge, rests the great fear. With the strongest conviction Schneiders argues that the Church is comfortable talking to 'the other' as long as the Church is instructing them on how *they* should change. However, the position Schneiders advocates is one where if we talk with them in order to see what might be the truth about the subject matter then we might also change and this is the great fear for the Church. Schneiders argues that this need not be the case as engagement with the full panoply of human reality will only enrich us and give us cause to hope. Learning from others only ever enriches our understanding. Ultimately for Schneiders, Vatican II marked a conversion moment for the Church itself: "The history of world rejection by the Church was officially repudiated by the Council. This dramatic reversal was not simply a change in policy or primarily in theology. It was a gospel inspired imaginative conversion, a new way of seeing. A re-orientation of being, life and action that had radical and profound implications for the Church. The conversion involved listening to and seeing the other and learning from their wisdom in order to move forward and bring about justice."[24] A conversion, it would seem, that is as necessary and true for the rest of the world as it was in Latin America.

[23] Sandra Schneiders, "On Vatican II: Spirituality and Religious Life"
[24]Ibid.

Ultimately, underpinning all of Schneider's endeavours in theology and spirituality is the belief that engagement with culture can only enrich us as a Church and this appeal to a broader, anthropological outlook is key in understanding Schneider's vision for the study of the discipline of spirituality.

2.3 The Emerging Discipline of Spirituality

Spirituality is a word that is commonly used, yet notoriously difficult to define.[25] Schneiders concurs that the term "spirituality," like the term "psychology," is unavoidably ambiguous, referring to a "fundamental dimension of the human being, the lived experience

[25]It must be noted from the outset that there currently exists a plethora of definitions on spirituality. It's meaning is as varied as its authors are numerous. Even a cursory glance at spirituality sections in bookshops highlights the vastness and diversity of this subject area. Phillip Sheldrake highlights that "paradoxically, the progressive decline in religious practice in Western societies has been accompanied by an increasing hunger for spirituality. One sign of this is the availability of an extraordinary variety of books and courses on popular spiritual psychology, science and religion, mysticism, ritual and meditation. For example, in general bookstores in the United States and the UK, popular editions of Christian mystics such as Meister Eckhart or Hildegard of Bingen sit alongside books about Sufism and the occult." *Explorations in Spirituality: History, Theology and Social Practice* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2010), 54. Similarly, Peter Tyler and Richard Woods depict a similar phenomenon. Discussing the common and often-heard slogan 'I'm spiritual but I'm not religious', they argue that this indicates not only youthful frustration in being unable to find meaning in either the sterility of fundamentalism or the rigidity (or irrelevance) of the organized churches but also a deep longing for spiritual life among the young in particular. Moreover, while church membership and attendance are in decline, not to mention vocations to the monastic and active religious communities, interest in yoga, Zen and Sufism is burgeoning, as is that in Native spiritualities. *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 1. Jack Finnegan's analysis of the question 'What is Spirituality?' accurately captures the breadth of the subject area: "Quite simply, the wild profusions and proliferating connotations of the word *spirituality* are fast outstripping the lexicon! And while spirituality has been explored throughout human history as a fundamental aspect of what it is to be human, in the contemporary milieu there is disagreement not only about its definition but also about its origins, functions and importance. Nor is Christian spirituality an exception to this growing diversity, a diversity arising out of different theologies, different cultures, different histories, and different geographies, for all that there is a shared commonality rooted in the interweaving themes of faith, grace, person and God. Then add to the mix the different theories of anthropology and human identity within the human sciences and philosophy that implicitly or explicitly influence different authors and teachers and you will get some idea of the challenge facing present attempts at a definition . . . no single definition, description or image will in fact encompass the spiritual revolution that is currently underway in Western cultures." *The Audacity of Spirit: The Meaning and Shaping of Spirituality Today* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008), 154-155. Brian O' Leary SJ, in a similar vein to his Milltown Institute colleague Jack Finnegan, finds it most fitting to employ metaphor as a tool with which to capture the challenging endeavour of defining Spirituality: "Spirituality in our contemporary world is like a broad and deep river coursing towards the ocean that is God. Into this river many streams are flowing. Some are ancient and powerful, almost rivers in their own right, cutting well-worn paths through the terrain. Others are rivulets of more recent origin that may gradually swell in volume or dry up with the passage of time. There has never been an age when so many influences are contributing to both the enrichment and (sometimes) the diminishment of genuine spirituality." Brian O'Leary SJ. "Exploring the Riverbed: Christian Spirituality Today", *Spirituality* 19, no.110:269-276.

which actualizes that dimension and the academic discipline which studies that experience."[26] Schneiders notes that it should be borne in mind that spirituality is studied in a variety of academic contexts and the objectives pursued in these diverse settings significantly influence what is studied and how it is studied. It is in this respect that spirituality is comparable with other humanistic fields of study, such as psychology. Schneiders posits that students of psychology and spirituality alike may undertake study in their respective areas with the intention to gain a better understanding of themselves or to seek the knowledge and skills to become a counsellor or to study the available research in the field. Schneiders highlights the astonishing growth of the term spirituality when used in reference to lived experience: "Before Vatican II it was an almost exclusively Roman Catholic term. The term is gradually being adopted by Protestantism, Judaism, non- Christian religions, and even such secular movements as feminism and Marxism to refer to something that, while difficult to define, is experienced as analogous in all of these movements."[27] Therefore even though spirituality has been deemed unavoidably ambiguous, it is also a term which has definite common characteristics which are comparable in certain respects not only with a broad section of religions but of many and varied academic disciplines. For the purposes of this chapter however the focus will be on Christian Spirituality as this is the area with which Schneiders is primarily concerned with.

In identifying the contours and boundaries of spirituality, the "work of definition continues as it should and the trick is to use the tensions of definition in responsible and creative, rather than stultifying, ways."[28] Schneiders explores this use of tensions of definition as she refines her own version of a definition of Christian Spirituality. Originally defining

[26]Sandra M.Schneiders, I.H.M. "Spirituality in the Academy" in *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676-691, here 678.
[27]Ibid.
[28]Elizabeth A. Dryer and Mark S. Burrows Eds. *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2005), *preface* xiv.

spirituality as the "experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life"[29] Schneiders colleagues objected to the term "striving" because it seemed to have a "Pelagian or "works righteousness" tone or at least to leave inadequate room for the passive dimension of spiritual life."[30] Following this, Schneiders subsequently defines spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives."[31] One of the definitive aspects of spirituality is the focus on experience and in assessing the many, contemporary definitions of spirituality, Schneiders does strongly state that there is no such thing as a 'generic spirituality.' Spirituality as lived experience is, by definition, "determined by the particular ultimate value within the horizon of which the life project is pursued. Consequently, it involves intrinsically some relatively coherent and articulate understanding of both the human being and the horizon of ultimate value (i.e., in Christian terms, theology), some historical tradition, some symbol system, and so on."[32] It is in the essay "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals or Partners?" that important distinctions are made by Schneiders as to what spirituality is and how it can be defined.

If our first question is 'what are people talking about when they talk about spirituality?' then Schneiders recommends that a good starting point for arriving at a working definition of spirituality as a human phenomenon is to say what spirituality is not. As the following points are pivotal to Schneider's understanding of spirituality it is worth quoting at length:

[29] Sandra M. Schneiders. "Theology and Spirituality: Stranger, Rivals or Partners?" in *Horizons* 13 (1986), 266.
[30] Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, 6-7.
[31] Ibid., 23.
[32] Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 684.

> First, as noted earlier, and in contradistinction to what we have seen the case to be historically, spirituality is no longer an exclusively Roman Catholic phenomenon. In fact, it is not even an exclusively Christian phenomenon. People speak intelligently of Buddhist, Native American or African spirituality. Some would maintain that spirituality is not even necessarily theistic or religious. Second, spirituality today is neither dogmatic nor prescriptive. It does not consist in the application to concrete life of principles derived from theology. Spirituality is understood as the unique and personal response of individuals to all that calls them to integrity and transcendence. Third, spirituality is not concerned with "perfection" but with growth, and consequently it is not the concern of a select few but of everyone who experiences him or herself drawn toward the fullness of humanity. Fourth, spirituality is not concerned solely with the "interior life" as distinguished from or in opposition to bodily, social, political, or secular life. On the contrary spirituality has something to do with the integration of all aspects of human life and experience.[33]

Some scholars in the traditional theological disciplines, i.e., biblical studies, church history, systematic and moral theology and practical theology, became interested in studying what was occurring in the culture and the churches under the vague term 'spirituality' and its relation to the classical texts and traditions. By the early 1980s these scholars were beginning to realize that they shared an interest which did not have a recognized place in the theological academy. They began to reflect on that interest, raise questions about its subject matter and specific focus, try to articulate their methodology, and to distinguish the field from other disciplines. Evidently, biblical and theological questions will always need to be raised but "the time is gone when a single discipline, namely, theology can be considered to supply the sole or even the determining approach to a given research project in the field of spirituality."[34] However, even though not the only discipline, theology is the most important single discipline at the service of spirituality[35] and therefore the role of theology must be assessed to understand how it can integrate with spirituality.

[33]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals or Partners?" in *Horizons* 13/2 (1986), 253-274, here, 264-265.
[34]Ibid., 268.
[35]Ibid., 271.

2.4 The Role of Theology

Unquestionably, theology has a unique role in the discipline of spirituality. Schneiders contends that this is the case only when by *unique* what is meant is not that it is hegemonic or superior but it has a role that nothing else plays. The same could be said of church history or the human sciences for example. Therefore, "theology plays a unique role in the discipline of spirituality as one discipline among others within this interdisciplinary field."[36] When discussing theology, Schneiders refers to the broader and more inclusive committed religious studies within the Christian tradition,

> So a theology department at a Catholic or Lutheran university might include not only systematic theology but also biblical studies, church history, pastoral ministry studies, practical theology, world religions, comparative theology, ecumenical theology, theology and aesthetics, and a number of other areas of inquiry. I would suggest that Christian spirituality as an academic discipline, while not a subdiscipline of systematic theology, is a legitimate member of the inclusive household of theology broadly understood as a confessionally committed study of reality within a Christian perspective.[37]

Theology, as understood by Schneiders, is a discipline which seeks to mediate the faith as it has been formulated in the classical focus of scripture, creedal, dogmatic and liturgical traditions and church history into the contemporary religio-cultural situation which is ever changing. In tandem with theology, philosophy is traditionally the other discipline which elaborates an understanding of faith. While the ways in which theologians investigate the faith tradition are now many and diverse the "object of theology – faith as the thematically formulated response to revelation that has been transmitted in the Church, in relation to faith as it is currently being lived in particular contexts – remains constant."[38] Discussing the role of

[36] Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology", 197.
[37] Ibid., 198.
[38] Ibid., 202.

formation for people entering a form of religious life, Schneiders explains the importance of theology and spirituality to proper discernment. Discernment is a process of coming to an informed decision about one's course of action and in discussing this Schneider's highlights an important point about the role of theology and spirituality:

> First, the person discerning needs adequate knowledge in the areas of theology, spirituality and religion in their interrelationship. Scholars in both theology and spirituality today are increasingly realizing how integral to each other the two fields are. Theology that is not rooted in spirituality, that is, in the personal and corporate religious experience of the Church, is abstract and often barren. But spirituality that is not shaped or informed by good theology is often incoherent, lacking in substance, and insufficiently rooted in a believing community that can guard it against privatistic idiosyncrasy and fanaticism.[39]

Theology that is rooted in spirituality can reflect the experience of Church in a way that is both dynamic and constant. Theology as a discipline "seeks to mediate the faith as it has been formulated in the classical loci – that is, scripture; the creedal, dogmatic and liturgical traditions; and the history of the Church – into the contemporary religio-cultural situation, which is ever changing."[40] Similar to the diversification of the interpretation of spirituality, the ways in which theologians interrogate the faith tradition are many and varied. However, the object of theology, that is, faith as the thematically formulated response to revelation that has been transmitted in the Church, in relation to faith as it is currently being lived in particular contexts, remains constant.[41] In comparison, the object of spirituality, different to theology although related, is the *lived experience* of faith itself:

> Theology today is both critical and pluralistic and it seems unlikely that it will settle into a new "perennial" form any time in the foreseeable future.[42]

[39]Sandra M. Schneiders, *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 56-57.
[40]Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," 201.
[41]Ibid., 202.
[42]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 271.

> Emphasizing their complimentary roles, Schneiders illustrates"that it is spirituality, that is, Christian experience of living the faith in various times, places, cultures and in the midst of various issues, problems, and triumphs that generates theology, not, as the nineteenth-century theologians thought, theology which generates spirituality. However, by that curious dialectic observable in other fields as well, once theology has arisen in response to and as an explicit articulation of Christian religious experience, it comes to have both the ability and the responsibility to criticize spirituality."[43]

Just as it is literature which generates literary criticism but the latter which then operates to sift the good from the bad, to analyze and explicate the good, and even to stimulate artists in their work, so theology generated by spirituality is the primary evaluator and critic of spirituality. It is theology which renders judgment on the adequacy of a particular spirituality to the Gospel and Tradition; theology which challenges partial or one-sided approaches; theology which defends the prophetic and charismatic; theology which finally helps the believer to understand his or her experience and by understanding to appropriate it more deeply and live it more fully. It must never be forgotten that, despite this important role, theology is a servant of Christian experience, not its master. Just as the biblical scholar must never presume to fetter the Word of God with the human bonds of exegesis, so the theologian must not presume to manufacture or to control the work of the Spirit in the churches. But without the service of the biblical scholar much in scripture would remain unintelligible, and without the service of the theologian spirituality could degenerate into enthusiastic chaos, dangerous aberrations, or anemia. It must also be kept in mind that, while theology is the most important single discipline at the service of spirituality, it is by no means the only one. The spiritual life, as has been said, embraces the whole of human experience within the horizon of ultimate concern. Consequently, the personality sciences, the social sciences, literary and aesthetic disciplines, history, comparative

[43]Ibid., 270.

religion, and a variety of other fields of study are important to the understanding and to the living of Christian religious experience.

Schneiders also challenges some other common misconceptions about the relationship between the disciplines of theology and spirituality. A rather popular understanding, rendering spirituality as theology for the intellectually underendowed, is decisively dismissed by Schneiders as are the arguments that spirituality is merely 'theology done right' that is, theology done with heart as well as head engaged. Using the biography of Teresa of Avila and the study of conversion, Schneiders clarifies the difference between research in theology and research in spirituality. Schneiders argues that for a theologian the questions asked of Teresa of Avila's experience will be 'was Teresa's conversion primarily intellectual or affective?' Accordingly, what the theologian is actually seeking is a "deeper and more adequate understanding of conversion itself by relating the theological data on the subject to a particularly striking instance of conversion from the history of spirituality."[44] The spirituality scholar however will approach the same subject matter, of Teresa's conversion account, differently:

> Theological and philosophical material on conversion may well figure in the interrogation of Teresa's conversion experience, especially if the study raises questions about her God-image, her theology of suffering, and her understanding of Church and ecclesial authority. But theology may or may not be the primary tool of analysis, and it is not the purpose of the study to understand better the theology of conversion or to directly contribute to the theology of conversion (although both of these might occur). The point of the study is to understand Teresa of Avila's experience of God, her spirituality, as it gave rise to, shaped, and was shaped by this experience. [45]

[44]Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," 204.
[45]Ibid.

Therefore, theology is irrefutably integral to such a study and yet the study need not be primarily theological. Theology is integral to any research project in Christian spirituality, as is "biblical material and church history, not because the project is a study in spirituality but because it is a study in *Christian* spirituality and all Christian faith experience is suffused with and embedded in the theological tradition of the Church.[46] Theology therefore, is relevant and pivotal to such research. Offering a summary of the difference in approaches with respect to objects of study, Schneiders notes that in one case the object is to expand our theoretical knowledge of humanity and in the second case, the object is to expand our knowledge of the concrete experience of being human so that theoretical formulations are more adequate to their subject matter:

> One might say that the "knowing" aimed at by theology is primarily conceptual, arrived at through the study of formulated expressions of the tradition in the classical and contemporary loci, and eventually expressed in second- order language that has applicability beyond the individual case. The "knowing" aimed at by spirituality is primarily personal and arrived at through multidisciplinary analysis of thick description of the individual that remains concrete and specific even as it gives rise to constructive results that have, ideally, broad implications. Theology probably has more in common with philosophy, while spirituality has more in common with psychology or art criticism. In any case, it is probably as futile to try to eliminate all overlap between the two disciplines as it is to try to distinguish absolutely between systematic theology and historical theology, or between biblical criticism and biblical theology. A research project in spirituality is recognized not only by what it studies but by the way it is conceptualized, constructed and prosecuted, and by the kinds of knowledge in which it results.[47]

What both disciplines have in common is a hermeneutical approach. This approach seeks a "fusion of horizons between the world of the scholar and the individual phenomenon being studied. The study of spirituality as experience, Schneiders argues, requires us to bring into

[46]Ibid., 205.

[47] Ibid. 206-207. Bernard Lonergan also describes this sense of 'knowing' "for intellectual conversion involves the transformation of the person as knowing subject through the elimination of the myth that all knowing is simply like looking. The person who has experienced intellectual conversion has come to see that knowing is more than seeing; it involves experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing." Bernard Lonergan, *Method In Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972), 238-240.

play not only theology and historical studies but . . . the natural sciences."[48] Until it becomes clear to all concerned that the contemporary discipline of spirituality is not an attempt to resurrect what was once called spiritual theology, distinctions are necessary. However, Schneiders argues that "mutuality among equals is a better model for productive conversation than rivalry, hegemony, or absorption. The more the members of the theological household talk to each other rather than at or past or down to each other, the richer the intellectual (and spiritual) fare the academy will be able to offer to contemporary seekers.[49] This open conversation between theology and spirituality is a necessary first step in a broader discussion which looks forward to conversations with other academic partners if theology is to truly fulfil its commitment to faith seeking understanding and understanding seeking transformation. The power of such a transformation, for women in particular, is another important area which Schneiders explores.

2.5 Contributing to Feminist Theology and Spirituality

Tracing the origins of the term "feminist spirituality" Schneiders notes that it began to be used early in the "second wave" of the modern feminist movement, arising in the United States in the 1970s and appearing in Europe in the 1980s. According to Schneiders, women,

[48]Ibid.
[49]Ibid., 209.

both lay and religious, were among the most enthusiastic students and promoters of the Bible in the immediate wake of the Second Vatican Council. However, the Council closed just as the second wave of feminism broke on Western shores. It "was only a matter of minutes, metaphorically speaking, before feminist consciousness and the renewed love of Scripture clashed. Once women began to read the whole of scripture rather than listening to a few selected passages . . .they began to find the beloved text highly problematic."[50] For Schneiders one of the key issues concerns the idea of interpretation. Interpretation is the process of coming to understand any phenomenon, including a text. Interpretation is necessary, Schneiders argues, when the phenomenon resists understanding and this is true in the case of the Bible as it was written in an ancient culture, in a different language and about events that do not easily correlate with contemporary understanding. Contemporary scholarship regarding textual interpretation, known as the field of hermeneutics, is vast in scope and immensely complex. Essentially, interpretation "is a dialectical process that takes place between a reader and a text and culminates in an event of meaning . . . The process of interpretation, then, is not merely a matter of extracting the meaning intended by the author from an inert text, but a matter of interacting with the text in order to achieve meaning."[51] In this process both the text and the reader are affected: both change. It is in this assertion that Schneider's study of biblical interpretation, and its impact on feminist spirituality, effectively mirrors her conclusions about the integration of theology and spirituality and the self-implication involved in its study. Given the centrality of hermeneutics for Schneider's approach to the study of Christian spirituality "indeed, her casting of the discipline itself as essentially hermeneutical [and] allows for fruitful exploration in Christian spirituality."[52] However, Schneiders points out that "while some of the feminists

[50]Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Bible and Feminism" in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* Ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 33-34.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Lisa E. Dahill, "The Genre of Gender: Gender and the Academic Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, 100. Here, Dahill states that there is a commonality between analysis of *gender* and that of

using the term spirituality were practising members of one or another recognized religious tradition, and religion and/or theology was central to the academic feminist interests of most of them, feminist spirituality did not arise within or in terms of any particular institutional church or recognized religion."[53] It is well beyond the scope of this chapter to enter into an examination of feminism. However, in Schneider's own contribution to feminist theology and spirituality, the implications for the integration of theology and spirituality can be illustrated.

Schneiders defines feminist spirituality as the "reclaiming by women of the reality and power designated by the term "spirit" and the effort to reintegrate spirit and body, heaven and earth, culture and nature, eternity and time, public and private, political and personal, in short, all those hierarchized dichotomous dualisms whose root is the split between spirit and body and whose primary incarnation is the split between male and female."[54] "Feminist" is a term with many meanings and it is a position which can involve a solid conviction of the equality of men and women. It is also a "commitment to reform society so that the full equality of women is respected, which requires also reforming the thought systems that legitimate the present unjust social order."[55] It is this understanding of the term which Schneiders develops:

> First, feminism is not merely a cause or a project but a comprehensive ideology, that is, a mentality or life stance that colors all of one's commitments and activities. Second, although feminism is concerned with the full humanity of all people, it is rooted in women's experience of oppression, just as Latin American liberation theology is based on the experience of the poor and Black liberation in the experience of people of color. Third, it is not purely theoretical or exclusively reactive, but embraces analysis, a vision of a different reality, and an active participation in change to bring about that different reality.[56]

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genre in literary studies, arguing that "in both cases categories often viewed simplistically as merely classificatory are better understood as hermeneutical.

[53]Sandra M. Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church* (New York; Paulist Press, 1991), 75.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Anne E. Patrick, *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 7.

[56]Sandra M. Schneiders, *With Oil in Their Lamps: Faith, Feminism and the Future* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2000), 7-8.

The reality and importance placed on experience is once again highlighted as pivotal to enabling change and bringing about transformation, "as feminist consciousness has gradually deepened, the feminist agenda has widened, from a concern to right a particular structural wrong, namely, the exclusion of women from the voting booth, to a demand for full participation of women in society and culture, to an ideal of recreating humanity itself according to a pattern of ecojustice, that is, of right relations at every level and in relation to all of reality."[57]Aiming to change the self and the world and to liberate humanity from a narrow horizon and free humans for deeper relationships is possible with such a deepening of feminist consciousness and with a greater spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity is also inseparable from attention to theology, psychology and history, while "all great spiritual teachers say that maturity requires discernment and contemplation rooted in self-knowledge, a psychological climate that insists on conformity to passive female roles allows a very different experience of self-knowledge than a culture that encourages critical thinking."[58] Conn goes on to argue though that maturity is also a theological matter, "maturity understood as sharing the Trinitarian life of divine persons who are equal in their sharing of life with each other and with all humanity differs from an experience of Trinitarian life perceived as flowing in a hierarchical pattern from a patriarchal father."[59] Conn argues what is ignored is;

> The clear affirmation of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that God is spirit and, thus, totally transcends sex which is rooted in matter. Such an abstract theological statement is absolutely central to biblical revelation, yet is not often

[57]Ibid., 8.
[58]Joann Wolski Conn, "Toward Spiritual Maturity," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, 240-241.
[59]Ibid., 241.

> explicitly repeated in Scripture. Thus it can easily be obscured by the abundance of anthropomorphic language which, coming from a patriarchal culture, is dominated by. the use of masculine pronouns for this spirit God. This male language is in practice often misinterpreted as, in some way, accurately expressing a revelation of God as a male being. There are scattered examples of feminine anthropomorphic language which could balance the picture, reinforcing that God is neither female nor male, but that feminine language is seldom used in liturgical texts or Church documents. Jesus' understandable use of masculine parental language for this spirit God is mistakenly taken as a revelation that God is a male being. Consequently, most women absorb a totally masculine God-image and, thus, can mistakenly presume that men are more like God and women are rightly dependent on men for liturgical mediation of God's presence.[60]

The prospect of equal human dignity is severely limited by this distortion of biblical revelation. It "prevents a woman from valuing and affirming herself as authentically an image of God. It restricts a woman's ability to utilize her own experience as a revelation of God's qualities and activities."[61] However, highlighting the promise of feminist research that remains to be done with a sense of spiritual maturity, Conn goes on to supply six tasks of the feminist scholarly agenda to spirituality viewed from the perspective of Christian spiritual maturity. Inspired by Schneiders pioneering work on a fully integrated approach to theology and spirituality, Conn's sixth task of the feminist scholarly agenda is worth highlighting:

> Scholars work toward a truly integrated field, one not reduced by its prejudices against women, lower classes, variant sexual preferences, or anything else. Future generations may see this accomplished; it is now only emerging. This commitment to integration contributes research on subjects such as the religious experience of the poor Hispanic women whose spiritual resources come from "popular religion" (for example, processions, promises to God, concentration on devotion to Mary) and has been derided as superstitious by church authority and theological scholars.[62]

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[60] Joann Wolski Conn. Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction. *Cross Currents*, (Fall, 1980), 297. Receiving renewed widespread interest recently is the recovery of the early Christian tradition of Wisdom- Sophia: "Several scholars have suggested that Hellenistic Jewish wo/men in Egypt conceived of Divine Wisdom as prefigured in the language and image of Goddesses like Isis, Athena, or Dike . . . Like Isis, Sophia is a divine saviour figure who promises universal salvation." Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 136.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 242.

Such commitment is necessary as Schneiders reminds us that feminist spirituality is both rooted and oriented toward women's experience, "especially their experiences of disempowerment and of empowerment. For this reason, story – telling, the narratizing and sharing of the experience of women which has been largely excluded from the history of mainline religion is central . . . feminist spirituality is deeply concerned with the reintegration of all that has been dichotomized by patriarchal religion. This involves rehabilitating what has been regarded as inferior and reappropriating that which has been alienated."[63]

A reconstructed Christian tradition is slowly emerging, asserts Conn, as women and men become aware of the detrimental effects of patriarchy on everyone and especially on women. Women's spirituality:

> Can be supported if all of us, both women and men, make progress in a twofold process. To begin, we must reexamine presuppositions about human development, discover the history of women's experience and leadership that has never been told, and explicate the women-liberating insights implicit in biblical teaching about God. As soon as we have these resources available we must begin to incorporate them into every aspect of life and ministry: teaching, writing, celebrating, praying, counselling, reconciling, befriending, protesting. As long as this process remains "frontier territory," experienced as the unknown and fraught with risk, women's spirituality will continue to be especially problematic.[64]

In this regard, Western culture is now in the process of a paradigm shift, in every field of study and endeavour the "standards of 'authentic reality' are beginning to change from individualism, hierarchy, and male centredness to a new paradigm of interdependence, mutuality and inclusiveness, yet tremendous pressures resist the emerging paradigm, and

[63]Sandra M Schneiders, *Beyond Patching*, 87.
[64]Joann Wolski Conn, "Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction," 299.

Catholic feminism is embedded in this tension as it tries to understand and reach spiritual maturity."[65] The question Conn poses is not how we can duplicate the past, but how we can discover new roles "which are defined in terms wider than fertility [with] a sense of worship which appropriately incorporates bodily experience in the many seasons of life."[66] It could be said that a new phase is emerging in which women view themselves not as another minority but, more accurately, as the majority of humanity. For Conn, the question becomes: "what would history itself look like if seen through women's eyes and values? Women's and men's spirituality can thus be nourished and challenged by the radical call to egalitarian relationship to Jesus ("I have not called you servants but friends.") which could be the pattern for all our relationships, and the inspiration for new theology."[67] This new theology will look toward developing a spiritual maturity. The "exploration of this tension will move in three steps; firstly a definition of Catholic followed by an integration of this view with spiritual maturity and a consideration of the difference it makes to have this perspective."[68] Integration is made possible in both theory and practice "when a feminist model of psychological development is related to a feminist theology of spiritual development and shown to be identical. In brief, a feminist theology of spiritual development notices that the classical spiritual tradition defines maturity as intimate relationship with the Holy Mystery and with all persons and the cosmos, an intimacy made possible by increasing independence from attachments that block deeper relationship."[69] Ultimately one of the most enduring themes of Scripture is "the call to leave the familiar and risk going into the unknown, with trust that God is present in the new situation. One strand of Christian tradition has consistently taught that God's glory is humanity fully alive."[70] Now however, many women and men are being called to respond to the challenge of

[65]Joann Wolski Conn, "Toward Spiritual Maturity," 253.
[66]Joann Wolski Conn, "Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction,"302.
[67]Ibid.,305.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Ibid., 254
[70]Ibid.,307.

a new integrating paradigm between theology and spirituality which positively affirms women's experience.

For Christian theology and spirituality, the ultimate deeper relationship and our horizon of ultimate value is with God through Jesus Christ. For those men and women who follow Jesus:

> a faithful but dangerously critical Jew who was finally executed by the connivance of religious and political power elites, there is no guarantee against the distortions of religious tradition by institutional agencies but the latter are finally powerless to undermine genuine spirituality . . . we cannot close our minds or our hearts to the truth that comes to us from outside our own tradition [or from outside our own experience or our own context] nor can we afford to repudiate our own tradition . . .Like Jesus, however, who encountered God in the tradition of Israel whose psalms were on his lips as he died, we finally commend our lives not to institutions but only into the hands of God.[71]

Christianity, like its founding figure Jesus, is an essentially prophetic religion. However, "unless Christianity can make a substantive contribution to the project of universal justice, the tradition has outlived its usefulness . . . The prophet is a mediator of the ongoing three-way interaction of God, people and culture. Because culture is continually developing, the prophetic task will never be completed."[72] Reintegration of theology and spirituality would be a strong foundation on which it is possible to reimagine and rebuild such a dynamic and evolving tradition. Jesus "did not oppose his personal spirituality to his religious tradition but expressed his spirituality through his religious practice."[73] Crucially Schneiders argues, Jesus was able to make his spirituality "a resource for the reform of his tradition rather than an alternative to it."[74] Describing Jesus as a "storyteller who offered alternate visions and invited people to consider

[71]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum," 182.
[72] Schneiders, *With Oil in Their Lamps*, 95-96.
[73] Ibid., 101.
[74] Ibid.

another way,"[75] Schneiders expresses her deepest conviction that in integrating so many varied and different voices and experiences through the integration of theology and spirituality our "can serve as a launchpad for commitments to a new world order of universal right relations."[76] Furthermore, Schneiders poses the question as to whether in the third wave of feminism the "broadening and deepening of the feminist agenda [moved] from liberal equality of women with men to a [concern about] the ecojustice reconstruction of the social order."[77] Concerns over solidarity and justice are two of the key factors which motivate liberation theologian Jon Sobrino. Like Schneiders, Sobrino argues that the integration of theology and spirituality can contribute in the attempt to heal the ecological and social justice emergencies of our time.

2.6 Integrating Theology with the Academic Discipline of Spirituality

Essentially, the work of spirituality as a field of academic study or discipline is theological in the broadest sense of the term when by theology what is meant is "all religious studies carried out in the context of explicit reference to revelation and explicitly affirmed

[75] Ibid., 107.
[76] Ibid., 115.
[77] Ibid., 118.

confessional commitment. Under the heading of theology, one finds systematic theology including foundational theology, theology of God, ecclesiology, Christology and eschatology; moral theology including both general and special, personal and social ethics; and finally church history and biblical studies. A theology department might also include practical and/or mixed disciplines such as religious education, pastoral counselling, liturgy, homiletics and ministry."[78] It is on this understanding that Schneiders maintains the work of spirituality as a field of study is theological in this broadest sense of the term.[79] However, in the study of spirituality, there is no exclusion of personal questions or the ultimate self – implication apparent in the results. It is in this sense, Schneiders notes, that that the field of spirituality more resembles the arts than the sciences, "in any case, there seems to me to be little question that the objectives of the study of spirituality are distinct from, although not unrelated to, those of the classical theological disciplines."[80]As with all successful partnerships, the working relationship has to be one that is balanced and harmonious. In the case of the disciplines of theology and spirituality, spirituality has until recently been dominated by theology. In recent decades though spirituality has matured with an identity of its own. For Schneiders, Spirituality:

> must make its own alliances, and its own mistakes, but it belongs in the household of theology in the broad sense of that term. It is no longer a mindless subordinate controlled by theology nor a pedestaled idol, lovely to look at but useless in discussion. Spirituality is that field – encompassing -field which studies Christian religious experience as such. And there is, when all is said and done, almost nothing whose study is more important than spirituality for us who are called to integrate our lives in self – transcending faith, hope, and love through and in the Spirit of Jesus the Christ.[81]

[78]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 271-272.
[79]Schneiders contrasts this to a second more narrower understanding of theology to which she does not subscribe, which denotes only the areas of systematic theology and moral theology as these are are the two major fields since the Middle Ages which organized the scientific study of the faith. This is a much-restricted sense of theology which includes neither biblical studies, church history nor significantly, spirituality. Spirituality is distinct from however intimately related to that of systematic and moral theology. Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 273.
[81]Ibid., 274.

The contemporary research discipline of spirituality was born of this growing interest in studying Christian religious experience, both as it had occurred in the past and as it was evolving in the present. By the 1990s, spirituality was emerging as a new, interdisciplinary research field distinct from systematic and moral theology on the one hand and from psychological or pastoral counselling on the other, although related to both.[82]According to Schneiders, the only real controversy centres on the question of the continuity or discontinuity of the mystical life with the life of Christian holiness to which all the baptised are called. On which note Schneiders points out that Karl Rahner, discussing this very issue, decides in favour of the continuity position: "The modern discussion, especially since Vatican II's stress on the call to holiness, has tended more and more toward the former position (of the continuity position) and this probably has favoured the growing preference for the inclusive term "spirituality" as a designation for the field which studies Christian religious experience over the term "spiritual theology" with its division into ascetical and mystical theology."[83] To fully appreciate Schneider's analysis of the contemporary discipline of spirituality, it is imperative to understand from the outset that Schneiders does not consider spirituality to be merely a subdivision of theology, "although spirituality and theology in the strict sense are mutually related in that theology is a moment in the study of spirituality and vice versa, theology does not contain or control spirituality. In other words, I have proposed that spirituality is not a subdivision of either dogmatic or moral theology."[84] Liberating the field of spirituality from its ties to dogmatics and to broaden its scope to include the whole of the human search for self-transcendent integration and authenticity is of upmost importance for Schneiders and recourse to the terms mystical, ascetical and spiritual theology are less than helpful in respect to the

[82] This argument is outlined in: Sandra M. Schneiders, 'Christian Spirituality: Definitions, Methods and Types', in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (ed. Philip Sheldrake; Louisville, KY,2005.)

[83] Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality" 271-73.
[84] Ibid.

emergence of this new discipline. In this respect, autonomy for Schneiders, is a central concern for the discipline of spirituality.

Schneiders, in making the case for the absolute autonomy of the discipline of spirituality argues that most convincing and clarifying "is the position that regards spirituality as an autonomous discipline which functions in partnership and mutuality with theology. It is a relationship analogous to that between biblical studies and theology."[85] Defending this postion more recently, Schneiders further explains: "I would suggest that Christian spirituality as an academic discipline, while not a subdiscipline of systematic theology, is a legitimate member of the inclusive house-hold of theology broadly understood as [a] confessionally committed study of reality within a Christian perspective."[86] Consistently defending what Christian spirituality is, Schneiders characterizes it as an essentially interdisciplinary endeavour; studying the lived Christian faith where the object of study is accessed through expressions of the particular, and aims at knowledge of the individual: "The fully engaged scholar of spirituality does not simply interpret concrete examples of human encounter with God but also understands this encounter as a particular participation in a living tradition that these individuals incarnate and mediate."[87] The task for Schneiders is in the belief that all theology is faith seeking understanding but also understanding seeking transformation, the transformation of self and world in God through Christ in the power of the Spirit. However, while Schneiders empathises with those scholars who seek the revival of a premodern approach to theology, her feelings are admittedly based on nostalgia and not confidence; the Enlightenment has happened. Instead Schneiders suspects that "multi-disciplinarity and inter-disciplinarity are our characteristic and probably only ways of dealing with the excessive

[85] Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 689.
[86] Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," 198.
[87] Ibid., 208.

fragmentation that is the downside of the critical revolution."[88] Expanding on what constitutes such interdisciplinarity, Schneiders concurs with Karl Rahner that "a scholar in the field of spirituality would agree with Rahner that one other relevant discipline is psychology, but would recognise that comparative religion, anthropology, theory of myth and symbolism, history, literary interpretation, and other disciplines are also relevant. Spirituality better denotes the subject matter of this interdisciplinary field than narrower terms such as "spiritual theology."[89]

In assessing the many contemporary definitions of spirituality, Schneiders cites a conclusion made by Jon Alexander that the term is being used by most in an experiential and generic sense which, she explains, means that many are affirming that Christian spirituality is a subset of a broader category that is not confined to or defined by Christianity or even by religion. Schneiders does strongly state though that there is no such thing as a 'generic spirituality.' Spirituality as lived experience is, by definition, "determined by the particular ultimate value within the horizon of which the life project is pursued. Consequently, it involves intrinsically some relatively coherent and articulate understanding of both the human being and the horizon of ultimate value (i.e., in Christian terms, theology), some historical tradition, some symbol system, and so on."[90]

As Philip Sheldrake has noted, contemporary spirituality emphasizes experience and reflects a sense that there is something deeper than conceptual approaches to religion. The concept of spirituality is "increasingly used outside religious contexts . . . to designate a quest for depth and purpose in life as a whole – a vision of the human spirit and what enhances it."[91]

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[88] Ibid.,199-200.
[89] Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy", 691.
[90] Ibid., 684.
[91] Philip Sheldrake, "Spirituality and Its Critical Method", in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders IHM*, eds. Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert SNJM, (Paulist Press: New Jersey, 2006), 16.

It is a search for meaning. In studying texts through history, psychology or theology we can receive an explanation of them but what of their meaning? Or what do they mean today? "To ask these questions is to move into the realm of understanding . . . The questions of understanding intend to ask the questions of meaning of the text in today's world – in the life of an individual, group or community. . . understanding a text moves toward the actualization of the text in the life of a person or community. . . while explanation provides information about the text, understanding leads to transformation of a life, a new way of being-in-the-world, as Heidegger suggested."[92] It is precisely such issues of meaning, understanding and transformation which shape Schneiders approach to research in Christian spirituality. Douglas Burton- Christie captures the contemporary situation explaining that,

> Increasingly, scholars of spirituality are coming to recognize that such improvised and oblique expressions of spiritual experience make up an important part of this moment in history. Yet the challenge of locating and interpreting these diverse and varied expressions of spiritual experience is daunting. At the very least, it requires a willingness to engage in an open-ended phenomenological – hermeneutical approach of the kind advocated by Bernard McGinn and Sandra Schneiders. To respond to contemporary experience of the natural world in this way means, first and foremost, attending carefully to the range of experiences described without moving too quickly to impose a theological meaning on them. It also means being prepared to engage in a rigorously interdisciplinary investigation of experience. To understand the spiritual significance of nature as it emerges in contemporary literary texts requires attention not only to spiritual language and symbols, but also to rhetoric, ecology, geography, biology and any number of other cognate fields that shape a particular writer's understanding of nature. It may be that certain theological patterns will emerge from such an inquiry, but they must be allowed to emerge from the work itself, however unexpected or disturbing such patterns may turn out to be.[93]

As Burton Christie notes, the central questions in the search for meaning are surprisingly consistent: "when we look out onto the natural world or into our own bodies and find the world

[92]David Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 326.
[93]Douglas Burton-Christie, "The Weight of the World: The Heaviness of Nature in Spiritual Experience," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, 144.

to be ambiguous, shifting and even hostile to our own hopes, how do we respond? How does one learn to live, to feel, and to know the presence of God in such a world?"[94] In the quest for meaning, such questions involve a step into unknown and unfamiliar territory, students of spirituality "learn to exist in the world of borderlands – between theory and practice, theology and other disciplines, the sacred and the secular, interiority and exteriority. Indeed, spirituality as reflection on "felt experience" and "lived practice" is necessarily, in Graham Ward's words, "a venture into the ambivalent"[95] because of its fundamental horizon of otherness and transcendence. In this, as in so much else, spirituality reminds theology of its task of crossing thresholds and questioning human absolutes."[96] Sheldrake and Schneiders both assert that this brings an ascetical quality to interdisciplinary work because "such encounters make us vulnerable."[97]As Schneiders has stated and as David Perrin notes, the goal in Christian spirituality is not Christian perfection, but "life with God and with each other – in all of its uncertainty and messiness."[98]Such uncertainty and messiness is evident in the self-implicating character of spirituality.

Self- implication implies that we care personally and not just academically about the results of our research: "vital personal interest in the answers to one's questions can lead to skewing one's research, consciously or unconsciously, by a slanted formation of the question, methodological manipulation, or a selective interpretation of results. Conversely, it can also lead to a passionate honesty in the search for the truth no matter where that might lead."[99] Despite these honest, open and dynamic aspects, the self- implicating character raises some difficult questions for scholars and academics. Mary Frohlich, a professor of spirituality, argues

[94]Ibid.,145.
[95] Graham Ward, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000), ix.
[96]Sheldrake, "Spirituality and Its Critical Method", 20.
[97]Ibid.
[98]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodolgy in Christian Spirituality," 324-325.
[99]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics," 18.

that while accepting the self-implicating nature of spirituality, in the academic sphere "we may seem to have lost our purchase on academic respectability. If we stand in the messy reality of lived spirituality, have we fallen all the way down the "slippery slope" to wallow in sheer subjectivity?"[100] Frohlich, while admitting spirituality faces a challenge in this respect, argues that if it is to be taken seriously in the academy it "has to function as a modern critical discipline which respects the protocols of public discourse . . . it does require us to explain what we are doing when it differs significantly from "what is done" in the well- regulated academy."[101] Schneiders demonstrates an even more acute awareness of the situation than perhaps even Frohlich or others do when she maintains that:

> We cannot proceed as serene medievals confident that everyone subscribes to a common faith (or any faith, for that matter), respects the same authorities (or any authorities), and regards probity as the supreme criterion of credibility. How to integrate a holistic approach to research with full accountability to the standards of criticism, personal commitment to what one is studying with appropriate methodological perspective, and practical involvement with theoretical integrity is, in my view, one of the major challenges the discipline of spirituality faces as it develops its identity in the academy.[102]

Spirituality will develop, argues Schneiders, in the context of postmodernity: "constructive postmodernism may be the intellectual climate in which spirituality as an academic discipline will finally discover breathable air."[103] Making the case for constructive postmodernism Schneiders argues that:

> Constructive postmodernism is willing to admit, even embrace, the superiority of holistic approaches to the human subject that reject the matter-spirit, nature-culture, subject-object dichotomies in favour of a definition of the human as embodied spirit. It recognizes the transcendent dimension of human experience

[100]Mary Frohlich, R.S.C.J., "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," 69.
[101]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 19.
[102]Ibid.
[103]Ibid., 21.

> as constitutive of personhood rather than illusory, and as susceptible of respectful investigation that can be validated even if not proved. It acknowledges the integration of the human into a universe that is not dead matter but living organism. It is comfortable with, even intrigued by, mystery. And its ideal of understanding is less control, prediction, and domination than mutuality and relationship in wholeness. Such constructive postmodernism is perhaps a context in which Christian spirituality as an academic discipline can find dialogue partners. The conversation will be humbler, no doubt, but perhaps more in tune with reality than either the totalizing discourse of medieval Christendom which knew it was the only game in town, or the inflated rhetoric of the Enlightenment "man" who was the exultant measure of all things, or yet the deconstructivist who makes and unmakes a tinker toy reality as a playful diversion until cosmic bedtime. For the immediate future, spirituality, in the context of the modern academy, will have to march to a different drummer. But the postmodern beat is getting louder. In a constructive postmodern context, spirituality as a self-implicating discipline will be no stranger.[104]

This critical study must be for Schneiders ecumenical, interreligious and cross-cultural; the context within which spiritual experience is studied is therefore anthropologically inclusive. In addition, spirituality is a holistic discipline that explores the 'interior life' the "psychological, bodily, historical, social, political, aesthetic, intellectual and other dimensions of the human subject of spiritual experience are integral to that experience insofar as it is the subject matter of the discipline of spirituality."[105] Furthermore, Schneiders argues that like psychology, "spirituality deals with material that often cannot be understood except through analogy with personal experience."[106] The development of the discipline of psychology and indeed sociology shared similar difficulties before being credentialed in the modern academy "it may well be that as psychology has enriched all intellectual discourse by establishing introspection as a valid path to knowledge . . . spirituality may help validate what many in the academy suspect, namely, that care and commitment not only do not contaminate thought but enhance

[104]Ibid.
[105] Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy", 693.
[106]Ibid., 694.

it. Becoming more is not inimical to knowing more but should be its organic outcome."[107] Significantly, for the student of spirituality, the research area of spirituality is self-implicating. The transformation experienced through such research reverberates in the ongoing research.[108] To fully appreciate Schneider's position on such an anthropological inclusivity, the influence of the Second Vatican Council in her academic career and in her ministry cannot be underestimated. It could be argued that for Schneiders, the "spirituality phenomenon is the proper name for the wholesome breeze that entered through the windows opened by Vatican II.[109] Given Christianity's understanding of the abiding Spirit in each and every life, and "God's ongoing Self- involvement in the world, it is not surprising that "experience *as* experience" would become the formal and distinguishing object of study in Christian spirituality."[110]

Spirituality as a discipline, argues Schneiders, does not "seek to deduce from revelation what Christian spirituality must be . . . It seeks to understand it as it actually occurs, as it actually transforms its subject toward fullness of life in Christ, that is, toward self-transcending life integration within the Christian community of faith."[111] Understanding the phenomena of the Christian spiritual life as experience is, for Schneiders, the primary aim of the discipline of

spirituality. Like psychology, spirituality deals with material that often cannot be understood except through analogy with personal experience. Spirituality deals with spiritual experience as such, not merely with ideas about or principles governing such experience. Schneiders defines the material object (what is studied) of study as "lived Christian faith" and the formal object (the aspect under which it is studied) as "experience." Therefore, as a discipline it is truly dynamic and fulfils the call of *Gaudium et Spes* for social engagement and communication

[107]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality", 20.
[108]Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy", 695.
[109]Ibid., 696.
[110]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 329.
[111]Sandra M. Schneiders I.H.M, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit:The study of Christian Spirituality*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), 6.

with community, culture and the world. Even though Schneiders recognises that spirituality, under different aspects, is a discourse, a field and a discipline, it is primarily spirituality as a discipline with which she is concerned. There is, Schneiders notes, an increasingly serious attitude toward spirituality in the academy due to the fact that "major theologians of the conciliar era have made explicit the roots of their constructive work in their own faith experience and their conscious contention that their work should bear fruit in the lived faith of the church as well as in its speculation and teaching."[112] However, questions do arise as to how the discipline of spirituality relates to lived experience of the faith.

Until recently, Christian spirituality has had no critical method to organise or analyse the many resources available to the discipline. Therefore new ways to pursue research in Christian spirituality have been called for as "theological knowledge, terms, and frameworks do not cover the great expanse of human life."[113] David Perrin asks the question of how we are to analyse and comprehend the contribution of people who profess no adherence to or belief in God. In addition, how are we to assess art, sculpture, poetry, and all the aspects of human life and culture that do not particularly reflect academic or institutional theological concerns: "how are they to be analysed in order to mine their hidden secrets of the mysterious way that Transcendence lives and moves within all of humanity?"[114] Taking his cue from Schneiders, Perrin advocates for an approach to research which allows us access to something more fundamental in life, namely, the lived experience of the Spirit of God that is constantly active in our world. Schneiders has written of spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one

[112]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy"in *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 677.
[113]David B. Perrin, O.M.I., "Hermeneutical Methodology In Christian Spirituality." *Theoforum* 44 (2013)317-337, here 319.
[114]Ibid.

perceives."[115] It is in this respect that the acute awareness of multiple disciplines and context can contribute to such research in spirituality. Discussing the scientific method, which sought absolute certainty and precise knowledge, Perrin states that "truth, in the scientific method, seemed tied to a technical method: observation, extraction of data, and formulation of conclusions. However, the current realization that knowledge, even scientific knowledge, requires some element of interpretation opens up the possibility of multidisciplinary research and the hermeneutical approach."[116] This involves outlining a method for research that allows for the scope of human and divine life to be explored in a systematic and critical way. This essentially follows on from Schneiders argument that the focus on experience demands an interdisciplinary method. Pointing out that in effect, spirituality as a discipline does not have *a* method, Schneiders argues that "it has an approach which is characteristically hermeneutical in that it seeks to interpret the experience it studies in order to make it understandable and meaningful in the present without violating its historical reality."[117] Academic spirituality, "needs to draw regularly on sources other than written ones. One of the great riches of Christian spirituality is the range of genres in which it is expressed: art, music, architecture, practices such as pilgrimage, communitarian ways of life and rituals."[118] Therefore it is clear why questions of interdisciplinarity, as well as Christian specificity, and self-implication are to the fore for Schneiders when speaking of the discipline of spirituality.

Sandra Schneiders, in outlining the parameters for the study of spirituality as a discipline, draws on the philosophical hermeneutics as espoused by Paul Ricoeur. Philosophical hermeneutics, through its evolution as a secular research method in the

[115]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 6:1 (Spring 1998): 1 and 3.
[116]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 320.
[117]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality:Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," 6-7.
[118]Philip Sheldrake, "Spirituality and Its Critical Method", 22.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, considers "experience as sedimented in cultural traces and then subject to interpretation, which is paramount in the search for an ever-deepening understanding of life in the world."[119] Ricoeur argues that meaning about God, life, suffering and death can be found in *texts* which for Ricoeur means all cultural traces, literature, poetry, art, nature for example. The focus on experience, therefore, allows an inquiry into any aspect of human life, whether deemed relevant to the 'holy' or not. God cannot be contained within our current understandings of where and how God is active in the world.[120]"Hermeneutical method, and its focus on all experience – as opposed to appealing only to activities already seen as religious or theological in nature, as Sandra Schneiders emphasizes – allows us to remain open to God's mysterious unfolding of divine love in our world."[121] Understanding Ricouer's hermeneutical philosophy of interdisciplinarity is timely and important.[122]

Scholarship in the 21st century will become increasingly interdisciplinary. Furthermore, hermeneutics "or the skill of interpretation, will be one of those skills (perhaps the most

[119]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 328.
[120]Ibid., 329.
[121]Ibid.
[122]For this reason, the six key implications of Ricoeur's philosophy of interdisciplinarity as comprehensively accounted for by Kenneth A. Reynhout are outlined: (1) The recognition that interdisciplinary work involves acts of interpretation should encourage one to be critically self-reflective of the ways in which prejudices shape interpretations of other disciplines, especially if one suspects a prior understanding might be encouraging a mistranslation or faulty interpretation. (2) At the same time, we should embrace the fact that we each come to the interdisciplinary task with a particular perspective and stop pretending that we can construct an alternative, third discourse that can somehow rise above disciplinary differences or fund a perfect translation. (3) The contextual specificity of interdisciplinary work does not, however, licence an anything-goes relativism, because interpretation passes through explanation on the way towards new understanding. There will always be some degree of objectivity to support rational conversation aimed at resolving conflicts of interpretation or adjudicating between rival translations. (4) When engaging in interdisciplinary interpretation, we must be attentive to semantic subtleties between disciplinary contexts and work hard to translate them appropriately. (5) Because there is no algorithm for establishing a perfect translation, no way to anchor a perfect interpretation, the task of interdisciplinary hermeneutics is never complete. This means interdisciplinary dialogue is never finished, nor is the conversation with other interdisciplinarians who may critique and challenge us with alternative interpretations. (6) Finally, interdisciplinary work can be both risky and rewarding. It is risky because one may seriously fumble a translation, or an interpretation may challenge some treasured aspect of one's self-understanding. The potential reward, however, comes from the hope for an appropriation of new self-understanding that liberates one towards greater meaning and significance. Kenneth A. Reynhout, "Ricoeur and Interdisciplinarity" *Literature & Theology*, Vol 27. No. 2, June 2013, 147-156, here 155-156.

important), and so Paul Ricouer's hermeneutical philosophy of interdisciplinarity could prove to be a valuable resource on this new scholarly landscape."[123] Schneiders certainly elaborates and espouses such a view. Schneiders sees two layers of interdisciplinarity active in the study of spirituality, namely constitutive and problematic disciplines. Stressing that every topic of study in the field of spirituality requires that several disciplines be used together in an interactive way, Schneiders cites Scripture and the history of Christianity as constitutive because they supply the positive data of Christian religious experience as well as its norm and hermeneutical context.[124] Schneiders maintains that while the spirituality scholar needs a functional knowledge of Christian scriptures, being well versed with the content of scriptures and have a methodological competence in dealing with it, they need not be an exegete or an expert in biblical languages.[125]

In other words, Scripture and history of Christianity are constitutive because the experience being studied is Christian, the problematic disciplines of psychology, literature and science for example are so-called because the object of study is experience as such. Schneiders illustrates a good example of constitutive and problematic disciplines working together in the study of spirituality, "if one were investigating the role of the Higher Power in the spirituality

[123] Ibid.
[124]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: The Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," 7. However, Robert John Russell questions Schneiders's limitation of the constitutive disciplines to scripture and the history of Christianity. Russell argues a good case for the inclusion of culture as a third source for Christian spirituality. Concerned that without the explicit inclusion of culture as a third source, Christian spirituality may be isolated within the confines of sacred text and tradition Russell instead proposes that "if we include culture as a third source for Christian spirituality, then it follows that science influences Christian spirituality through its role in culture . . . this wondrous knowledge [Big Bang, evolution of life on earth, DNA for example] is the common inheritance of our age and the framework that shapes every dimension of culture from education to the media, form international space programs to modern medicine, communications and travel. Just as the prevailing cosmologies, anthropologies and natural histories shaped the culture in which scripture was formulated and historical Christianity unfolded, so too is contemporary culture contoured by the discoveries and horizons of science. In sum, science, transmitted through culture, impinges profusely on Christian spiritual experience." Robert John Russell, "The Contributions of the Natural Sciences" in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders I.H.M.* Eds., Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert SNJM (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 122-123.
[125]Ibid., 8.

of Alcoholics Anonymous the biblical God image would be an important point of reference but other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, or the physiology of addiction would be the leading problematic disciplines."[126] This second interdisciplinary level called problematic disciplines are called into play by the problematic of the particular object of research. Schneiders herself asserts this illustrated by example:

> Suppose the researcher has focused on the spirituality of the sixteenth – century Carmelite mystic and reformer, Teresa of Avila. If the research problem is finally defined as the role of the humanity of Jesus in Teresa's spirituality, theology, which from another standpoint is one of the constitutive disciplines, would be the primary problematic discipline as well. But if the focus of study is the functioning of the metaphor of water in Teresa's spirituality, literary studies might be the leading problematic discipline. If the issue is the role of achievement and self – esteem in Teresa's spirituality, developmental psychology and/or feminist theory might be the problematic discipline(s). This does not exhaust the possible foci of study in Teresa's spirituality which might call for the use of different disciplines, but it illustrates the point of how the problematic disciplines function in research.[127]

From this multi layered view, the potential of such interdisciplinarity is clear and the reward is the greater understanding and depth of meaning and significance hoped for by Schneiders. Also apparent is the distinct and unique role which theology has in this grand tapestry.

The interdisciplinarity of spirituality involves theology which is related to both the constitutive and problematic disciplines. As theology is the Church's reflection on both scripture and Christian experience and explicitly or implicitly functions in any research project of spirituality, it belongs to the constitutive disciplines. Unusually however, theology also functions as a problematic discipline. As "theology is not the positive datum of either "pole" of the spirituality relationship, i.e., divine self-revelation or lived human response to revelation,

[126]Ibid., 9.
[127]Ibid., 10.

but is rather a second order reflection on one or both or the relationship between them, it is primarily an analytical and critical tool, among other tools, for the understanding and criticism of spirituality phenomena."[128] Therefore theology, in harmony with spirituality can work as a constitutive discipline while at the same time, just like biblical studies or history can be a problematic discipline too. In integrating theology and spirituality though a peculiar feature of theology in relation to spirituality arises. One of these features is the "complicated historical relationship between theology and spirituality and the second is the fact that theology has three different personae, each of which makes theology function differently in the discipline of spirituality."[129] The first case views theology as prescriptive and normative of spirituality which is not considered a research discipline in its own right. The second case sees spirituality as a discipline disappear completely into theology. It is in the third particular instance of such personae that Schneiders argues her case:

> In the third case, in which spirituality is understood as the experienced, multi-faceted living of faith, and theology as the critical reflection on faith, theology and spirituality as disciplines are equal partners in the academy. They each investigate, by their diverse and proper methods, their diverse and sometimes overlapping objects to their mutual enlightenment. Thus, for example, theology might ask what theory of grace would best explain Teresa of Avila's mystical prayer, while spirituality is asking about the mystical experience of Teresa from psychological, psychosomatic, artistic, cultural, and literary, as well as theological angles . . . spirituality is a genuine interdisciplinary discipline in which theology is a moment, that is one of the contributing disciplines . . . If the field of theology is to develop, we need not only to do serious scholarly research but to become more explicit about our interdisciplinary methodology and how our projects relate to those of other scholars in the field.[130]

While the balance between theology and spirituality as equal partners in the academy may not yet have been fully actualized, the gap is closing as "the wide ditch between theology and spirituality has already been bridged, and is being bridged more and more often today. As we

[128]Ibid., 8.
[129]Ibid., 11.
[130]Ibid., 13.

negotiate the transition from a more or less monocultural, Eurocentric church, to a multicultural, polycentric global church, we have witnessed the birth of many theologies which not only admit but insist upon a constitutive relationship with particular spiritualities."[131]Ashley, like Schneiders, is convinced that the cross-disciplinary work with which theology and spirituality endeavour to undertake can ultimately help both disciplines as they attempt to chart a course into the next millennium, and aid them in their continuing service to the Great Tradition.[132] It is not surprising that scholars are drawn to study this phenomenon. In the space of a couple of decades after the event of Vatican II, a new discipline had emerged and it is a discipline which now integrates uniquely but not solely with theology, "spirituality stands at the junction where the deepest concerns of humanity and the contemporary concern with interdisciplinarity, interreligious dialogue, feminist scholarship, the integration of theory and praxis, and the hermeneutical turn come together. If the present of spirituality is somewhat confused, it is also very exciting."[133]

[131]J. Matthew Ashley, "The Turn to Spirituality? The Relationship between Theology and Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 159.
[132]Ibid., 168.
[133]Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 697.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORK OF JON SOBRINO

3. Introduction

Although born in Barcelona, Spain, Jon Sobrino has lived most of his life in El Salvador dedicating his life to this country and its people. A Jesuit theologian, Sobrino is a professor at the University of Central America where he worked closely with his colleague, friend and greatest influence, Ignacio Ellacuria. It was at this university however, on November 16, 1989, during the civil war, that Ellacuria along with five other Jesuits and two women were brutally murdered by the military regime. Of this horror, Sobrino said that after their deaths, such martyrs continue among us. Reiterating the sentiment of Monsenor Oscar Romero, Sobrino stated that such martyrs become "a 'tradition,' a permanent source, already objectified in history, of inspiration and courage."[1] For Sobrino, the only response to this reality is one of witness. With sobering clarity, we are asked to "remember how the resurrection of the crucified is described in the gospel: he appeared before "witnesses," not before mere "seers." That is now what is our task: to bear witness for our martyrs, pursue their cause, and in that way keep them alive in a world which so deeply needs what they were and what they did."[2] What they did, and what Sobrino continues to do, is bear witness to injustice and suffering and react with honesty, fidelity and mercy. This is *the* gospel message

[1] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified Peoples from the Cross* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 184.
[2] Ibid.

that underpins all of Sobrino's work. It is a living work, one where theology and spirituality are never separated from each other nor from reality and as such, Sobrino's endeavour is infused with timely vitality.

Embodying the task of 'witness,' Sobrino has lived in solidarity with 'crucified peoples' for most of his life. In the area of liberation theology, it is stated that "a condition of its emergence was the Second Vatican Council and its call for, and implementation of, an openness to the world in which the church is to act as a sacrament of salvation. Vatican II pulled down many of the objective and subjective walls that removed us from [reality] and deformed reality."[3] Following the Second Vatican Council, in order to account for the cries and hopes of the Latin American people, a serious and different approach to theology was indeed urgent and necessary.[4] Vatican II rejuvenated ecclesial communities on the ground in Latin America. Here, for the first time, a theology was born that gave voice to and belonged to the people. Any attempt to face up to the reality of the poor, suffering and oppressed peoples of Latin America had to be undertaken with honesty and with honour, key themes in Sobrino's writing. From the viewpoint of the Salvadoran and Latin American experience, backed by his learning from Ellacuria, Sobrino reaches the firm conclusion that "the true church of Jesus today is the church of the poor."[5] Although this argument is supported through Sobrino's rereading of scripture, his most decisive argument rests on the *experience* of Latin American ecclesial reality itself. The conviction that "God is moving within that reality with a power not seen in other ecclesial realities,"[6] is central to the work of Sobrino.

[3] Roberto Oliveros, "History of the Theology of Liberation," in Eds. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993),4.
[4] "The Latin American response was different. It was there that *Populorum Progressio* was taken seriously, because local churches recognized the injustice lurking behind the veil of modernity, the inequalities riding on the waves of technocratic 'progress' and the greed for 'wealth control' . . . no wonder they gave us Medellin – and then, liberation theology." Aloysius Pieris, S.J., *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 6.
[5] Jon Sobrino, "Communion, Conflict and Ecclesial Solidarity," in *Mysterium Liberationis,* 616.
[6] Ibid.

Other ecclesial realities such as theology, handing down of doctrines, liturgical celebrations and canon law are indeed necessary in the church Sobrino argues. However, whether they in themselves can be deemed to be always good or not, the important point for Sobrino is that they are not the primary ecclesial substance.

Arguing that real ecclesial substance is the realization of the true *body of Christ* in history, Sobrino holds that whoever sees this church sees Christ as "it carries out the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the Good News to the Poor, the defense of the oppressed from their oppressors, the unmasking of the idols, *especially wealth andpower*, which produce victims in order to survive. Thus it is a church not focused on itself but on the Kingdom of God."[7] It is not only fixed notions of church Sobrino wishes to challenge but he moves us to confront what being a follower of Jesus really means today. To resemble Jesus, argues Sobrino, is "to reproduce the structure of his life. In gospel terms, the structure of Jesus' life is a structure of *incarnation*, of becoming real flesh in real history . . . the structure of Jesus life meant *taking on the sin of the world*, and not just standing idly by looking at it from the outside. It meant taking on a sin that, today, surely, continues to manifest its greatest power in the fact that it puts millions of human beings to death. Finally, the structure of Jesus' life meant *rising again* and *raising again* – having, and bestowing on others life, hope and gladness."[8] Whatever points of contention are raised over liberation theology, and there have been many, the consistency in its and Sobrino's argument remains; honesty to, fidelity with and mercy for the poor, suffering and marginalised are the hallmarks of a true Christian response. Although, at first glance, this premise appears simple, for some perhaps naïve, Sobrino observes that as "The war in the Persian Gulf has shown, among other things, that the Western world has discovered or invented almost everything – except justice, solidarity and peace. The sum total

[7] Ibid. Italics added.
[8] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 15.

of the West's scientific and technological knowledge, its impressive political democratic and Judeo-Christian traditions, the power it has amassed in its governments, its armies, its enterprises, its universities, and its churches has not been sufficient enough to enable it to find a just and humane solution to conflict. Yet despite this failure we continue to suppose that we know what it is to be human and that everyone else must be like us in order to become human . . . All of this changed for me since returning to El Salvador. The most important change is the very way of seeking the answer to what it means to be human, coupled with the nagging suspicion that we have asked the question in a rather "dogmatic" and uncritical manner . . . Western human beings have to a great extent produced an inhuman world for those in the Third World and a dehumanizing world in the First World. And still no change seems imminent. "[9] This is what makes Sobrino's work so vital. To do theology from the reality of the poor creates a situation where horizons are broadened, reciprocal learning takes place and transformation takes place. Gratitude, joy, friendship, humility are real gifts received and only truly experienced in service of the poor that no theory or abstract theology can ever be an adequate substitute for. Often, the person who is believed to be bringing the Good News to a suffering people is the one who actually receives it among the poor. This is service to the poor's best kept secret. It is not they who are transformed but it is often the "Western" visitor who experiences conversion. Actual conversion that takes place as a result of bearing witness is the very definition Sobrino's theology and spirituality. The inseparable nature of theology and spirituality for Sobrino is built on the same foundation that does not allow him to ever separate his life from his work. Sobrino embodies his work he bears witness to God's today and he asks no less of us.

[9] Ibid, 6-7.

Although Sobrino's spirituality and exposition of the principle of mercy are distinct contributions to be explored, this chapter could only begin with careful consideration of Liberation Theology, the crucial framework foundational to understanding Sobrino's spirituality. Following this, the second section will look at the clear progression made from liberation theology to Sobrino's development of the spirituality of liberation. The third and final section will analyse Sobrino's unique contribution of the principle of mercy which aims to take suffering people down from the cross.

3.1 Background to Liberation Theology

Toward the end of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI warned that the gap between the rich and poor was widening, and that Catholics had to become sensitive to social justice otherwise what he called the 'social messianism' of Marxism would prove attractive and promote 'violent revolution'.[10]Subsequently, Paul's groundbreaking encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (PP) and indeed John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, began a momentum in the Catholic Church. A momentum which understood that combating less than human conditions was part of our mission as Christians and was our obligation as human beings. The reach of this encyclical was vast and its impact continues to be felt.PP constituted "one of the more original, extensive, and influential applications of Catholic social teaching ever achieved. This legacy continues to influence Christians throughout the world, particularly in the least developed nations . . . As such, this encyclical represents a significant milestone in the

[10] Ibid., 210.

ongoing elaboration of Catholic social teaching."[11] Most notably, it contributed to the rise of liberation theology in the ecclesial communities of Latin America and therefore liberation theology can be understood as not only emerging *after* the Second Vatican Council but from *within* the larger framework of Catholic social teaching. However, the seminal experience which gave rise to the theology of liberation was "purely and simply, the daily experience of the unjust poverty in which millions of our fellow Latin Americans are obliged to live. In and from this experience emerges the shattering word of the God of Moses and of Jesus: this situation is not the will of that God."[12] It is precisely this unjust situation the bishops of Latin America sought to address.

3.2 Medellin to Puebla

In 1968, the Roman Catholic bishops of Latin America gathered a conference at Medellin, Colombia. The meeting, known as CELAM II acknowledged that the church should take a stance on the side of the poor. This meeting was to set the stage for the implementation of Vatican II on the continent and it has in fact been argued that "without the arrival of Paul VI at the meeting of Medellin would not have had the same strength and the same impact on the pastoral life of the church in Latin America."[13] In addition to this implementation, Paul's visit strongly supported a church for the poor and their just causes. Consequently, "the Medellin conference was a fruitful opportunity for renewal and many of the concepts outlined in the final document were new additions to the social doctrine of the church, notably the concepts 'a truly human economics,' 'institutionalised violence' and

[11] Allan Figueroa Deck, "Commentary on *Populorum Progressio*," in ed., Kenneth R. Himes O.F.M., *ModernCatholic Social Teaching* (Washington; Georgetown UP, 2005), 310.
[12]Roberto Oliveros, "History of the Theology of Liberation" in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 4.
[13] Mario I. Aguilar, "The Kairos of Medellin" in Eds., Patrick Claffey and Joe Egan, Movement or Moment? Assessing Liberation Theology 40 years after Medellin (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2009), 16.

'sinful structures.'"[14] This stance against injustice, the affirmation of solidarity and identification with the poor clearly highlights the overlap between the document and the Church's social teaching:

> We ought to sharpen the awareness of our duty of solidarity with the poor, to which charity leads us. This solidarity means that we make ours their problems and their struggles, that we know how to speak with them. This has to be concretized in criticism of injustice and oppression, in the struggle against the intolerable situation which a poor person often has to tolerate, in the willingness to dialogue with the groups responsible for that situation in order to make them understand their obligations. (Medellin, "Document on Poverty," #10)

Pointing out causes of poverty and understanding obligations means a structural analysis is necessary which is a key feature of liberation theology. However, this is where the tension arises. In pointing out the causes of poverty it "inevitably means speaking of social injustice and socioeconomic structures that oppress the weak. When this happens, there is resistance – especially if the structural analysis reveals the concrete, historical responsibility of specific persons. But the strongest resistance and greatest fear are aroused by the threat of a raised consciousness and resulting organization on the part of the poor."[15] Therefore, Medellin was of tremendous significance as a movement which initiated "not a new academic or philosophical theology, but rather the transformation of the very structures and methods of doing theology. To be faithful and authentic, Christian theology would have to emerge out of the believing community grappling with history and responding to its contemporary situation."[16] Once the movement, initiated by Vatican II and Medellin, had begun, liberation theology had the tools to build its foundations. From the outset "liberation theology has

[14] Ibid.
[15] Gustavo Gutierrez, "Option for the Poor" in Eds., Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria, *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 25.
[16] Aguilar, "The Kairos of Medellin," 18.

posited a distinction – adopted by Medellin in its "Document on Poverty" – among three notions of poverty: *real* poverty, as an *evil* (that is, as not desired by God); spiritual poverty, as *availability* to the will of the Lord; and *solidarity* with the poor, as well as with the situation they suffer."[17]

As with PP, the Documents on Poverty and indeed the movement begun at Medellin, *Justitia in mundo* (JM) concentrated on the social issues directly affecting the poor. Issued in 1971 by the Synod of Bishops, the document recognizes three central themes: "(1) the right to development; (2) the connection between Christian faith and justice, and (3) strategies for acting on behalf of justice in our time."[18] The document stresses that Christianity can no longer direct the fate of the poor to the next world but rather that Christianity requires that all are involved in social engagement and action:

> We see in the world a set of injustices which constitute the nucleus of today's problems and whose solution requires the undertaking of tasks and functions in every sector of society, and even on the level of the global society towards which we are speeding in this last quarter of the twentieth century. Therefore we must be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of human activity and especially in the sector of world society, if justice is really to be put into practice. Our action is to be directed above all at those people and nations which because of various forms of oppression and because of the present character of our society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice . . .
>
> The present situation of the world, seen in the light of faith, calls us back to the very essence of the Christian message, creating in us a deep awareness of its true meaning and of its urgent demands. The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause

[17]Ibid., 22.
[18] Kenneth R. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in mundo* (Justice in the World)," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 340.

> of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times.[19]

In complete distinction to any notion of development as charity, justice in this document is instead defined in terms of human dignity and human rights. It recognizes that in standing quietly and idly by "voiceless victims, effectively marginalized by deliberate intent or historical circumstance, endure a unique disadvantage, for they cannot correct their own plight and it is unrecognized by others. This is the particular pain of the truly marginal; they cannot participate in social affairs or even call for the correction of their situation."[20] The bishops believed that the action of the Church should be specifically directed at this special group of people. Ultimately, what permeates this document is the firm belief that loving God is most effective in love and service of others:

> Faith in Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer, and love of neighbor constitute a fundamental theme of the writers of the New Testament. According to St. Paul, the whole of the Christian life is summed up in faith effecting that love and service of neighbor which involve the fulfillment of the demands of justice. The Christian lives under the interior law of liberty, which is a permanent call to us to turn away from self-sufficiency to confidence in God and from concern for self to a sincere love of neighbor. Thus takes place his genuine liberation and the gift of himself for the freedom of others.[21]

This core foundation would be further built upon in Puebla, Mexico.

Medellin and *Justitia in mundo* undoubtedly succeeded in highlighting the injustice in which entire peoples live. However, in 1979, the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate held at Puebla in Mexico, firmly established the reasons for their situation:

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[19] *Justitia in mundo*, #20 and #35.
[20] Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in mundo*", 344.
[21] *Justitia in mundo*, #33.

> So we brand the situation of inhuman poverty in which millions of Latin Americans live as the most devastating and humiliating kind of scourge. And this situation finds expression in such things as a high rate of infant mortality, lack of adequate housing, health problems, starvation wages, unemployment, malnutrition, job uncertainty, compulsory mass migrations, etc. Analyzing this situation more deeply, we discover that this poverty is not a passing phase. Instead it is the product of economic, social and political situations and structures, although there are other causes for the state of misery (Puebla Final Document, #29-30).

At Puebla, it is again highlighted that such desperate situations of poverty exist because of the social system and its unjust social structures. The "central theme of our lives, and of all spirituality – which is how to meet God, where it is that God is loved and known – leads straight to the heart of the gospel: loving God and neighbor. But this topic acquires a radical reality when we look into the face of someone poor."[22] The demand to love and take care of one's neighbor is central to liberation theology. In fact, this "is not simply one of the topics addressed in liberation theology; it is its heart and soul . . . loving God and neighbor means turning from the beaten path, entering the pathways of the oppressed, those struck down by injustice, and making a commitment to their cause."[23] What is also significant at is the fact that it is during this conference at Puebla that the notion of the *option for the poor* was first adopted. The word *option*, adopted at Puebla "represents today a point of orientation for the pastoral activities of the Church and an important guideline for being Christian – in other words, what we call spirituality, one of the fundamental concerns of liberation theology . . . It combines a profound sense of the gratuitous love of God with the urgency of solidarity with the 'little ones' of history."[24] While the events from Vatican II through to Medellin and Puebla provided the fuel for liberation theology, it would be Gustavo Gutierrez, widely regarded as the founding father of liberation theology, who would propel it forward.

[22] Roberto Oliveros, "History of the Theology of Liberation" in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 6.
[23] Ibid., 7.
[24] Gustavo Gutierrez, "The task and content of Liberation Theology," in Ed. Christopher Rowland, *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (New York; Cambridge UP, 2007), 27.

3.3 Gustavo Gutierrez

. Gustavo Gutierrez is often described as the father of liberation theology.[25] A theologian and Dominican priest, Gutierrez was born in Lima, Peru and has spent most of his life living and working side by side with the poor of Lima.[26] The Peruvian reality is still one of poverty for many. Many still live in the most dehumanizing conditions. There exists, in addition to lack of housing and education: lack of clean water, lack of food, lack of sewage facilities and all of the health problems that are related to these issues.[27]The real issue at stake "in this situation is becoming increasingly clear to us today: poverty means death. It means death due to hunger and sickness, or to the repressive methods used by those who see their privileged position being endangered by any effort to liberate the oppressed."[28] The Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, held at Puebla, in Mexico, recognized too that this reality was not the will of God:

> Viewing it in the light of faith, we see the growing gap between rich and poor as a scandal and a contradiction to Christian existence. The luxury of a few becomes an insult to the wretched poverty of the vast masses. This is contrary to the plan of the creator and to the honor that is due him. In this anxiety and

[25] Many describe Gutiérrez as "the father of liberation theology, " a description he apparently disavowed because he insists that a theology of liberation is not the work of the experts but of "the people, " meaning the poor people for whom he was simply the one to write a book about what he had learned from them.

[26] In 1993, Gutierrez was awarded the Legion of Honour by the French government for his tireless work with the poor.

[27]On accompanying many poor and sick children to several hospitals in Lima, Peru, I learned first-hand that without money these children would simply not be treated, they would be turned away from the hospital and many would die. On arriving with a baby who needed an injection, I was given a list of items that included the syringe, the fluid, the swabs, even the plasters and told to go and buy these at the pharmacy before he (the doctor) would even treat the sick baby. Many mothers queue to see the doctors with their sick babies wrapped around their backs in the hope of finding a sympathetic ear, only to be turned away because they are poor. With minor ailments some children have a chance at survival but if suffering with cancer or TB or malnutrition many do not.

[28]Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 9-10.

> sorrow the Church sees a situation of social sinfulness, all the more serious because it exists in countries that call themselves Catholic.[29] (Puebla Final Document #28)

Therefore, for Christians, the plight of the poor and marginalized must be always at the forefront of our work and life. The situation of the poor is one that demands immediate and consistent action for "how can we thank God for the gift of life when the reality around us is one of premature and unjustly inflicted death? How can we express joy at knowing ourselves to be loved by the Father when we see the suffering of our brothers and sisters? How can we sing when the suffering of an entire people chokes the sound in our throats?"[30]

According to Gustavo Gutierrez, "although the term liberation exists also in the social and political spheres, it comes from a very biblical and theological tradition. It was within this tradition that we sought to locate the term from the beginning."[31] In order to understand liberation theology, it is imperative to examine this foundation which also provides us with answers to questions over its ongoing relevance and appeal. Gutierrez links the three dimensions of liberation to portray this integral reality:

> (1) Political and social liberation, which points towards the elimination of the immediate causes of poverty and injustice, especially with regard to socio-economic structures. On this basis, an attempt can be made to construct a society based on respect for the other, and especially for the weakest and the insignificant;
> (2) Human liberation, meaning that, although aware that changing social structures is important, we need to go deeper. It means liberating human beings of all those things- not just in the social sphere- that limit their capacity to develop themselves freely and in dignity. Here we are speaking of what Vatican II called a 'new humanism'(cf. GS 55);
> (3) And, crucially, liberation from selfishness and sin. In the analysis of faith, this is the last root of injustice that has to be eliminated. Overcoming this

[29]Puebla Final Document, #28.
[30] Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 7.
[31] G. Gutierrez translated by Judith Condor, The Task and Content of Liberation Theology, *The Cambridge Companion to LiberationTheology*. ed.Christopher Rowland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26.

> leads to re-establishing friendship with God and with other people (cf. *Lumen Gentium* n. I). It is clear that only the grace of God, the redeeming work of Christ, can overcome sin.[32]

As Gutierrez himself argues, this provides the concept of liberation with its permanent relevance and the demanding appeal, as well as the context for dealing with the issue of poverty. From these distinctions, and also emerging from Medellin and Puebla, was the expression 'preferential option for the poor.'

The principles of an option for the poor are rooted in the Old and New Testament. The "struggle and the richness of the commitment that many Christians in Latin America and the Caribbean began to feel in the 1960s as part of the struggle for justice and solidarity with the poor raised new questions, as well as pointing to fertile new pathways in the discourse about faith."[33] Discussing the challenges faced by the Latin American Church, Gutierrez states that: "the way of understanding the task of announcing the gospel changed from the moment that the Church took new consciousness of the 'inhuman misery' in which the majority of the population lives; poverty continues to be the great challenge to Christian witness in our continent."[34] Liberation theology, in dealing with the challenge of extreme poverty, looked for a new language and consequently a theology was born which, even though far from perfect, allowed for a fresh, new and relevant discourse on the poor.

In recent years, Gutierrez was asked if he thought the 'preferential option for the poor' had become an integral part of the Church's social teaching. His response explains the origins of the term:

[32]Ibid., 26.
[33] Ibid., 19.
[34] Ibid., 20.

> The precise term was born between the Latin American Bishop's Conferences in Medellin in 1968 and Puebla in 1979. In Medellin, the three words *option*, *preferential* and *poor* are all present but it is only in the years that followed Medellin that they were brought into a complete phrase. It would be accurate to say that the term 'preferential option for the poor' comes from the Latin American Church but the content, the underlying intuition is entirely biblical. The term poverty refers to the real poor. The poverty to which the option refers is material poverty; material poverty which means premature and unjust death. The poor person is treated as a non-person, someone considered insignificant from an economic, political or cultural point of view. The poor count as statistics; they are nameless, insignificant but never so before God.[35]

Gutierrez goes on to discuss the common belief that the word 'preferential' waters down or softens the option for the poor. "This is not true. God's love excludes no-one. Nevertheless, God demonstrates a special predilection for those who have been excluded from the banquet of life."[36] Most interesting is the fact that for Gutierrez, *option* is the word that is most misunderstood as in English it suggests a choice between two things. Gutierrez states that the Spanish is actually closer to the true meaning as it evokes a sense of commitment:

> In some ways, *option* is perhaps the weakest word in the sentence. In English, the word merely connotes a choice between two things. In Spanish, however, it evokes the sense of commitment. The option for the poor is not optional, but is incumbent upon every Christian. It is not something that a Christian can either take or leave. As understood by Medellín, the option for the poor is twofold: it involves standing in solidarity *with* the poor, but it also entails a stance *against* inhumane poverty.[37]

With momentum gaining around this new language, which has the needs of the poor at its core, it quickly became apparent that the theory was not so easily translated into practice.

[35] http://americamagazine.org/issue/420/article/remembering-poor-interview-gustavo-gutirrez Accessed 29/11/2018.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Indeed, Paul VI, toward the end of Vatican II, warned that the gap between the rich and poor was widening, and that Catholics had to become sensitive to social justice otherwise what he called the 'social messianism' of Marxism would prove attractive and promote 'violent revolution'.[38] This is one of the main difficulties of discussing the 'preferential option for the poor'; many still hear the association with left wing ideologies that have led to uprisings and violence.[39] Even though the option for the poor has been developed from Vatican II to *Populorum Progressio* to liberation theology, special concern for the poor, of course, has its origins in scripture. In trying to liberate the oppressed of Latin America, this very claim is often levied at liberation theologians in a negative and dismissive fashion; that they use biblical texts to advance their own cause. This however, is not the only criticism of liberation theology.

[38] Peter Hebbelthwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church," in ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2007), 210.

[39] At the CELAM conference in Puebla, Mexico, Pope John Paul II arrived at a new understanding which helps develop the dichotomy between the positivity and hope behind the term 'preferential option for the poor' and the difficulties in making a reality of such a concept In continuity with Medellin and Puebla conferences, the church reaffirms the preferential option on behalf of the poor, though that option is not exclusive or excluding, since the message of salvation is indeed intended for all. It is an option, moreover, that is based essentially on God's word, and not on criteria provided by human sciences or opposed ideologies, which often reduce the poor to abstract socio-political and economic categories. But it is a firm and irrevocable option. Liberation Theology also added to the climate in which the encyclical *Sollicitudo ReiSocialis* was written. Acknowledging that this theology had many positive aspects, Pope John Paul II sent a letter to the Brazilian hierarchy in which he described liberation theology as "not only timely but useful and necessary," the Pope himself, "promised on several occasions to present eventually the positive side of this theology, and finally he did with this encyclical." A papal trip in the year preceding this encyclical proves important to the overall understanding of the document. In 1987, John Paul visited Chile which was, at that time, under the oppressive regime of Augusto Pinochet. During a papal mass in Parque O'Higgins, anti – government protestors clashed with police, violence ensued and people were injured. Tellingly, John Paul decided to go ahead with the new social encyclical because, according to Robert Suro, "he felt that Catholics like those that kept with him in Parque O'Higgins deserved clear direction from the church on how to find a way out of the turmoil and poverty around them." For In agreement with Paul VI, John Paul asserts that the "United States has failed to promote economic and political development in Latin America."[39] Of interest to note is that, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at this time also believed that the United States "had become overly materialistic and morally insensitive to the plight of the world's poor. Ratzinger was skeptical of a liberal capitalist system as the blueprint for genuine development." Charles E. Curran, Kenneth R. Himes and Thomas A. Shannon, "Commentary on *Sollicitudo rei socialis*" in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 418.

3.4 Some Objections to Liberation Theology

As stated, *Populorum Progressio* contributed to the rise of liberation theology in Latin America, Africa and Asia which certainly constitutes one of the more original, extensive and, and influential applications of Catholic social teaching ever achieved. However, during his time as Cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger issued instructions that warned against dangerous extremes prevalent in some liberation theologies. In an address to the Presidents of the Doctrinal Commissions of the Bishop's Conferences of Latin America, Ratzinger stated that, "In the 1980's, the theology of liberation in its radical forms seemed to be the most urgent challenge to the faith of the church. It was a challenge that required both a response and a clarification because it proposed a new, plausible . . . practical response to the fundamental question of Christianity: namely the problem of redemption."[40] Nonetheless, as Pope, Benedict was admittedly very wary of any type of prevailing ideology perhaps because he was witness to the student revolt of 1968 in Germany which "heralded a left-wing swing in politics and quickly degenerated into terrorism, a phenomenon that Joseph Ratzinger would later diagnose as a symptom of an underlying illness in society, an illness whose roots were intellectual and ultimately theological."[41] Therefore his attack on Marxism would seem somewhat understandable as it was "precisely in those places where the Marxist liberating theology had been applied consistently, a radical lack of freedom had been produced . . . the fact is that when politics are used to bring redemption, they promise too much. When they presume to do God's work, they become not divine but diabolical."[42] It is little wonder then that in the 1980's liberation theology went on the defensive; "this was not because liberation theologians accepted the charge of Marxism or the papal account of what they were doing,

[40] John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 227.
[41] Vincent D. Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of Our Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 19.
[42] Thornton and Varenne, *The Essential Pope Benedict*, 228.

but because so many of them were under direct attack from the CDF."[43] The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued the *Instruction on certain Aspects on the Theologyof Liberation – Libertatis Nuntius,* in August of 1984. The overall tone of the instruction is severely critical as this summary indicates:

> Faced with the urgency of sharing bread, some are tempted to put evangelization into parentheses, as it were, and postpone it until tomorrow: first the bread, then the Word of the Lord. It is a fatal error to separate these two and even worse to oppose the one to the other. In fact, the Christian perspective naturally shows they have a great deal to do with one another. To some it even seems that the necessary struggle for human justice and freedom in the economic and political sense constitutes the whole essence of salvation. For them, the Gospel is reduced to a purely earthly gospel. The different theologies of liberation are situated between the 'preferential option for the poor', forcefully reaffirmed without ambiguity after Medellin at the Conference of 'Puebla' on the one hand, and the temptation to reduce the Gospel to an earthly gospel on the other . . . The warning of Paul VI remains fully valid today: Marxism as it is actually lived out poses many distinct aspects and questions for Christians to reflect upon and act on. However, it would be illusory and dangerous to ignore the intimate bond which radically unites them, and to accept elements of the Marxist analysis without recognizing its connections with the ideology, or to enter into the practice of class-struggle and of its Marxist interpretation while failing to see the kind of totalitarian society to which this process slowly leads. (LN VI,3 – VII,7)

In addition to this, a special assembly of the Peruvian bishops was summoned to Rome in September 1984 for the express purpose of condemning Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the leading liberation theologians. Leonardo Boff too "was summoned to Rome for what was called by Cardinal Ratzinger a 'colloquy' and by everyone else a 'trial' . . . authority and ministry, Boff maintained, could come from below in the Church . . . this was regarded as 'subversive'. Boff was silenced for a year."[44] However, after the negative instruction issued in 1984, a more positive one was produced two years later in 1986: "unlike earlier condemnations . . . there is no talk of 'errors' still less of 'heresy', but merely 'deviations' or

[43] Peter Hebbelthwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church," 216.
[44] Ibid.

the possible threat of them . . . moreover, the risk of deviation afflicts only 'certain forms of 'Liberation Theology' – not presumably all of them."[45] Many read into Pope Benedict's critiques a dichotomy; on the one hand he appears to denounce liberation theology while through an encyclical like *Caritas in Veritate* he celebrates the very work which inspired liberation theology.

However, recently, there is what appears to be the beginning of a resurgence of liberation theology as Paul Vallely writing for the New York Times reports:

> In a remarkable turnaround, liberation theology is being brought in from the cold. During the Cold War, the idea that the Catholic Church should give "a preferential option for the poor" was seen by many in Rome as thinly disguised Marxism . . .The Vatican also silenced key exponents of liberation theology, and its founding father, the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez, was placed under investigation by the Vatican's guardian of doctrinal orthodoxy, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, or C.D.F.
>
> After the Cold War ended, Pope Benedict encouraged bishops in Latin America to find new ways of expressing the church's "bias to the poor." He attended their seminal meeting in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007, at which they refined the message of liberation theology. The priest the bishops elected to draft the document was Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, who six years later was elected Pope Francis, and announced that he wanted "a poor church, for the poor."
>
> Last year the pope invited Father Gutiérrez, whose 1971 book "A Theology of Liberation" had been for years under investigation by the C.D.F., to meet him in the Vatican. L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican's semi-official newspaper, marked the event by proclaiming that liberation theology can no longer "remain in the shadows to which it has been relegated for some years, at least in Europe." Moreover, Father Gutiérrez has recently co-authored a new book with Archbishop Gerhard Müller, the current head of the C.D.F., who was appointed to the post by Benedict XVI. Archbishop Müller now describes liberation theology as one of the "most significant currents of Catholic theology of the 20th century."
>
> The perspectives of the West, which have for so long dominated the thinking of the Vatican, are being augmented by those of Latin America. A new historical moment has arrived. Pope Francis is taking a risk. . . But at a time when the

[45] Ibid., 217 – 218.

> economic gap between the rich and the poor is widening, the pope's rehabilitation of liberation theology is timely and most welcome.[46]

Waxing lyrical about the concept of frontiers and laboratories Pope Francis quotes a 'brilliant letter' by Fr Arrupe to the centres for Social Research and Action on Poverty in which he (Arrupe) says clearly that "one cannot speak of poverty if one does not experience poverty . . . the frontiers are many."[47] Pope Francis continues by comparing religious sisters who live in hospitals, to the doctor who, although very good, lived in his laboratory, "the sister lived on the frontier and was in dialogue with it every day. Domesticating the frontier means just talking from a remote location, locking yourself up in a laboratory. Laboratories are useful, but reflection for us must always start from experience."[48] Reflection which starts from experience? The very sentiment of Jon Sobrino.

3.5 Jon Sobrino and Liberation Spirituality

Following Vatican II, *Populorum Progressio* and Medellin:

> the traditional mosaic of the church, with all its pieces and colors, [was] shaken apart and now must be fitted back together again."[49] Doctrine and administration continue to be important as is Christian praxis but what is more advantageous and necessary is in the two working together, "Johannes B. Metz speaks of a 'mysticism and politics of discipleship'; and Ignacio Ellacuria called for 'the contemplative in action for justice.' Whatever terms we may want to use to describe this new situation and challenge, the important thing is

[46] http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/05/opinion/a-church-for-the-poor.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0accessed 24/09/2014.
[47] Antonio Spadaro, "The Heart of a Jesuit Pope: Interview with Pope Francis," in *Studies* (Volume 102*
[48] Ibid.
[49] Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 678.

> the emphasis on something calledspirit rather than only on theory and praxis – or, of course, only on doctrine and administration.[50]

Jon Sobrino is one of the most well-known and influential figures in liberation theology. A Jesuit theologian, Sobrino was born in Barcelona and was educated in Spain, Germany and the USA, from where he has the unique distinction among liberation theologians of a Master's degree in Engineering. In 1956, Sobrino joined the Society of Jesus and since 1957 has lived in El Salvador. It was during his time at the Central American University of San Salvador that Sobrino lost many of his colleagues in an assassination by government troops in 1989. [51] Of the many liberation theologians, Sobrino's work stands out perhaps because of this personal tragedy. It appeals though not only on the level of sentiment; it is at once a theology of liberation, a liberation spirituality and a very real testimony and a living witness to hope. It is due to living "in El Salvador [that] I have been given the grace of meeting thousands of people like this Jesus of Nazareth. In March we recall Rutilio Grande and Monsenor Romero. In November we always remember the UCA Jesuits, with Julia Elba and Celina. In December we honor the four North American women, Ita, Maura, Dorothy and Jean, as well as many hundreds of lay people and campesino men and women like Ticha and Polin."[52] The ultimate purpose in every action Sobrino takes, evident in every piece of writing he creates, is dedicated to helping the people he lives among. In understanding what happened to Sobrino and others in San Salvador, the hope is that we too may be moved to an awakening:

[50]Ibid.
[51]The 1993 Commission on the Truth for El Salvador produced a chilling report which . . .reveals how violence and state terrorism were used mercilessly against civil society . . . Two [cases] in particular, shook the conscience of the world: the assassination of Archbishop Romero, committed by a death squad under the command of the founder of the ARENA party [Roberto D'Aubuisson], and the assassination of the Jesuit fathers and their domestic employees, ordered by the military high command. (Pedro Nikken, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights) Robert Lassalle-Klein, *Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuria, Jon Sobrino and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2014), Foreword, Kindle.
[52]Ibid.

> My hope is that we all might be moved to a desire for conversion, compassion for the victims, and a determination to work for justice and to take the crucified peoples down form the cross. Hopefully, and what is most humanizing of all, we will be grateful to them. This gratitude (like hope) is not plentiful in our world, and perhaps that is because it does not even occur to us that we need to thank the poor and the victims. Nonetheless, as Monsenor Romero and Father Ellacuria used to say, it is the poor and victims who save us . . . they are the sources of living water, given so that this world might overcome its insensitivity and triviality. They are living water that strengthens us in the struggle against injustice and lies.[53]

These encounters, the taking down of the crucified peoples from the cross, marks the life of Jon Sobrino and in turn marks the lives of all those who engage in his spirituality. Rodolfo Cardenal S.J., the other surviving member of the UCA Jesuit community, offers the following summation that "in the end, then, the question arises as to whether the follower of Jesus today is not also called to help take down from the cross the crucified peoples of history."[54] Sobrino's answer to this question is a resounding yes which is why his liberation spirituality is significant and important.

3.6 Honesty in the Face of Reality

Collaborating extensively as theologians, Jesuit brothers, as colleagues at the Central American University and as friends, it would be difficult, if not altogether impossible, to discuss Sobrino without adequate reference to his esteemed fellow Jesuit, Ignacio Ellacuria.[55]

[53]Ibid.
[54]Ibid.
[55] Ignacio Ellacuria entered the Society of Jesus in 1947 at the age of 16. In his second year, he moved from Spain to El Salvador. In 1967, he was permanently assigned to El Salvador although crucially he made an annual trip to Madrid to work with the Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri. This annual trip proves pivotal to establishing the philosophical background which underpins much of Ellacuria's and Sobrino theology and

It must be understood that within Sobrino's Christological spirituality can be read Ellacuria's fundamental theology and as such it is a "collaborative theological reflection on God's gracious self- offer in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its *analogatum princeps* in the crucified people of the planet. They (Ellacuria and Sobrino) consider the poor and oppressed to be the defining sign of the times and a privileged *locus theologicus* for the encounter with God."[56]. Both take for their philosophical framework the work of Xavier Zubiri[57] and this in turn shapes Sobrino's spirituality. For Ellacuria, the fulness of salvation has appeared in history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth which presupposes the turn to historical reality:

> it complements the theologal element of that turn with the theological perspective afforded by Christian revelation," Ellacuria maintains that "at the level of its richest and deepest manifestation of reality, history is open to transcendence. Moreover, authentic liberation includes both historical and transcendent elements. From a Christological perspective, this takes the form of extending *in* history the ongoing incarnation of Christ as Lord *of* history.[58]

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spirituality. On November 16, 1989, Ellacuria was murdered along with five other Jesuits in the residence of the Archbishop Romero Centre at the Central American University.

[56]Robert Lassalle-Klein, *Blood and Ink:* Ignacio *Ellacuria, Jon Sobrino and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2014), Introduction, Kindle.

[57] Xavier Zubiri was also born in Spain. With a doctorate in theology, a doctorate in philosophy, studies in mathematics, biology, theoretical physics, command of many languages including Basque, German, Latin, Hebrew and Sanskrit, in addition to studying and living with Albert Einstein, Zubiri's academic credentials are exhaustive. In 1942, he wrote a paper entitled 'Our Intellectual Situation' in which it was clear to see his sadness at the war in Europe and fearful for Western Civilization's future, he wrote: "When human beings and human reason believed they were everything, they lost themselves; they were left, in certain respects, annihilated. Thus the person of the 20th century finds himself even more alone; this time without the world, without God, and without himself." When Ellacuria came to Zubiri it was to study with someone who was so in touch with the times and in Zubiri, he had found a mentor "who saw philosophy as a way to engage reality and to commit oneself to the demands of reality," and Ellacuria notes, "Zubiri has attempted to apprehend, affirm and think about the totality of real things as real . . . he equips us materially and formally to interpret the world and even to transform it, serving as an ultimate light to other modes of knowing and acting." Zubiri's philosophy was not mere abstraction therefore; rather it was to encompass the whole body of human existence. Zubiri was awarded his doctorate in theology in 1980 and Ellacuria admired greatly his philosophical openness to divine reality evident in the following:The theologal "is the dimension in which the person, because he is connected to reality, is more than himself, even while, at every minute, he is a pilgrim utterly awed by the power of the real . . . Zubiri is a theologal philosopher whose own philosophy of the human person brought him to a living encounter with the realm of the divine, which is implicated in the most personal dimension of a human being, but also in society and history. There is a theologal dimension of things and from this dimension a religious encounter with God is possible, a theological as well as a philosophical encounter." The effect of Zubiri's philosophy on Ellacuria cannot be overstated. However, after returning to El Salvador, Ellacuria began to "deploy Zubiri's philosophy of reality in ways that concretely and directly influenced that society . . . with profound consistency and controlled intensity, Ellacuria exercised his call to work for liberation." Ibid.

[58]Ibid.

In placing the poor at the centre of life, Sobrino takes a very definite position to reality within history. Honesty in the face of the reality of the suffering of the poor is a consistent theme for Sobrino. Indeed, this owes to the fact that murder, war and oppression are actualities to which Sobrino has confronted throughout his life in El Salvador:

> the reality of this country has made me think a lot, and has also helped me think about Jesus Christ . . . so much tragedy and so much hope, so much sin and so much grace provide a powerful hermeneutical backdrop for understanding Christ and give the gospel the taste of reality." Sobrino argues that he is raising the reality of life in El Salvador: "reflecting on a Christological faith I find as a living faith, and no more than present Christ, the great witness to God, from the sources in theology, of course, but also from the cloud of witnesses who shed light on the witness by definition. . . the crucified Jesus Christ, so omnipresent, is really good news, is truly a liberator Jesus Christ."[59]

From the reality of his country, Sobrino reflects on a living faith which is inspired by the good news of Jesus Christ. This corresponds with the social doctrine of the church where it is stated that:

> The transformation of social relationships that responds to the demands of the Kingdom of God is not fixed within concrete boundaries once and for all. Rather, it is a task entrusted to the Christian community, which is to develop it and carry it out through reflection and practices inspired by the Gospel . . . this inspiration is given to the community of Christians who are a part of the world and of history, and who are therefore open to dialogue with all people of good will in the common quest for the seeds of truth and freedom sown in the vast field of humanity.[60]

[59]Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator* (Burns and Oates: Kent, 1994), 8.
[60]*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, #53.

Within Catholic Social Teaching, Christians are called to walk the line between the vision of the reign of God and its actual realization in history. This tension is often described in terms of the 'already but not yet' that is, we live in the grace of the kingdom, but it is not yet the completed kingdom. Honesty in the face of this reality, for Sobrino, is a prerequisite for authentic human existence, "it is impossible to engage this reality as a mere spectator. Far more than a change of location, that engagement involves a change of mind and heart, in a word conversion."[61] Such a conversion often evokes a sense of dread and resistance as harsh truths and "difficulties arise. There is a price to pay. Honesty with the real must be maintained through thick and thin. Honesty with the real may lead us where we did not expect to be led."[62] This openness can evoke a sense of dread because in terms of conversion "we are being asked to see ourselves in a new and different way . . . Could this mean letting go of myself as I am for the sake of what I may be? Is it a matter of letting go of what I *think* I am, in order to discover what I *truly* am? It would seem that conversion is no less than a process of myself dying and rising."[63] It is imperative though that we are honest about reality. Any attempt to build a spirituality without it, argues Sobrino, would be in vain:

> True, the attempt to concretize this objective reality can sometimes be 'hit and miss." But the attitude, the attempt, is basic – as basic as the disposition for conversion – when it comes to seeing reality as it really is. In Latin America we believe that we have this attitude, and that it is the poor who have enabled us to have it, both objectively (because the truth of things is better known from below and from the periphery than from above and from the centre) and subjectively (because the poor have the gift of turning the gaze of others toward their world, and dislodging their interest from themselves so that they now 'tune in' to the interests of reality instead) . . . the imperative of active

[61]Dean Brackley, S.J., "Theology and Solidarity:Learning from Sobrino's Method" in ed. Stephen J. Pope, *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 10. This excerpt is a translation from Sobrino's essay entitled '*Teologia en un mundo sufriente*.'
[62] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988),17.
[63] Donal Harrington, *What Is Morality*? (Dublin: Veritas, 2008),154.Bernard Lonergan has also provided an insight into such a reimagining when he discusses conversions, "the experience of conversion itself involves a radical shift in horizons, in the perspective from which the person views reality itself. . . It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, it enriches his understanding, guides his judgements, reinforces his decisions." Mark O'Keefe, *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy* (Mahwah, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 2005), 28-29.

> solidarity with the poor of this world proceeds, at bottom, from a profound honesty about Latin American reality.[64]

For Sobrino, honesty to the real will be the basis of all spirituality and spiritualities that have been handed down to us by Christian tradition. Honesty with the real "is a matter of great activity and requires spirit. If this basic honesty with the real is not exercised, the consequences for the human being are catastrophic. As Paul says, the heart is darkened (subjectively) and concrete realities are no longer creatures, sacraments of God (as they are objectively), but manipulated things."[65] When speaking of this, what is actually meant is overcoming the temptation to oppress truth. It means that when the truth of reality is not imprisoned through injustice, that truth itself gives rise to an unconditional yes to life, and an unconditional no to death. Confronting the real, according to Sobrino, means facing the concrete history in which we live and the theology of liberation has sought to be a creative synthesis of what it means to be human . . . specifically in the world of the hoping, suffering poor.

This concept of 'honesty with the real' clearly is the pivotal key to understanding Sobrino's spirituality. Questioning what the correct relationship between the spirit of the subject and the reality surrounding that subject is, allows Sobrino to examine the prerequisites for spirituality as such and thus for any and every spirituality. He is looking for prerequisites that, once fulfilled, become the foundations on which a spirituality will be built. Stating that any genuine spirituality will demand in the concrete three prerequisites: honesty about the real, fidelity to the real and a certain correspondence, by which we permit ourselves to be carried along, by the 'more' of the real, Sobrino argues firstly that God condemns the

[64] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 17.
[65] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 681.

negation of reality, implicit in the denial of the truth of reality.[66] This dishonesty consists in doing things an injustice,

> Humanity today is the victim of poverty and institutionalized violence. God's creation is being assaulted and vitiated because this reality is simply not natural but historical-it is sinful . . .violating them in their very being, refusing to be honest with them, refusing to deal with them honestly. From this dishonesty flows a threefold perversion. (1) Things are deprived of their proper meaning, their capacity to function as sacraments of transcendence, and their capacity to release history. (2) The subject or agent of this dishonesty is deprived of the capacity for an adequate knowledge of reality. His or her heart is beclouded. (3) This dishonesty issues in a practical denial of God, in as much as God is no longer recognized as the foundation both of the real and of the very spirit of the subject. And so, because this dishonesty precludes the absolutely basic "right relationship" between subject and object, between agent and reality, spirituality is precluded. Spirituality, then, must begin with exactly the opposite: profound honesty about the real.[67]

Naturally following on from this honesty about the real is the next prerequisite for an authentic spirituality, which is fidelity to the real.

3.7 Fidelity to the Real and Correspondence with the Real

If honesty to the real must be maintained at all times, then "we must be faithful to that reality regardless of where it may lead."[68] Sobrino warns that when demand for love and justice fail there is the temptation to infidelity of the real:

> In our historical experience, past and present, a correct response to the real – love in all its forms, above all in the form of justice – does not always succeed in its aim. Indeed, frequently those who seek to foster life must give up part or all of their own life. The giving of one's life by waging a struggle with sin will suddenly be transformed into the necessity of bearing the burden of sin.

[66]Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988),14. Sobrino argues before all else God condemns dishonesty about the real by quoting the letter to the Romans, "The wrath of God is being revealed form heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirit of those who, in this perversity of theirs, hinder the truth." (Rom 1:18).
[67]Ibid.,14-15.
[68] Ibid.,17.

> Suddenly sin destroys not only the human reality upon which one seeks to bestow life, but also the very one seeking to bestow it. Now the subject operating on this human reality begins to wonder whether it is possible to bestow life at all. Understandably, situations arise in which the temptation to abandon the direction of one's first, honest response to reality, or to consider that response illusory, is strong indeed. This is the temptation of infidelity to the real.[69]

To counteract this, Sobrino asks that we never cease being honest to the real as exemplified in Jesus. Jesus is the archetype of this honesty toward the real:

> Jesus opens his mission on a positive note, 'the reign of God is near,' he cries, and he places all that he is and all that he has in the service of that reign. But then comes the tragic surprise. What is good news for the poor is bad news for the mighty. Grace is seen as a menace, threat. Still Jesus stands firm. His cause is under attack, his very person is assaulted, but still he keeps faith with reality . . . Jesus is faithful to the end, despite the sinister night that engulfs his cause, despite the mortal peril to his person.[70]

Fidelity to the real "the second prerequisite of any spirituality, is simply and solely perseverance in our original honesty, however we may be burdened with, yes, engulfed in, the negative element in history."[71] The same fidelity is on display in the practice of liberation; they do not turn their back on their goal when it is negated. To be like Jesus is to take on the structure of Jesus' life. This means "taking on the sin of the world, and not just standing idly by looking at it from the outside. It meant taking on a sin that, today, surely continues to manifest its greatest power in the fact that it puts millions of human beings to death . . . the structure of Jesus' life meant rising again and raising again – having, and

[69] Ibid. From my own time in Peru, I have seen many volunteers suffer from what is called compassion fatigue; realising how much work needs to be done to help the poor, in so many different ways and withprogress so veryslow, it is easy to become disillusioned and turn away or stop facing the reality. This gives me a sense as to what Sobrino means when he warns about the temptation to infidelity of the real.
[70] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 18
[71] Ibid.

bestowing on others, life, hope and gladness."[72] Finally, the third prerequisite for any spirituality, Sobrino argues, is in a certain correspondence, by which we permit ourselves to be carried along, by the 'more' of the real. This means by reaching out, helping others and giving more of ourselves a true correspondence with the 'more' of reality in hope and love is achieved. Justice is not done by a mere readiness to record it. The cry of the poor is a cry that calls for a correspondence, a giving over of ourselves completely in love and hope for justice for the poor. However, the hope that it calls for is "an active impulse . . . it is a hope bent upon helping reality become what it seeks to be. This is love. Hope and love are but two sides of the same coin: the conviction, put into practice, of the possibilities of reality. Hope and love foster one another, nurture one another."[73]

Lest the argument be made (as it often is) that such terms are too abstract, too soft, too intangible and changeable, Sobrino, firmly grounds his conviction for his spirituality in the example of Jesus:

> Thus we correspond to the 'more' of creation by going about doing good. But we quickly discover, as Jesus did, that in order for history to give more of itself, the subjects, the agents of correspondence with this 'more,' must now give more of themselves. The commandment of love, proclaimed and supremely illustrated by Jesus himself, and its demand to be 'for' others, dare not be understood as a wise axiom ('do unto others as you would have them do unto you'), or in terms of 'human success' (as the path to self-achievement). The commandment of love must be interpreted as correspondence to what is most profound in the reality around us, by way of assisting it in becoming more. The 'for' with which Jesus' life is suffused is not only the sine qua non of all future Christian soteriologies. Before all else, the 'for' of Jesus' life is the affirmation of what it actually means to be alive, what it means to be attuned to God's creation.[74]

[72] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 15.
[73] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 19.
[74] Ibid., 20.

This, Sobrino argues, is why there can be an authentic spirituality of liberation; it "will be the very spirit of the giving of life . . .a mediation of gratuity."[75] All of these prerequisites show that there can be an authentic spirituality of liberation but that it cannot be something which is ideologically superimposed. If apart from, or independent of this honesty and fidelity, we neither truly grasp revelation nor respond to it. Therefore, for Sobrino, the question of spirituality is a question of correspondence to the example of Jesus and God's revelation in history.

3.8 The Spirit of Jesus

As Sobrino has consistently emphasised, there can be no encounter with the God of Jesus without an encounter with the poor and the crucified of this world. As "we stand before the poor, as we stand before the crucified peoples, the demand becomes utterly clear: to practice justice and to love with tenderness. In this fashion one walks with God in history, humbly. What Jesus adds to this demand is that this humble walking is a genuine walking with God and toward God. To follow Jesus is to walk toward God, and to walk with God in history. It is to that walk that God invites us. And that walk is spirituality."[76] If there is a 'fundamental intuition' at work in Sobrino's spirituality, it is indicated through use of the title of 'Jesus as Good News.' This "marks the point at which spirituality comes closest to breaking through as a specific content, insofar as he claims that giving an account of the good news found in Jesus "is the most basic way of relating Christology and spirituality."[77] For:

[75] Ibid.
[76] Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 701.
[77] James Matthew Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor," 72.

> It is not only what Jesus proclaimed and initiated (the kingdom of God), not only what happened to Jesus as a result (cross and resurrection) that is good news but that the *manner* in which Jesus did all this, the "spirit" he brought to carrying out this mission, is itself good news . . . Jesus was not only good at mediating salvation, but he was a good mediator; he attracted people by his honesty, mercy, fidelity, his freedom to love, his propensity and ability to celebrate, which invited others into that celebration. If Christology did not attend explicitly and formally to this, it would fail to do justice to its subject matter, in part because it would fail to highlight the ways in which those who successfully follow Jesus (saints and martyrs) share in this particular feature, and this sharing is part of what is involved in being conformed to Christ.[78]

Therefore, spirituality, for Sobrino, "is the spirit with which we confront the real."[79]

Christian spirituality, in particular, is to be no less than a living of the fundamental spirituality (as previously described). It is precisely in the manner of Jesus and, more importantly for Sobrino, according to the spirit of Jesus that is the essence of what it truly means to follow Jesus. Even an anlysis of the christological dogmas of the church, argues Sobrino, lead to the same conclusion: Jesus was "not merely *vere homo*, truly a human being; he was precisely *homo verus* – the true, authentic, genuine human being. What dogma is really saying here, then, is that to be a truly human being is to be what Jesus is. To live with spirit, to react correctly to concrete reality, is to re-create, throughout history, the fundamental structure of the life of Jesus."[80] It is Sobrino's elucidation of what it really means to follow Jesus in spirit that is unique, and perhaps somewhat controversial, although crucially it makes the follower of Jesus feel involved in a movement rather than a reader of history:

> Jesus should be followed, continued, updated in history – not imitated. The spirit always adapts Jesus to a given time and place . . . The dialectic is a familiar one: The Spirit, says Jesus, will introduce his disciples into all truth, all through history, and will even see to it that Jesus' followers do greater things

[78]Ibid.
[79] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus" in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 680.
[80] Ibid., 686-687.

> than Jesus himself has done . . . while Christian spirituality today is as it has always been, the following of Jesus, it is not a 'following of Jesus' by way of mechanically reproducing this or that aspect of his historical life. The authentic following of Jesus today occurs by reproducing the whole of that life in terms of the option for the poor.[81]

In the life of Jesus, his cross is exemplified. Jesus takes up the cross because he lives in a time Sobrino refers to as the anti- Reign. If, as argued, spirituality presupposes the fidelity to the real, in "the real world the Reign of God is not proclaimed and inaugurated on a clean slate. The Reign of God is proclaimed and inaugurated in the presence of, and in opposition to the anti-Reign."[82] This is also our own reality. Taking our example from the cross of Jesus, we too have fight against the anti- Reign. This "must be done from outside the anti-Reign, yes, but ultimately the ant-Reign can only be uprooted from within itself. From without, sin must be denounced and combated. But from within, one must take on the burden of sin and thus share in the annihilation exerted by sin upon the victims of this world."[83] However, Sobrino is always at pains to point out that Christian spirituality is not a spirituality of the cross or suffering. Rather it is a spirituality of "honest, consistent, and faithful love – a wide awake love that knows the necessary risks it is taking. Christian spirituality is the spirituality of a crucified love."[84] I cannot find a better definition of Christian spirituality.[85] A wide – awake spirituality, founded on love, necessarily takes on the dimension of resurrection:

[81] Ibid., 687.
[82] Ibid., 694.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] However, with so much written in the area of spirituality and with much work exhausted in trying to define spirituality, I believe it is important to highlight liberation theologians Casaldaliga and Vigil's explanation of what is meant by the terms 'religious,' 'religiosity' and 'spirituality' as they accurately depict the essence in which they are used in this chapter: "Being a person is something deeper than being simply member of this particular animal species called the human race. It means taking up one's own freedom in the face of mystery, fate, the future; it is asking history for a meaning, giving a personal answer to the ultimate questions of existence. At one moment or other in our lives, we all break through the superficial level on which we normally live, like leaves being carried on the current, and formulate basic questions: "What is being human? What is the meaning and purpose of our life? Why is there suffering? How do we achieve happiness? What is death? What can we hope for? – the questions that Vatican II says all people ask of the different religions (NAe 1c). These are not "formally religious" but "deeply human" questions, or, more precisely, the deepest human questions – though, in our view, asking oneself these questions is in itself formulating a religious question. We all have to

> If resurrection is life in its fulness, it can only be love in its fulness. How can one live in fulness in this life? The answer is simple: by repeating the following of Jesus in the spirit of Jesus on this earth. The one who lives in this way lives even now as someone raised to life amid the very conditions of history . . . Freedom in the following of Jesus is the liberty of love. It is the freedom of those who detach themselves from all things in order to do good, the freedom of those who give their life freely, without anyone taking it from them. It is the freedom of Paul to become a slave to all. It is the freedom of Jesus, whose life no one takes from him, but he lays it down himself.[86]

It is just this type of freedom I would argue that is the main impetus behind Sobrino's use of the term *orthopathy* to describe where theology and spirituality find fulfillment. Explaining *orthopathy* enables us to see the threads of Sobrino's spirituality woven together:

> "orthopathy" . . . is recognizably at home in the history of Christian spirituality. Sobrino works it out this way: We respond to the good news of Jesus' mission by ourselves participating in it: *orthopraxis*. We respond to the good news of what happened to Jesus on the cross and in the resurrection by correctly naming it, and, thus correctly naming Jesus and Jesus' God: *orthodoxy*. Finally, we respond to the good news in the way Jesus carried out his work by allowing ourselves to be attracted to it, taken up by it, affected by it, This is *orthopathy*: "the correct way of letting ourselves be affected by the reality of Christ." It would not be too much to say that, defined in these terms, "orthopathy" is the particular concern of all Christian spirituality, and particularly of those strands which focus on the inherent attractiveness of the person of Jesus. Its inclusion in his Christology is an integral part of Sobrino's strategy to frame a spiritual theology, as he himself defines it.[87]

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face up to the mystery of our own existence. We inescapably have to choose values to give backbone and consistency to our life. In one way or other we have to select a point on which to build and define the structure of our conscience, the position we take up in relation to reality, within history. This is our basic option. And what is genuinely religious is this deep basic option, this human depth, rather than any dogma or rite, any belonging to a particular denomination. Because in this basic option we are defining what value we place at the centre of our life, what is our absolute aim, what is our God, or god. The great master Origen said that "God is that which one places above everything else." We cannot cease being "religious" – in this basic sense – without abdicating from the very depth of our own humanity. Not even if we abjure a particular religion will we stop being religious in our human depth. God, said the unquiet Augustine of Hippo, is for me "more intimate than my own intimacy." This deep religiosity is the same as what we have called spirit or spirituality. Spirituality – this deep religiosity – is what ultimately delineates us as persons, what defines us – saves or condemns us – before God, not the religious practices which, derivatively we may perform, perhaps without involving this depth." Pedro Casaldaliga and Jose Maria Vigil, *The Spirituality of Liberation* (Kent: Burns and Oates, 1994), 6-7

[86] Ibid., 697.

[87] Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor", 73. Similarly when "we speak of the praxis model of contextual theology, we are speaking about a model the central insight of which is that theology is not done simply by providing relevant expressions of Christian faith but also by commitment to Christian action. But even more than this, theology is understood as the product of a continual dialogue of these two aspects of Christian life. The praxis model employs a method that 'in its most profound sense is understood as the unity of

Sobrino's prerequisites, honesty, fidelity and correspondence with real lived with the spirit of Jesus are in fact much more than prerequisites. They "are the foundations of a radically anthropological spirituality. But they also found an objectively and radical theological spirituality. They set forth the correct mode of human relationship with history, and thereby with God."[88] The relationship with God is absolutely a relationship with others.

3.9 The Social Dimension of Spirituality

Human existence does not "precede relationship, but is born of relationship and nurtured by it. To be a human person is to be essentially *directed toward others*. We are communal at our core . . . Personal existence, then, can never be seen as an "I" in isolation, but always as "I" and "you" in relationship."[89] Articulated here is the undeniable fact that we are all social beings and cannot function in isolation. This assertion has been made, most succinctly perhaps, in *Gaudium et Spes*: "But God did not create man a solitary being . . . by his innermost nature man is a social being; and if he does not enter into relations with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts" (GS #12). Pope Benedict explains in *Caritas in veritate* that isolation is in fact one of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience. Therefore, for human beings to reach their full potential, to become who they are truly meant to be, we must immerse ourselves fully into relationships and society. The results of such an embracing are very positive and have far reaching implications. This is affirmedin the realization that values are transmitted through groups. For we "gain our moral bearings from

knowledge as activity and knowledge as content." Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology (*Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002), 72.

[88] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 22.

[89] Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 67.

the communities we are born into and deliberately choose, beginning with family and extending to peers, other adults, religious and professional communities . . . In groups we find our identity and the inspiration and accountability to lead a moral life.[90] To reflect on the earlier words of Sobrino, spirituality is not something only to be found or spoken of in churches but *in* the world. Spirituality is not exclusive to religious or holy people, it is not even exclusive to believers. Spirituality is the patrimony of all human beings. And more: spirituality is also a community reality; it is as it were the conscience and motivation of a group, of a people. Every community has its culture and every culture has its spirituality.

Essential to Sobrino's spirituality (and indeed, his Christology), is in the understanding that contact with or memories of Jesus is not an isolated event; no encounter with God is a purely individualistic experience:

> an essential element of the encounter with God is to have it within a people of God, a community. The personal experience of God must be open to the experience other human beings have of God. It must be open to giving of one's own experience of God and to receiving it from others . . . to the divine, or theologal dimension of spirituality then, belongs its "popularity," its openness to give to others and receive from others. No one ought to be so timorous as to think he or she has nothing to offer to others out of his or her own faith, and no one must be so presumptuous as to think he or she has nothing to receive for his or her own faith from that of others . . . This is the most splendid, most familiar level of solidarity: the encounter with God as community, as a people internally differentiated, yes, but as a people from start to finish, within which each member, in his or her faith, leads and carries along, while being led and carried by, all of the others.[91]

This indeed echoes Gustavo Gutierrez's perspective where he states that:

> every spirituality is a way that is offered for the greater service of God and others: freedom to love . . . as we saw in discussing the biblical models, "walking according to the spirit" is an activity undertaken within a community, a people on the move. This is a dimension of every spirituality, despite presentations that at times suggest that a spirituality is for a purely individual journey. When I say that the following of Jesus is a collective adventure I am,

[90] William C. Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development", in *Conscience*. Ed. Charles E. Curran. Readings in Moral Theology No. 14. (New York & Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 133.
[91] Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 700.

> of course, not eliminating the personal dimension; on the contrary, I am giving it its authentic meaning as a response to the con-vocation of the Father. In God we shall find that "whole truth" to which the inbreathing of the Spirit is leading us in the following of Christ.[92]

To be responsible for more than ourselves is a calling that, in theory is seemingly simple and straightforward, but proves difficult to consistently act upon. This is perhaps due to the fact that developed countries experience a kind of spiritual poverty; their identity is based on what they *have* rather than in terms of *who* they are meant to be. Through practice or experience we come to know the truth in very real terms. This is perhaps one of the reasons why many people's journey in faith begins when a life experience, good or bad, has helped them to see, hear or know the truth in their hearts. "Those who live "by the flesh" experience God's law as a burden . . . a restriction of their own freedom. On the other hand, those who are impelled by love and "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), and who desire to serve others, find in God's law the fundamental and necessary way in which to practice love as something freely chosen and freely lived out."[93] Liberation theology and Sobrino's subsequent spirituality attest to this prior need to understand. In this way, Sobrino "expands on what a number of twentieth century theologians, from Rudolf Bultmann to Karl Rahner, call the necessary pre-understanding (*vorverstandnis*) for grasping revelation. These theologians affirm that to hear and understand God's word it is necessary to be a subject constitutively open to receive that word and hence open to a novel future. To this, liberation theology adds that it is necessary to be receptive to the reality of the poor, disposed to respond and able to view reality from their standpoint."[94] For Sobrino, the social dimension is a type of communion "generated by the church of the poor [and] is that of *solidarity*, of 'bearing one another.' This is far more important than some churches simply helping each other at a time of need; it is the

[92]Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 89.
[93]*Veritatis Splendor*, #18.
[94]Dean Brackley S.J., *Hope and Solidarity*, 10.

communion of giving and receiving from one another the best that each has to give."[95] It is important for the Latin American experience to make ecclesial communion more fruitful:

> Solidarity then means putting together two fundamental Christian dimensions: the willingness to give, transformative praxis in technical terms; and the willingness to receive, grace. That is how true and Christian eccelesial communion is created. This communion continually widens to become truly ecumenical communion, with other churches, and truly human communion with all men and women of good will. This is not at all relativizing, but simply a way of honoring those who generated the movement of solidarity: the crucified peoples.[96]

However, Sobrino's liberation spirituality adds another principle in conjunction with the principle of solidarity. It is in this union that the power of Sobrino's spirituality is illuminated.

3.10 The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross

Vatican II, the theology of Karl Rahner and the discovery of Christ as none other than Jesus announcing the ideal kingdom of God, were major moments that lead Sobrino to an awakening: "we had awakened from the dogmatic slumber, if you will, but we continued to sleep in the much deeper sleep of humanity – the sleep of egocentrism and selfishness. But eventually we did wake up."[97] Pivotal to understanding the central theme of mercy in his spirituality, it is necessary to first understand the personal impact of this awakening:

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[95] Jon Sobrino, "Communion, Conflict, and Ecclesial Solidarity" in *Mysterium Liberationis,* 632.
[96] Ibid., 636.
[97] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 3. Sobrino states that he was given a new enthusiasm for his studies when he learned that the Christ being presented to him was not the Christ being presented by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as 'the final point of all evolution' nor by Rahner as 'the absolute bearer of all salvation.' It is on this point that I would diverge somewhat from Sobrino's thinking as I believe Teilhard's presentation of Christ is more revolutionary (and evolutionary) and is, as yet, a treasure-trove

> Through one of those strange miracles which happen in history, I came to realize that while I had acquired much knowledge and gotten rid of much traditional baggage, deep down nothing had changed. I saw that my life and studies had not given me new eyes to see this world as it really is, and that they hadn't taken from me the heart of stone I had for the suffering of this world . . . Once awakened my questions – and especially myanswers to questions – became radically different. The basic question came to be: are we really human and, if we are believers is our faith human? The reply was not the anguish which follows an awakening from dogmatic sleep, but the joy which comes when we are willing not only to change the mind from enslavement to liberation but also to change our vision in order to see what had been there, unnoticed, all along, and to change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh – in other words, to let ourselves be moved to compassion and mercy.[98]

It is my belief however, that it was in the dedicated life of his dear friend Ellacuria that Sobrino found the ultimate inspiration for living an awakened life of mercy. In a letter to Ellacuria, Sobrino recalls that during one of Ellacuria's exiles in Spain, he wrote a manuscript that would have made him famous in the world of philosophers. But he "didn't ascribe all that much importance to it," Sobrino continues:

> You didn't even finish it when you came back to El Salvador. You had other things to do – more important things – from helping solve some national problem, to attending to the personal troubles of someone who had asked for your help. For me the conclusion is really clear: service was more important to you than the cultivation of your intelligence and the recognition it could have meant for you . . . over and above everything else, you were a person of compassion and mercy, and that the inmost depths of you, your guts and your heart, wrenched at the immense pain of this people. That's what never left you in peace. That's what put your special intelligence to work and channeled your creativity and service. Your life was not just service then: it was the specific service of 'taking the crucified peoples down from the cross' – words very

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of potential for spirituality just waiting to be uncovered and explored. It is my intention, in the final chapter of this dissertation, to begin such an exploration.

[98] Ibid., 4. Sobrino goes on to state that once awakened, what is there the whole time, waiting to be faced, is a world of poverty; "people do not want to acknowledge or face up to the reality of a crucified world, and even less do we want to ask ourselves what is our share of responsibility for such a world. The world of poverty truly is the great unknown. It is surprising that the First World can know so much and yet ignore what is so fundamental about the world in which we live. It is also frustrating, because the problem is not a lack of means by which to learn the truth. We have enough knowledge to place a man on the moon or on Mars, but we sometimes do not even know how many human beings share this planet, much less how many of them die each year from hunger (the number must be around 30 million) . . . we sense that we have all had something to do with bringing about such a crucified world. And as usually happens where scandal is involved, we have organized a vast cover-up before which the scandals of Watergate, Irangate, or Iraqgate pale in comparison. Ibid., 5.

> much your own, the kind of words that take not only intelligence to invent, but intelligence moved by mercy.[99]

Evidently, this life of service had a profound impact. Sobrino even succinctly sums it up stating that the rock-bottom thing Ellacuria left him is "that there's nothing more essential than the exercise of mercy in behalf of a crucified people, and nothing more humane and humanizing than faith."[100]

However, as with terms such as hope and love, *mercy* could be deemed too soft to adequately express what crucified peoples need. Mercy on its own "is not sufficient but it is absolutely necessary – in a world that does all that is possible to conceal suffering and avoid a definition of the human – in terms of a reaction to that suffering."[101] Sobrino's argument on the principle of mercy comes with a stark warning:

> There are many things to do, of course; and there will be much to 'think,' philosophically and theologically, in order to do them well. But unless reason becomes – also – compassionate reason, and unless theology becomes – also – *intellectus misericordiae*, I greatly fear that we shall be leaving the crucified peoples to their catastrophe, by dint of much reasoning and many theologies . . . what is at stake in the 'principle of mercy' is the very notion – and real possibility – of all of us coming to form a single human family[102]

[99] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 187-188. The full "letter to Ignacio Ellacuria" was read at Mass, November 10, 1990, nearly one year after the martyrdoms in El Salvador on November 16, 1989. For more see also James F. Keenan, S.J., "Radicalizing the Comprehensiveness of Mercy: Christian Identity in Theological Ethics," in *Hope and Solidarity*, 187-200.
[100] Ibid., 189.
[101] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, viii.
[102] Ibid.

For Sobrino, mercy means a genuine com-passion, a genuine suffering with the poor. The "greater the passion, the greater the com-passion and mercy . . . prophecy is truth-telling. It denounces the horrors of death and the causes of death."[103] Furthermore:

> Purity of heart is deep chastity of intellect and will: those possessed of it do not seek themselves, do not impose their own ideas, or maintain their own interests in the practice of liberation . . . The *merciful* are those who initiate and carry forward the struggle for liberation, beginning with a profound act of compassion for the suffering poor . . . To be sure that pain causes indignation. The prophets too and Jesus, were angry with their oppressors. But anger is not the prime motivation. The main thing that moved Jesus was his mercy.[104]

Mercy or compassion denotes "a reaction in the face of the suffering of another, which one has interiorized and which has become one and the same thing with oneself, with a view to saving that other . . . everything – absolutely everything – turns on the exercise of mercy. On it depends not only transcendent salvation, but our living here and now, in concrete history, as saved human beings."[105] The term mercy does not denote mere sentiment, without a praxis to accompany it. It "may connote 'works of mercy.' Here, the risk is that the practitioner of such works may feel exempt from the duty of analyzing the causes of the suffering that these works relieve."[106] Rather, Sobrino puts forth his principle in the same way Ernst Bloch held that the hope was not merely one category among others but the hope principle. By the principle of mercy, Sobrino means "a specific love, which while standing at the origin of a process, also remains present and active throughout the process, endowing it with a particular direction . . . we hold that this principle of mercy is the basic principle of the activity of God

[103] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 109.
[104] Ibid., 36.
[105] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus", 682.
[106] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16. David Steindl-Rast (a Benedictine monk) sums up the problem rather wryly: "The Church as institution was helping the poor as well as it could. But it tended to forget that the poor *are* the Church. God's Kingdom belongs to the poor. Dom Helder Camara says, 'if you help the poor, they call you a saint. But if you ask why the poor are poor, they call you a communist.' That is why some of the most truly Christlike figures in Central America today are branded as communists, even bishops." Fritjof Capra and David Steindl-Rast, *Belonging to the Universe: Explorations on the Frontiers of Science and Spirituality* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 187.

and Jesus, and therefore ought to be that of the activity of the church."[107] This is reminiscent of Sobrino's primary call to be honest and faithful to reality; woven together with the spirit of Jesus. Mercy is a re-action to another's suffering interiorized, or taken on, within oneself. This mercy "becomes the molding principle of the whole of God's activity."[108] It is, at once, the origin and consistent principle prevalent throughout the Bible. Therefore, mercy as action and re-action are fundamental to the totality of our being. That said however, "mercy does not suffice to define Jesus: He is a being of knowing, hoping and celebrating, as well . . .it is absolutely necessary [though] that mercy come into his definition. For Jesus, to be a human being is to react with mercy."[109]

To underline his argument, Sobrino posits that if the human being, Christ and God are all described in terms of mercy then we are dealing with something that is fundamental:

> We may say that love is the fundamental thing, and we have the whole of Christian tradition as our warrant. That goes without saying. But we must add that the love in question here is a specific kind of love. This love is the particular *praxic* love that swells within a person at the sight of another person's unjustly inflicted suffering driving its subject to eradicate that suffering for no other reason than that it exists and precluding any excuse for not doing so. The elevation of this mercy to the status of a principle may seem minimal. But according to Jesus, without it, there is no humanity or divinity, and however minimal, it is genuinely maximal, as well. The important thing to observe is that this 'minimum and maximum' is the first and the last. There is nothing antecedent to mercy that might move it, nor is there anything beyond mercy that might relativize it or offer escape from it.[110]

A church of mercy would involve three things: the option for the poor, a beatitude of mercy and because of the mark of mercy that would be stamped on such a church, it carries the mark of credibility. Maximal credibility "is a function only of consistent mercy, precisely because

[107] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16.
[108] Ibid., 17.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 18.

mercy is the thing most absent from the world today. A church of consistent mercy is at least credible."[111] If a church of mercy is fostered, as Sobrino defines it, another awakening is possible. For among "the poor of this world, the church will awaken acceptance and gratitude. A church of consistent mercy is the one 'marked' and 'noted' in the world of today, and it is noted as a church 'according to God's command.' Consistent mercy, then, is a 'mark' of the true church of Jesus."[112] It is when we respond with mercy, Sobrino argues, that we truly face reality.

Perhaps the argument can be made here that the formidable body of Catholic social teaching and its distinguished principles remains the Church's best kept secret because of a lack of credibility? The common good, the fundamental values of social life, the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity would perhaps garner a more receptive audience if these principles were *demonstrated* consistently rather than intellectually understood. Inclusion of the principle and virtue of mercy, understood as something active, could suffuse social teaching with the dynamism it seeks. In social teaching, it is stated that solidarity is a social principle and a moral virtue. This challenges us to change the structures of sin which perpetuate injustice. If, as Sobrino has argued, we are honest and faithful and correspond consistently with reality, and are truly infused with the spirit of Jesus, then the commitment and energy needed to challenge such structures, will be an ever-present well-spring which flows through us and from us. Sobrino's articulation on the principle of mercy is not only a one-way affair either. The First World has in fact, many gifts to receive from the Third World.

[111] Ibid., 25.
[112] Ibid., 25-26.

In terms of conversion, a fundamental problem for the First World is "simply from a human viewpoint, changing a heart of stone into a heart of flesh."[113] Rather more gravely, Sobrino also poses the question: "what kind of future awaits a First World built, consciously or unconsciously, upon the corpses of the human family. There can be no reason for living, if we live this way."[114] It is here that Sobrino highlights something radical and truly remarkable:

> There is something the First World often tends to forget: The Third World is open to forgiving its oppressors. It does not wish to triumph over them, but to share with them and open up a future for them. To whomsoever draws close to them, the poor of the Third World open up their hearts and their arms and, without realizing it, grant them forgiveness . . . this is a gift of the victim.[115]

This extraordinary gift of forgiveness is not the only one offered however. The Third world also offers humanizing values. These are: "community instead of individualism, simplicity instead of opulence, helpfulness instead of selfishness, creativity instead of enforced mimicry, celebration instead of mere enjoyment, an openness to transcendency instead of dull pragmatism."[116] Sobrino posits the very real love and hope, which are the essence of the poor of Latin America, as antidotes to a structurally selfish and self-centred First World. To make this point most emphatically, he turns to the words of Romero and his dear friend, Ellacuria:

> Throughout the Third World flows this hope-filled current of humanity, which time and again strives to make life possible. Precisely because the poor do not take life for granted, they are the ones who hope for that 'minimum which is the maximum gift of God' as Monsenor Romero said: life. Ignacio Ellacuria, not one for romantic statements, expressed it as follows:
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> 'All this blood of martyrs shed in El Salvador and throughout Latin America – far from moving them to despondency and despair – infuses a new spirit of struggle and new hope in our people. In this way, even if we are not a 'new

[113] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 79.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 79-80.
[116] Ibid.

> world' or 'new continent,' we are clearly and verifiably – and not necessarily by those from outside – a continent of hope. And this is something of utmost importance for future development in the face of other continents which have no hope only fear.'[117]

In this illumination of the principle of mercy, Sobrino has bathed liberation spirituality and the principle of solidarity in an extraordinary new light. In taking the crucified peoples down from their crosses, not only are they changed but we are changed too, utterly. We are offered the gifts of love, hope and grace. We are offered the mercy of being forgiven.

> Fr Jose Ellacuria, a Jesuit, the brother of Ignacio, said to us on the first anniversary of the martyrdom of the martyrs of the UCA that what he has learned in El Salvador is that 'there is another way to live' . . . I would like to say that the solution for this world of ours is solidarity. We all need each other, and we can all help each other . . . what is important is to recover or begin to have the idea and ideal of the human family.[118]

3.11 The Integration of Theology and Spirituality

So, what of the relationship between theology and spirituality? It has been argued that the closing decades of the twentieth century will be remembered for, amongst other things, the recovery of spirituality as a source and locus of theological work.[119] Furthermore, it is often maintained that spirituality is becoming an increasingly popular with people because in matters of spirituality people feel free to search, experiment and discern without judgement. Analyzing the 'contemporary spirituality' phenomenon and the developments in academic disciplines concerned with theology and spirituality, and offering an initial assessment, it has been stated that "at the level of scholarly writing, there is a trend away from narrow,

[117] Ibid., 80-81.
[118] Ibid., 81.
[119] J.Matthew Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor" in ed. Stephen J. Pope, *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 63.

segmented specialization in academic disciplines towards broader, more inclusive efforts to understand and promote religious life," while furthermore that "at the level of religious thought and practice there is in progress a paradigm shift in Christian and particularly Roman Catholic consciousness that parallels the Copernican revolution of the sixteenth century."[120] As noted, this paradigm shift is a process that has already begun and this is evident in the "many struggles for liberation from colonial oppression around the globe but also in the movements for racial justice, equal rights for women, and care of the environment. . . . we find it easier to dream of alternative futures . . .and to take action to realize the value of these ideal visions within present circumstances."[121] Pinpointing the progression of spirituality and its significance for the future Anne Patrick concisely captures the endeavor:

> Just as Ptolemaic astronomy eventually gave way to a more adequate model for understanding the solar system, so also a paradigm for Christian living that stressed an otherworldly, elitist, and individualistic form of spirituality is yielding in our day to a more integral vision of what authentic discipleship requires. The eclipse of the former paradigm by the newer model is by no means complete, but it is clear from the literature of contemporary spirituality that very different interpretations of God and the Christian life are now accepted . . . In sum the compass of what counts under the heading of spirituality has grown considerably in recent decades, and there has been greater affirmation of worldly values and appreciation for pluralism of experience and perspective.[122]

The importance, for many Catholic theologians, of recovering spirituality for the practice of theology today is thus highlighted:

> I think that theology will be better off the more theologians attempt to recover a relationship to traditions of spirituality and thus undo the separation of theology and spirituality that developed after medieval scholasticism, which made a distinction between the two without separating them. Unfortunately, that once helpful distinction became a fatal separation, one that intensified in the ever-wider split between theory and practice in most modern thought.

[120] Anne E. Patrick, "Ethics and Spirituality: The Social Justice Connection," *The Way* (Supplement) (Autumn/n.63), (1988): 103.
[121] Anne E. Patrick, *Liberating Conscience* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 175.
[122] Ibid., 175-176.

> Surely an absolutely crucial part of the undoing of that separation would be, in theology, spiritual attentiveness to the presence of God in all of life, including theological thought.[123]

Raisings concerns to this it has been intimated that advocates of the 'new' discipline of spirituality may not welcome the attention of theologians. In part "this is because of the recent history of the relationship, in which spirituality was reduced to being a ward of neo-scholastic theologies. Spirituality was relegated to a subdivision of moral or pastoral theology, to be viewed with suspicion and policed by the dogmatic theologian."[124] Another issue highlighted is that certain theologies, evidently like that of liberation theology, assert the authority of local communities over and against a 'theology' being imposed from above creating polar opposites and dichotomies.

However, whilst correct in the assertion that polar opposites and unhelpful disjuncts are completely undesirable, this is not liberation theology's motivation or intent. The true intent is better highlighted by the assertion that Sobrino's theological tendency is to work with a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" response to truth claims. Sobrino's "intent is to overcome unnecessary and counterproductive oppositions as well as to provide a synthetic theological perspective based on a proper ranking of Christian priorities. Sobrino has consistently attempted to overcome false dichotomies and distortions of the gospel."[125] It has in fact also been asserted that "from the perspective of a fundamental theology, a given spirituality defines the horizon or, perhaps better, the atmosphere within which theology is undertaken and which permeates its methods and results . . . our understanding of a given theological system will be enriched by an understanding of the spirituality which inspires its

[123]J. Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions*, 3.
[124]Ibid.,5.
[125]Stephen J. Pope, "On Not Abandoning the Historical World to Its Wretchedness," in ed. Stephen J Pope, *Hope and Solidarity*, 50.

particular vision of God, the world, and human beings."[126] Sobrino sees no separation between the two as theology is spiritual from start to finish. What does this mean? Sobrino explains that:

> It means not only that theology presupposes a spiritual experience, or that it treats of themes conventionally regarded as spiritual, but as it seems to me, that (1) it is done with spirit, and communicates spirit, in all its dimensions and contents; and (2) in its totality, it enlightens, unifies, and animated the constitution of a spiritual person and a spiritual people . . . [the] logos is genuinely spiritual when it genuinely enlightens. It is not the same thing to treat things scientifically and doctrinally as really to shed light on them. It is not the same thing to speak of many things as to allow things to speak for themselves. In the latter instance theology in its capacity as logos is practiced with an adequate spirit, and communicates light. Its content is not only registered in the cognition of its addresses, it is integrated by them in their spirit as well.[127]

Reflecting on the integration of theology and spirituality Sobrino often refers back to the work of colleague Gustavo Gutierriez. Gutierrez's reflection on spiritual experience gets to the essence of the importance of the relationship between theology and spirituality. Gutierrez argues that spiritual experience is the terrain in which theological reflection strikes root, "intellectual comprehension makes it possible to carry the experience of faith to a deeper level, but the experience always comes first and is the source."[128] Highlighting a truth known by many theologians, Gutierrez points out that "the solidity and energy of theological thought depend precisely on the spiritual experience that supports it," and continuing by making the case for the inseparability of theology and spirituality he argues that "any reflection that does not help in living according to the Spirit is not a Christian theology. When all is said and done, then, all authentic theology is spiritual theology. This fact does not weaken the rigorously scientific character of the theology: it does, however, properly situate

[126]Ibid.,17 &23.
[127] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 70-71.
[128]Gutierrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 36.

it."[129] It is in a similar sense that Marie Dominique Chenu wrote of the relationship over fifty years ago. Chenu wrote:

> The fact is that in the final analysis theological systems are simply the expressions of a spirituality. It is this that gives them their interest and their grandeur . . . One does not get to the heart of a system via the logical coherence of its structure or it's the plausibility of its conclusions. One gets to that heart by grasping it in its origins via that fundamental intuition that serves to guide a spiritual life and provides the intellectual regimen proper to that life.[130]

However, Chenu and Gutierrez are not the only ones to attest to this kind of relationship. Sobrino, reflects on and continues the tradition, acknowledging that "spirituality is a dimension that is as original and necessary for it as liberation, and the two of them require one another. This is how many of us see things at present . . . We believe, furthermore that spirituality is being understood not only as one dimension of theology, but rather as an integrating dimension for the whole of theology."[131] This 'integrating dimension' is a "general disposition with which the whole endeavor of theology is taken up and conducted."[132] For Sobrino, Latin American theology is more than concerned with spirituality; spirituality is a basic, fundamental dimension of theology and "spirituality is purely and simply the actualization of the spirit of Jesus in our own times," Sobrino argues that, "spirit and practice must join hands. Without spirit practice can always degenerate. Without practice, spirit will remain vague, sidelined, even alienating."[133] It is here once more that an understanding of Zubiri's philosophy, that intellectum needs sense (as we are sentient beings), helps to illuminate Sobrino's understanding of why theology needs spirituality.[134]

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[129]Ibid., 37.
[130]Ibid. 147 n. 2.
[131]Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor," 64.
[132]Ibid.
[133]Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988) ix.
[134] "The human being is a substantive reality one of whose essential notes is intelligence. Formally intelligence is the capacity to apprehend things as realities. Therefore, reality is the formality proper to everything a human apprehends intellectively. Also, real things are given primarily through impression. Hence in each impression

This gets to the heart of what any spirituality must be for Sobrino. Spirituality is an essential to theology.

In addition to Sobrino's work, and that of liberation theology as a whole, the praxis model of contextual theology focuses on the identity of Christians within a context. This model of doing theology is "a never-ending process that gets its considerable power from the recognition that it manifests God's presence not only . . . in the fabric of culture but also and perhaps principally in the fabric of history. The praxis model is a way of doing theology that is formed by knowledge at its most intense level- the level of reflective action."[135] The praxis model could be neatly summed up by a phrase attributed to Karl Barth: 'only the doer of the word is the true hearer.'[136] Praxis is a term that has its roots in Marxism however, Sobrino noted that most significant difference between European and Latin American theology is in the response to two 'moments' of modernity. The first moment of modernity, characterized by the thought of Descartes and Kant[137] introducing the idea of rationality and subjective responsibility. Sobrino, in a talk given in Mexico City, points to a second, more significant moment in modernity:

> Marx's breakthrough was his discovery that rationality or intellectual knowledge was not enough to constitute genuine knowledge. Even personally appropriated knowledge, while infinitely better than believing on someone else's authority, was not enough. We know best, Marx insisted, when our reason is coupled with and challenged by our action – when we are not just the objects of historical process but its subjects. This is perhaps best summed up in the famous sentence in Marx's critique of Feuerbach: 'the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it'. . . Latin

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there are two distinct moments: one, which we may call "content" or "quality" of what is apprehended, and another which is the moment of its formality as real, what I have called the "impression of reality". This is not a second impression to add to quality but rather both are moments of a single impression, the single impression of a real thing.Since to apprehend reality is intelligence, and to have impressions is sensing, it follows that the intellective apprehension of the human being is sentient: its intelligence is a *sentient intelligence*. . . A human being, by virtue of its sentient intelligence, constitutes and moves himself in the "medium" of reality."Xavier Zubiri, *Man and God* (Lanham:University Press of America, 2009)104-105.

[135]Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2013) 70-71.

[136] Ibid., 71.

[137]Of which, Zubiri argues, is incomplete at best. See Xavier Zubiri, *Man and God*.

> Americans, says Sobrino, orient themselves to this understanding of theology.[138]

Theology done in this way then can be seen more as a way of living rather than sole attention to books, articles or texts of any sort. The "practitioner of the praxis model presupposes the importance of the culture aspect of context in developing an understanding of faith . . . praxis theologians would be very sensitive to newer understandings of culture as hybrid identity and products of social conflict."[139] Bevans argues that one needs faith to do theology and faith is, according to the praxis model, more than believing propositions or opening up to an encounter; it is "doing the truth."[140]

The conviction that Sobrino carries through all of his work is that spirituality is the integrating dimension for all theology. As Marx stated, philosophy, and I would add theology, can interpret the world but there is a very real necessity to change the world. Through the philosophy of Zubiri and constant inspiration of his friend Ellacuria, Sobrino argues for the integration of theology and spirituality on the grounds of an absolute honesty and fidelity to the real, which is exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, praxis model practitioners also believe the highest level of knowing is intelligent and responsible doing. While "for more traditional ways of doing theology, theology might be described as 'faith seeking understanding' the praxis model would say that theology is a process of 'faith seeking intelligent action.'"[141] Furthermore, Sobrino and praxis model practitioners would undoubtedly concur with the assertion "that all theology is faith

[138]Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 72.
[139]Ibid., 75.
[140]Ibid., 76.
[141]Ibid., 73.

seeking understanding but also understanding seeking transformation, the transformation of self and world in God through Christ in the power of the Spirit.[142]

Spirituality, for Sobrino, is also a "global, integrating phenomenon in human life"[143] which faces and commits to the reality it finds itself in rather than being used as a means to escape from it. This type of spirituality has never been more crucial and necessary as we face into a world with ever-increasing disparity between the rich and poor and an ecological crisis of catastrophic proportions where, again, the poor will suffer the most:

> The primary social task of an emergent post-modern spirituality, then, will be to take a prophetically critical approach to the socio-cultural ethos that orients globalizing consumer cultures. The task of such a spirituality will be to offer an alternative ethos, an alternative orientation, to people living in a world of consumer-driven individualisms. This will be a robust spirituality shared by people committed to respectful justice and passionately caring solidarity with all who suffer and all who are diminished in an exploitative world. It will be a wise spirituality informed by a critical praxis made possible by real commitments to contemplative stillness in a noisy world.[144]

In a time of global crisis, turning inward to escape from the world is not an option. Now is the time to ask questions about God, our relationships with each other and our relationship with the earth. Alienation from God means a loss of the sense of the sacred and transcendent. Alienation from God "makes it possible for us to become predators, focal points of destruction, bearers of violence, creators of fear; and humankind's alienation from its true essence is the great challenge facing an emergent post-modern spirituality."[145] Echoing Sobrino, Jack Finnegan stresses the social dimension of such a spirituality. The "journey to inward transformation only makes sense to the extent that it has a collective impact; that it

[142]Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology" in ed. Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert, *Exploring Christian Spirituality* (Mahwah:Paulist, 2006), 198.
[143] J. Matthew Ashley. *Interruptions*, 44.
[144] Jack Finnegan, *The Audacity of Spirit: The Meaning and Shaping of Spirituality Today* (Dublin: Veritas, 2008), 324. Jack Finnegan is a Salesian priest and teacher of spirituality and psychology at the Milltown Institute in Dublin.
[145] Ibid., 325.

has social, political and ecological consequences. Otherwise the place where we dwell, the ethos that orients our lives, loses its openly receptive nature. Then it can become cold, an empty place inimical to real life, and the dangerous edge of a vast abyss."[146] Recognising, as Sobrino does, the importance of solidarity as a major principle and virtue in any spirituality, it is argued that a "desacralized and individualized world quickly loses a sense of the common good . . . this is why compassionate solidarity, one that respects the uniqueness of authentic individuality, must be the horizon against which the authenticity of an emergent spirituality is discerned."[147]Sobrino articulated a spirituality that involved a continual honesty and faithfulness to the reality faced. He calls for this to be done, not in imitation of, but with the true spirit of Jesus. However, "without the presence of an ecological awareness and the ethical conversion it demands, it is difficult to see how an emergent spirituality will be able to address the challenge of an ethos capable of confronting an unjust and exploitative world"[148] Donal Dorr, an Irish theologian, has more than risen to this challenge. Taking much of his inspiration from what he terms 'Third World theologians', many of the themes and concerns highlighted by Sobrino are incorporated into Dorr's own work and writing. However, although Dorr has spent time in Third world countries himself, he is concerned with the integration of theology and spirituality in his own context, that of 21st century Ireland. What is most extraordinary though, is through a detailed and deep analysis of Catholic social teaching, Dorr delivers an ecological and cosmic vision that could help us take a step back from the abyss we are facing. Through Catholic social teaching and a profound ecological awareness, Dorr conveys a balanced spirituality.

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., 326.
[148] Ibid., 330.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORK OF DONAL DORR

4. Introduction

Donal Dorr is an Irish theologian and missionary priest with wide-ranging pastoral and academic experience. Arguably, he is most well known as the author of *Option for the poorand for the Earth,* a landmark text which was the first to compile and analyse the papal encyclicals beginning with Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 through to the present day. However, Dorr's deeply personal concerns relating to social justice are also well expressed in *Spirituality and Justice,* which challenges our Christian attitudes and responses to the inequality and poverty we are confronted with. Dorr has dedicated many years to the training and support of individuals and communities in theological and spiritual issues and also facilitates many transformational workshops and retreats both at home and abroad. A member of St. Patrick's Missionary Society and a former consultor to the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, Dorr has worked extensively in Africa and South America. Greatly influenced and inspired by this experience working with local communities 'on the ground', most often with people who are poor[1], Dorr's spirituality moves him to

[1] Dorr states that a number of activists who live and work with poor people actually object to the use of the term "the poor", "They prefer to use the phrase "people who are poor" since this puts the emphasis on the fact that the most important point is that these are *people* and that the fact that they are poor is not what defines them. I think this is an important point, not just a matter of being "politically correct."However, the term'option for the poor' has by now been so widely accepted that I feel it best to continue to use it." Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for theEarth,* 7.

investigate methods with which to help the most vulnerable and marginalized people in society.

Living in solidarity with the poor allows Dorr to view issues of justice and poverty 'from below.' This perspective motivates Dorr to critique the current situation in a way that provides unique insights. However, in addition to this critique, Dorr actually offers original and transformational solutions aimed at enabling the poor and marginalized to lift themselves out of poverty. The poor and marginalized are privileged instruments of God in sharing in the saving work of Jesus. They have a privileged role in reading the 'signs of the times' which enables them to discern God's will for themselves and their communities. Any understanding of our society and our world will be inadequate or distorted unless it gives particular weight to the experience of poor or marginalised people. To remain true to our ongoing conversion as Christians involves "not merely the power to reach out to others but also the power to 'stay with' them, to be loyal even in the difficult times."[2] Dorr's experience of reaching out and being with others who find themselves marginalised gives him an authentic perspective which in turn offers a unique lens with which to evaluate how theology is done and what spirituality entails.

The need for a contemplative and active spirituality in the Church has also been a key feature throughout Dorr's work. In the article "What If We Had Taken Vatican II More Seriously?"[3] Dorr imagines a scenario where, in order to help people live out their faith

[2] Donal Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984), 14.
[3] Donal Dorr, "What If We Had Taken Vatican II More Seriously?" in *Spirituality* (Vol. 18, December 2012, No. 105.) 342-347, here, 342.

effectively, two major commissions were introduced as departments at the Vatican, one entitled 'Spirituality and Faith' and the other 'On-going Structural Renewal.' The aim of such commissions would be to "open themselves not just to the voice of the Spirit,' but to 'the many voices of the Spirit,' recognizing that there is room for a great variety in both the manner and the content of the Spirit's voice, and that we must at times be content to live with different understandings of the message of the Spirit."[4] In addition, there are many structural reforms which Dorr has always strongly advocated for, aiming to ensure as many varying voices as possible were part of Church decisions thus reducing gender divides and clergy-laity gaps. Immediately evident is the fact that Dorr envisages a Church where a new spirituality is key. In relationship with other religions, the main emphasis would be on contemplative and active spirituality rather than on doctrinal agreement. As a consequence, "when the dialogue does turn to beliefs, Church people will be aware that those who attempt to speak about the Mystery which we call God may validly do so in a variety of different ways which cannot always be fully reconciled with each other in a purely rational manner.[5] However, this new spirituality will draw on the body of work known as Catholic social teaching (CST) which remains an important source of inspiration for Dorr. This is due to the fact that CST is an evolving body which responds to the 'signs of the times' with respect to its proper context and challenges.

[4]Ibid. In this article, Dorr adds an interesting twist to the more conventional style of writing by structuring this article as if he was writing over forty years ago in 1972, writing about what his hopes for the Church *would* be after Vatican II. The commission on Faith and Spirituality would comprise of 'working groups' responsible for different areas. One area entitled 'contemplation, meditation and prayer' would work especially with children to try out various styles of prayer and meditation "drawn from a variety of traditions, until they find one which they will practice as an on-going nourishment for their spirits." Another working group would be responsible for looking at the great variety of cultures of the Christian people and would deal with issues related to how we can 'worship' together. The 'Social, Political and Cultural Action' committee's mandate would give priority to committed action by Christians on ecological issues the defence of human rights, the promotion of structural justice at local and global levels and on the fostering of an 'economy of communion.' Another working group in the 'Spirituality and Faith' Commission could have as it's heading 'Sexuality and Medical Ethics.' One of the commissions aims would be to establish a broad consensus among Christians on the delicate issues of sexual activity, gender sensitivity, and different forms of marriage and sexual relationships, "It will of course have to look closely at the issue of how new scientific knowledge and changing public attitudes may lead to a modification of traditional teaching on the kinds of Church leadership which may be exercised by women and by those of a minority sexual orientation."

[5] Ibid.

The relevance and importance of Catholic social teaching, the option for the poor and for the earth and issues concerning spirituality and justice have remained the most important issues throughout Dorr's work. These issues are as pertinent today as they were just after Vatican II, arguably, even more timely, as the destruction of our environment, our home, continues at an alarmingly rapid pace and the people most devastated by the consequences of this are the poor themselves.[6] What is required of the Church in this situation is "not some 'particular Catholic 'blueprint.' It is rather an insistence on the urgent need of a search for alternative models of living and organizing society."[7] Through discernment of these issues, Dorr advocates a life of commitment committed to the poor and the earth and this is at the heart of his theology and spirituality.

Therefore, the chapter will begin by examining the role which CST plays in Dorr's Spirituality. It is important to emphasize Dorr's critique of particular documents as it introduces the themes which are central to Dorr's spirituality. It is not possible, given the

[6] Despite its deniers, the issue of climate change is now firmly established and widely accepted and now the move away from theory to action on this front has never been more urgent. The issue of climate change is one which evokes a great deal of emotion and has stirred up many controversies and debates in the past decade. In the autumn of 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which consists of hundreds of scientists operating under the auspices of the United Nations, released its fifth report in the past 25 years. "This one repeated louder and clearer than ever the consensus of the world's scientists: the planet's surface temperature has risen by about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit in the past 130 years, and human actions, including the burning of fossil fuels, are extremely likely to have been the dominant cause of the warming since the mid-20th century. However, many people in the United States – a far greater percentage than in other countries – retain doubts about that consensus or believe that climate activists are using the threat of global warming to attack the free market and industrial society generally. Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma, one of the most powerful Republican voices on environmental matters, has long declared global warming a hoax. The idea that hundreds of scientists from all over the world would collaborate on such a vast hoax is laughable – scientists love to debunk one another. It's very clear, however, that organizations funded in part by the fossil fuel industry have deliberately tried to undermine the public's understanding of the scientific consensus by promoting a few sceptics." Joel Achenbach, "The Age of Disbelief" in *National Geographic: The War on Science*, March 2015, Vol, 227, no.3. In Ireland in 2016 Danny Healy-Rae, an Independent TD elected to the Dail for the first time in February, cites the story of Noah's Ark as proof that climate change does not exist. Mr Healy-Rae, in a debate about climate change, stated that 'God above is in charge of the weather and we can't do anything about it.' http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/only-god-controls-the-weather-danny-healy-rae-tells-climate-change-debate-1.2635192'

[7] Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth* (New York: Orbis, 2012), 459.

scope of the body of work, to give a thorough account of CST. However, examining certain documents of the CST tradition will provide a firm grounding with which to situate all of Dorr's endeavours. The most pertinent documents informing Dorr's spirituality, *Mater et Magistra, Gaudium et Spes, Populorum Progressio* and *Justitia in Mundo* will be outlined. Following this, the second section will establish the role of theology as a key component in Dorr's vision of spirituality. This section will explore Dorr's own understanding of theology and will also examine his understanding of theology's distinctive role and relationship with Spirituality. The third and final section will evaluate Dorr's unique vision of a balanced spirituality and will seek to expound how this integrated vision can lead to an effective and transforming commitment to justice in society and in the world. This will effectively show the meaning of integration for Dorr and how CST and theology are vital components of a balanced and healthy spirituality.

4.1 The Centrality of Catholic Social Teaching to Dorr's Spirituality

Catholic social teaching is an evolving tradition which analyses the contextual situations and challenges it is confronted with in any given time period. As such, CST is the very opposite of a fixed and conclusive system of doctrine. It is dynamic in nature even though it employs the consistent function of addressing the many imbalances prevalent in our society and in the world. CST is firmly rooted in scripture and Catholic Tradition and every message is one grounded in faith in God and in Jesus Christ. However, it is in the attitude and methodology of CST that an evolving and powerful honesty appears in relation to social issues. The significant shift in attitude concerning social issues is especially evident around the time of the Second Vatican Council when it emphasized the Church's responsibility for

the world and made commitments to work for justice and especially for the poor. This led to the belief that the Church has "the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel" (*Gaudium et Spes* #4). This would be, in effect, a new way of doing theology. The 'signs of the times' therefore, "embody and reflect the movement of the Holy Spirit in human history working to bring about the redemption of peoples and the fuller realization of the reign of God."[8] For Donal Dorr, the new way of doing theology was an opportunity to delve deeper and look at the reality that is confronted by the poor. Through CST, Dorr examines the stance taken by different popes, and at Vatican II, in relation to issues of poverty, injustice, and oppression in society and asks to what extent are they on the side of the poor and the powerless in the struggle against injustice? This is the key issue for Dorr and is one which continues to remain a challenge to CST. This teaching is open to development and is not seen, by any pope, as an immutable set of truths but rather as an organic tradition of teaching by the Church on social issues. They "do not see it as a matter of laying down rules for how society should be organized. They believe rather that the Church has a duty to teach and witness certain basic truths about the human person, and certain fundamental values that ought to be respected in society."[9] It is precisely within this context, in the organic tradition of social teaching, that the principles of justice and an option for the poor, so pivotal to Dorr, are to be found. Dorr's spirituality is informed first by his personal experience and like Sobrino, his experience is grounded in the reality of poverty and injustice. To reflect further on this experience is to do theology according to Dorr and CST is Dorr's preferred place of reflection.

[8] Edward P. De Berri and James E. Hug, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (New York: Orbis, 2003), 19.
[9] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*., 15.

4.2 Mater et magistra (1961)

Undoubtedly for the Christian community, the setting out of universal social justice principles and values is absolutely necessary and vital. The central tenet of CST is the belief in the dignity of the human person. This "dignity flows readily from our reality as children of God. It also claims that we are more than one-dimensional; there is a 'Godly' or spiritual dimension to each person that needs to be acknowledged and affirmed."[10] Although by no means the first pope to address the dignity of the human person and try to address the causes of suffering, John XXIII initiated a momentum for action in the world and on behalf of the poor.

Crucially, the encyclical *Mater et magistra* (MM)was important in its "distancing of the Church from right-wing forces . . . by breaking decisively with this trend he laid the foundations for 'an option for the poor' by later Church leaders; and he gained for the Church new allies and new enemies."[11] The encyclical's strong support of socialization "began the process of breaking the long alliance between Roman Catholicism and socially conservative forces . . . he had publicly and clearly put the weight of the Church on the side of a policy of social reforms in favour of the poor and deprived."[12] The developments in social life at this time and the subsequent increase in the number of social relationships highlighted by John, are considered the single most important issues in this encyclical, according to Dorr. Summing up the main elements in modern society that Pope John had in mind when he used the word 'socialization' Dorr states that:

[10] Padraig Corkery, *Companion to the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2007), 20.
[11] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 122.
[12] Marvin L. Mich, "Commentary on Mater et Magistra" in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 208.

> People are now more closely inserted in a web of relationships where the actions of each individual affect many others. Many aspects of daily living which used to be seen as personal or family matters now have to be organized, or at least regulated, on a larger scale. So the individual and the family have to rely more on large institutions. Some of these are, technically, private institutions – trade unions, for instance, or non-State insurance schemes. But many are new organs of the public authorities – ranging from local councils up to national governments and even international agencies.[13]

However, the real issue, with regard to the term 'socialization' which John employed, was whether the pope was moving the Catholic Church away from its long-held suspicion of such socialistic notions as that of the welfare state. Dorr states emphatically that this is indeed what the Pope set out to achieve, seeing that what was required was that socio-political institutions became intelligently planned and controlled. There was "an urgent need for new sociopolitical systems to look after security, welfare public health, education, economic development, the environment, and so on. And these needs expanded as society became less centred on small community units and more concentrated in urban areas."[14] Rather than seeking to retreat and take refuge from this rapidly growing and interconnected reality, John not only embraced it but he, in fact, challenged every member of society to take responsibility for their part. However, in assuming this responsibility it is also imperative to John that:

[13] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and the Earth*, 108. Here, Dorr is explaining in his own words his understanding of MM #59-60.

[14] Ibid., 110. "The importance of MM is not found only in this new attitude toward socialization but in the articulation of specific recommendations that encourage socialization. Here is a partial list of seven implications of socialization suggested by the letter: Employees are entitled to share in ownership of the company where they work (75) Employees should have a say in management at the level of the individual firm and in determining policy at every level, including the national level (92-93, 97). The state is to exercise strict control over managers and directors of large businesses. (104). More state ownership is justified to promote the common good (116-117). The state and public authorities have taken on a greater role in addressing social problems. (120). Public authorities must address the specific difficulties of farmers (128-41). Specific suggestions are made in regard to tax assessment (133), credit facilities (134), insurance (135), social security (136), price supports (137), price regulation (140), and moving industry into rural areas (141). Marvin Mich, "Commentary on Mater et magistra," 208.

> a sane view of the common good must be present and operative in men invested with public authority. They must take account of all those social conditions which favor the full development of human personality. Moreover, we consider it altogether vital that the numerous intermediary bodies and corporate enterprises—which are, so to say, the main vehicle of this social growth—be really autonomous, and loyally collaborate in pursuit of their own specific interests and those of the common good. For these groups must themselves necessarily present the form and substance of a true community, and this will only be the case if they treat their individual members as human persons and encourage them to take an active part in the ordering of their lives. (MM #65).

The recognition that nations were no longer self-serving, self-sufficient entities separate from one another had to be faced and that the world was now seen as an interdependent society. As such, international communication and cooperation were vital to the endeavour and intervention by the state was deemed not just necessary but vital for protection of the common good and for the most vulnerable in society. The plight of the most vulnerable and the poor, is precisely the one which John sorely laments:

> We are filled with an overwhelming sadness when we contemplate the sorry spectacle of millions of workers in many lands and entire continents condemned through the inadequacy of their wages to live with their families in utterly sub-human conditions. This is probably due to the fact that the process of industrialization in these countries is only in its initial stages, or is still not sufficiently developed. Nevertheless, in some of these lands the enormous wealth, the unbridled luxury, of the privileged few stands in violent, offensive contrast to the utter poverty of the vast majority. In some parts of the world men are being subjected to inhuman privations so that the output of the national economy can be increased at a rate of acceleration beyond what would be possible if regard were had to social justice and equity. And in other countries a notable percentage of income is absorbed in building up an ill-conceived national prestige, and vast sums are spent on armaments. (MM #68-69)

To overcome such ills, John planted the seeds of a new spirituality, one which sought an active engagement in the world. Clearly "what comes through is the fact that he is *not* afraid that commitment to the world and its values will cause people to neglect the highest spiritual

values."[15] This signalled the beginning of a more engaged spirituality than what had gone before which was a spirituality detached from the realities and complexities of the world. MM initiated a dialogue with modern society through which John sincerely sought to put CST into action particularly to help the poor. The preferential option for the poor that the Latin American Church would later advance "was largely due to John XXIII and especially to the social teaching of *Mater et magistra*"[16]

However, despite Pope John's overt optimism and despite such profoundly moving passages concerning the poor, Dorr indicates that a certain naivety is to be found in this encyclical. Pope John insisted on the need for a wider distribution of property of various kinds as"now, if ever, is the time to insist on a more widespread distribution of property, in view of the rapid economic development of an increasing number of States." (MM#115) He maintained that it was a particularly suitable time for countries to adjust their social and economic structures so as to facilitate a wider distribution of ownership-thus overcoming the tendency of capitalism to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few. However, Dorr pinpoints the pitfalls of such an approach:

> Why now? Because, said Pope John, this is a time when an increasing number of countries are experiencing rapid economic development. This statement suggests that John accepted the common assumption that rapid economic growth offers the easiest way to overcome the problem of unequal distribution of wealth. That is not surprising; for, on the face of it, this assumption seems almost self-evidently correct. Instead of having to face the difficult task of taking wealth from the rich to redistribute it to the poor, why not create sufficient new wealth to enable the poor to become reasonably well off? But, despite its apparent obviousness, this line of thinking can, in practice, play a

[15] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 91. Itallics added.
[16] Ibid., 121.

> part in bringing about the very opposite to what it aims at. This is what in fact has happened in large parts of the world.[17]

It is precisely this overly optimistic view of capitalism that, while not explicitly supporting the present unjust world order, lends it a certain respectability. In the capitalist societies of the West, the relationship between growth and equal distribution of wealth is a complex one and as such Dorr's three-point analysis of its shortcomings are worth highlighting in full:

> First, capitalism is committed to growth not merely for practical reasons, but also ideologically. At a practical level an ever-increasing demand seems to be necessary if the whole system is not to collapse. Hence the need for an ideology of growth. So growth is promoted in various ways, notably by the advertising industry. The belief is fostered that there is no foreseeable limit either to human needs or to the ability of a free enterprise system to meet these ever-expanding "needs."
>
> Second, the growth that actually takes place tends, as we have seen, to concentrate wealth in the hands of a minority rather than leading to a more equitable distribution.
>
> But, third, another part of the ideology of capitalism masks this lack of equity. It promotes an image of free enterprise where all have a fair opportunity to use their talents profitably. Hard work and initiative are correlated with success and prosperity. The implication is that poor distribution of wealth is to be explained more in terms of the laziness and lack of ability of some rather than any lack of opportunity imposed by the system [ ] Furthermore, the idea is fostered that new growth will gradually "trickle down" from the richer to the poorer sectors of society. These beliefs are illusions. They conceal the fact that the normal tendency of the system is to widen the gap between the rich and poor. One must conclude that these are ideological beliefs that protect the interests of the wealthy.[18]

[17] Ibid., 95.
[18] Ibid., 96-97.

The fact that Pope John XXIII and indeed many others in the West accept this belief without question, suggests a certain blind spot in their outlook and view of capitalism.[19] Changing such a system is a monumental task and especially so when the system and the economy appears to be working as relatively smoothly as it was at the time MM was written. Undoubtedly, "the years between 1945 and 1961 saw a considerable growth in prosperity for most workers in Western countries. But this was part of a wider reality - the increased wealth of Western nations as a whole vis-à-vis the poorer countries of other continents. This imbalance was, in turn, related to the extravagant use by industrialized countries of energy and raw materials, much of which came from poorer countries at a very cheap price."[20] In the years which have followed, John's vision of an ever – expanding economy in which the principles of free enterprise exist naturally and healthily alongside welfare programmes and protection for the most vulnerable, has proven utterly unattainable. Therefore, the only

[19] However, it is a blind spot which continues to affect our vision today and Pope John XXIII could never have envisaged the insidious incarnation which capitalism would become. Even current economists and analysts are having difficulty trying to understand and unravel the many layers of corruption and deceit involved on a global scale which have led to a minority of rich and powerful corporations securing the rights to our freedoms and the earth's resources. Economics Fellow, journalist and author Naomi Klein sums up the situation: "over the past three decades, what has emerged is a powerful ruling alliance between a very few large corporations and a class of mostly wealthy politicians – with hazy and ever-shifting lines between the two groups . . . these political and corporate elites have simply merged, trading favors to secure the right to appropriate precious resources previously held in the public domain . . . all these incarnations share a commitment to the policy trinity – the elimination of the public sphere, totalliberation for corporations and skeletal social spending . . . a moreaccurate term for asystem that erases the boundaries between Big Government and Big Business is not liberal, conservative or capitalist but corporatist. Its main characteristics are huge transfers of public wealth to private hands, often accompanied by exploding debt, an ever-widening chasm between the dazzling rich and the disposable poor and an aggressive nationalism that justifies bottomless spending on security. For those inside the bubble of extreme wealth created by such an arrangement, there can be no more profitable way to organize a society." Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Penguin, 2007). Introduction, Kindle.

When confronting social justice issues, a strong critique of capitalism/corporatism must underpin any argument. Poverty, inequality and climate change are just some of the recurring issues which continue to appear in the struggle against capitalism. The "battle is already underway, but right now capitalism is winning hands down. It wins every time the need for economic growth is used as the excuse for putting off climate action yet again, or for breaking emission reduction commitments already made. It wins when Greeks are told to that their only path out of economic crisis is to open up their beautiful seas to high-risk oil and gas drilling . . . It wins when a park in Istanbul is slotted for demolition to make way for yet another shopping mall. It wins when parents in Beijing are told that sending their wheezing kids to school in pollution masks decorated to look like cute cartoon characters is an acceptable price to pay for economic progress. It wins every time we accept that we have only bad choices available to us: austerity or extraction, poisoning or poverty. The challenge, then, is not simply that we need to spend a lot of money and change a lot of policies; it's that we need to think differently, radically differently, for those changes to be remotely possible." Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (New York: Penguin, 2014), Chapter 2, Kindle.

[20] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 97.

conclusion to be drawn is that although Pope John truly stood in solidarity with the plight of poor and powerless, the impact of this stance was lessened due to "a rather uncritical optimism in relation to Western-style democratic capitalist society."[21] As Dorr points out, the intervening years have shown Pope John's optimistic vision to be highly problematic:

> Firstly, an indefinite period of rapid economic growth can no longer be presumed: there are severe limits to the amount of cheap energy and raw materials that are available to make this possible. There are several inherent problems of the capitalist system; these include unsustainable ecological exploitation, massive financial speculation, as well as problems of prediction, credibility, cycles and protectionism. These have proved far more intractable than had been anticipated.
>
> Secondly, it is now quite evident (to all who have eyes to see it) that the "development" of the West depended to a large extent on the availability of cheap resources from the poorer countries of other continents; so it cannot be seen as a model that may be repeated all over the world.
>
> Thirdly, the welfare state approach has itself run into serious difficulties in the West: the expansion of the "national cake" has slowed down at the same time as the demands of the stronger groups in society have increased: the result is that there is less left for the poorer segment of society, which in some Western countries now comprises about a quarter of the population.
>
> Finally, government efforts to stimulate the economy are costing the taxpayer a great deal: the heavy tax burden offers a convenient opportunity for opponents of state welfare to mount ideological attacks on the social services as wasteful and as an encouragement to idleness and parasitism. In such an atmosphere it becomes quite unrealistic to hope that something analogous to the welfare state will emerge at the *international* level, with the rich nations providing adequate help for the poor ones.[22]

Through this critique of MM,[23] Dorr actually highlights a problem integral to CST as a whole: its exclusively Western approach limits its ability to adequately assess and address the

[21] Ibid., 101.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Although limited in its assessment of capitalism, Dorr continually emphasizes the importance of this encyclical and the extent to which it was a turning point in CST. It stands at the source of important developments, one of which was the establishment of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace: "in the

needs of the poor and the problems of capitalism. While CST certainly promotes values and principles which seek justice and dignity for all, Dorr's argument appears to centre around the fact that the gap between aspiration and achievement is very wide indeed. Although the aspirations of CST are met in affirming Christian values, their view through the single lens of Western development hampers it from achieving its real potential. Dorr has consistently warned that "the 'modern' lifestyle of the West is quite destructive of human relationships. It gives a central role to competitiveness; and this 'value' has come to pervade the interpersonal sphere as well as business life . . . people are becoming so concerned with efficiency and productivity that there is little scope for depth and tenderness."[24] Instead of imposing or promoting a Western way of life on people, listening to and learning from the many diverse cultures across the globe may help us all learn different ways to live with depth and tenderness. For "Christians today are vividly aware that the faith is not to be identified with any single culture . . . the crucial point is that universality is not to be confused with uniformity: it is precisely because Christianity can be pluriform that it can be truly universal."[25] MM undoubtedly succeeded in opening up the Church in a way that welcomed, with open arms, the idea of social change which would help to create a dignified future for all and Dorr notes that Pope John ultimately "laid the foundations for 'an option for the poor' by later Church leaders."[26] In the events which were to follow namely, the Second Vatican Council and *Populorum progressio,* there would remain little doubt as to CST's commitment to the poor.

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following years, under the guidance, inspiration and energy of its key members, this commission played a key role in influencing Vatican policy on issues of justice . . . members [of this] commission were the main drafters of the document 'Justice in the World' issued by the Synod of Bishops in 1971." Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 120.

[24] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 119-120. Addressing the fact that some Western values are not only detrimental to others, Dorr goes on to highlight the fact that even in the industrialised West, "the modern style of life – in work, recreation, and communications – is leaving people 'lost' and rootless. So Christians must be exploring alternative ways of living." Ibid., 121-122.

[25] Ibid., 121.

[26] Ibid., 122.

4.3 Gaudium et Spes (1965) and Populorum Progressio (1967)

Symbolizing the essence of Vatican II, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (GS), was new and visionary.[27] Its purpose was to set forth the relation of the Church to the world and to the men and women of today. In 1965, the document envisaged a new style for the life of the Church; it was about the Church *in* the modern world. Consistently, GS stresses the unity of this dual ministry of the Church: that of spreading the light of the Gospel throughout the world and uniting all people. GS recalled that the conditions of the modern world lend greater urgency to this duty of the Church of bringing all humankind to fuller union in Christ. It must be judged, according to Dorr, as a major achievement as it contributed greatly to the specific area of social justice and "it offers a theology and spirituality of the world that provide a solid foundation for a Christian approach to the question of poverty – an approach that can avoid lapsing into escapism, on the one hand, or secularism on the other."[28] According to Dorr, the approach it emphasized was a liberal approach, which is open to the world , accepts the pluralism of modern society and seeks dialogue with those of a different outlook.

This approach is one which positively seeks to be of service to the world precisely by challenging some of its dominant values. The world to which it is committed is not only the

[27] Dorr notes the lengthy process that that produced the document, "*Gaudium et spes* expresses theconsensus that emerged after three years of private and public dialogue, debate, and even controversy. It crowns a three-year process of thorough and intense exploration by experts in the various matters it deals with as well as a process of education of the bishops and of the millions of people who followed the Council. So, even where it merely repeats the teaching of Pope John or earlier popes, it does so with a greatly increased degree of authority and credibility." Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 127.
[28] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 142.

present world but the future: “it is not the world of the rich or the powerful, or, more accurately, not the world as structured to favour this privileged group. It is primarily the world as seen from the perspective of the dominated, the oppressed, the poor – a world in need of liberation.”[29] The call to action for the service of all but especially for the poor is highlighted in this particular passage of GS:

> out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place produce the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men, especially those designed for the needy, such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings . . . The Church recognizes that worthy elements are found in today's social movements, especially an evolution toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic realms. The promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, for she is, "thanks to her relationship with Christ, a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race." (GS #42)

Clearly, the language and tone used here seeks to inject a sense of dynamism and warmth as it aims to foster and encourage working towards putting concern for the poor into practice. However, while the reference to service of the poor is significant, Dorr argues that “it is weakened by the phrase ‘such as works of mercy and similar undertakings.’ Had these instances been omitted the text could more easily be taken as referring to a structural reform of society for the benefit of the poor.”[30] A key feature of Dorr’s spirituality is the commitment to structural justice. He notes that people are affected daily by three major types of structural injustice: exploitation of the poor by the rich; discrimination on the basis of gender, race or status and oppression of the weak by the powerful both in the political and cultural spheres. Although challenging systematic structural injustice is a huge endeavour

[29] Ibid., 143.
[30] Ibid., 144.

Dorr, in a move away from the reliance on 'works of mercy and similar undertakings' as stated in GS, outlines three key stages crucial to our response:

> We must first of all allow ourselves to experience solidarity with the victims of injustice. We learn this form the prophets . . . this experience of solidarity comes through some measure of practical sharing in the plight of those who are victims of injustice.
>
> The next stage of our response to structural injustice must be to understand its causes. Without this, our response will be haphazard and ineffectual, a tackling of the symptoms without getting at the roots. So we need to engage in what is called 'social analysis' . . . the most effective kind of social analysis is one which is not just academic but which gives a central to 'on the ground' research and sharing by local people.
>
> Then comes a further stage which is to challenge injustice. Here we come to the key word 'struggle.' This notion of a spirituality of struggle is something new; it contrasts sharply with the type of spirituality which most of us were brought up with . . . this requires us to find a place in our spirituality for righteous anger. It also calls for a new kind of fortitude – the ability to continue the struggle in the face of an apparently hopeless situation, and despite the fear that the struggle will cost us our livelihood and perhaps even our lives. If we are to live out a genuine spirituality of struggle we must also develop the virtue of prudence to a high degree – knowing when to resist openly and when to work more quietly, when to stand up strongly and when to bend and make some compromise.[31]

Although not explicit about structural justice, Dorr emphasizes that the Council document did indeed provide important elements which contributed to an overall theology of human rights with specific reference made to development. The Council:

> (1) offered a theology of work, seeing it as a way in which humans share in the divine work of creation and the redemptive work of Christ(GS 67.2); (2) it provided a theology of the community of humankind (GS33 – 39); and (3) it suggested that Christians working for justice and the welfare of humanity should observe the right order of values, in faithfulness to Christ and his

[31]Dorr, *Time for a Change: A Fresh Look at Spirituality, Sexuality, Globalisation and the Church* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2005) 40-41. Admittedly, in addition to his own experience of working with the poor, it was the development of liberation theology that inspired much of what Dorr notes in these key stages, "what liberation theology has given us is a whole new light on Christian Spirituality – an active involvement in struggle on behalf of those who are victims of injustice." Ibid.

> gospel, and have their lives permeated with the spirit of the beatitudes, especially the spirit of poverty (GS 72)."[32]

The legality of human rights in its strictest sense usually means not interfering or impinging on the rights of others. According to Dorr however, an authentic spirituality of human rights requires that we go much further:

> Instead of just seeing others as people whom we should not hurt or obstruct, our spirituality invites us to empathize with them, to be aware of their fragility and vulnerability. This can lead us to revere them, to love them and even to treasure them. At its best, our spirituality can inspire us to treat others with great *tenderness*. Ideally we should find ourselves looking at each person as a sacred being, as a mystery before whom we feel at times like bowing in awe and veneration. Such spirituality poses a radical challenge to the competitive and exploitative attitude that is fostered by certain aspects of modern Western culture. We need to nurture our empathetic powers, to be in touch with the feelings of others, and to be sensitive to their needs . . . if we develop an attitude of empathetic respect and reverence we are equipping ourselves to campaign for, and eventually to negotiate, international treaties and covenants for the protection of all kinds of fundamental human rights.[33]

What Dorr is arguing for here is actually emblematic of his spirituality. It is only by being with the poor, by opening ourselves up to theirs and our own vulnerabilities, by committing ourselves to help them achieve their dignity and freedom, that we will be motivated enough to truly want and truly fight for human rights for others. Our spirituality must be formed by this experience before it will be in any way effective.

Significantly though, in noting the ineffectiveness of the Council Fathers' concept of development, Dorr once again firmly substantiates his position that it is the thoroughly Western notion of and approach to development which underpins its failure. The specific kind of development that was successful in bringing economic prosperity to Western

[32] Ibid., 148.
[33] Ibid., 146-147.

countries could not and more importantly, should not be applied indiscriminately all over the world. Dorr argues that, "the ecological cost would be so high that the Earth's resources could not sustain it. Furthermore, 'development' in the West was at least partly dependent on 'underdevelopment' in other parts of the world, for instance, through the availability of low – cost primary products from the poorer countries of the world. This kind of unjust development obviously cannot be extended to all parts of the world."[34] In these observations, Dorr discredits such an approach, arguing that the "Council Fathers and experts assumed too easily that the basic elements of Western 'development' and its underpinning values are transcultural."[35] The basis of the Western model of development is a certain individualism and competitiveness. Such competitive individualism is a "value that is quite alien to many non-Western cultures; and it is profoundly destructive of these cultures. Western "development" also presupposes a certain work ethic that is quite foreign, even hostile, to the understanding of work, leisure, and life that lies at the heart of many non-Western cultures."[36] Therefore, an essential foundation in respect to development is to nurture an attitude of deep

[34] Ibid., 149. More recently however, such problems have been exacerbated by the fact that the more industrialised nations have been trying to lessen their own ecological problems by exporting them to the third world. Criminally, "toxic industrial waste, and even radioactive materials, have been dumped in poorer countries by unscrupulous companies. Governments in these countries may not have available to them the technological expertise to monitor the waste material; or officials may be bribed to allow dangerous dumping to take place." Donal Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 30-31. The importance of Dorr's argument here has particular relevance to the current Irish context. The Irish Catholic's Bishops' Conference have, over a number of years, tried to apply the content and spirit of Catholic social teaching to the Irish society and to the international community. In particular, the 1999 pastoral letter *Prosperity with a Purpose* argues that there is an urgent need to develop what it calls 'an ethic of consumption.' http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2000/02/06/prosperity-with-a-purpose/ accessed September 1, 2017. Furthermore, "It readily acknowledges also that this is 'probably the least developed area of the Church's social teaching'. The essential foundation for the development of such an ethic depends on making a distinction between needs, wants, basics and luxuries . . . This can ultimately lead to an emphasis on 'having' rather than 'being.' Padraig Corkery, *Companion to the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 118-119. In addition, the foundation for such an ethic would take into account Dorr's argument that true development cannot guarantee one country's wants or luxuries at the cost of another country's exploitation of workers and resources. An all too real example of this is the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh. Over 1000 factory garment workers, mostly female, died making clothes for Western retailers while working in the most abysmal and unsafe working conditions. In this context, intrinsic to an ethic of consumption would be the principle of solidarity with these workers. For more on the Rana Plaza collapse see https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/bangladesh-factory-building-collapse-community accessed, August 13, 2017. See also Nathan Fitch and Ismail Ferdous' video-article on the collapse "The Deadly Cost of Fashion" at https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/15/opinion/the-deadly-cost-of-fashion.html?mcubz=0 accessed August 13, 2017.

[35] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 149.

[36] Ibid.

respect for others. The landmark encyclical *Populorum progressio* (PP) took up this challenge.

Pope Paul VI 's encyclical not only changed "the face and direction of Catholic social teaching, but made a significant contribution to global socio - economic policy considerations. Economists, social activists and politicians took note of Paul's masterpiece because it was original and articulated in a comprehensible and non- partisan manner."[37] Undeniably ground breaking, PP established the link between Christian faith and justice and development for all:

> The progressive development of peoples is an object of deep interest and concern to the Church. This is particularly true in the case of those peoples who are trying to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance; of those who are seeking a larger share in the benefits of civilisation and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are consciously striving for fuller growth." (PP #1).

This document offered a new and different approach to the understanding of development. It placed duties on the richer nations whose three major obligations in the service of humanity involved:

> 1)Mutual solidarity – the aid that the richer nations must give to developing nations; 2) social justice – the rectification of trade relations between strong and week nations; 3) universal charity – the effort to build a more humane world community, where all can give and receive, and where the progress of some is not at the expense of others. The matter is urgent, for on it depends the future of world civilization (PP #44).

[37]*Pope Paul VI: Christian Values and Virtues*, ed. Karl A. Schultz (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 12-13. Even in choosing the name Paul VI, this pope signalled that "his pontificate was to be profoundly *activist* along the lines of Paul the Apostle's tireless activities on behalf of proclaiming the gospel message. Allan Figueroa Deck, "Commentary on *Populorum Progressio*," in *Modern Catholic SocialTeaching*, 295.

Clearly, PP no longer started with the Western model of economic growth as previous documents had. Concurring, Dorr highlights that any solely economic concept of development is thoroughly inadequate and "those who start with this explicit or implicit assumption quickly find themselves trapped into an awkward conceptual framework."[38] Dorr emphasizes that the difference between this new document and previous Church documents was in Paul's approach. The difference was to be a conceptual one as "the encyclical was radically new . . . in the way it seeks to *define* development. At the heart of *Populorum progressio* lies a notion of integral development which Paul VI took from Pere Lebret, the Dominican scholar and activist who died some time before the encyclical appeared."[39] Authentic human development or integral development, "cannot be restricted to economic growth alone . . . it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man." (PP#14). However, Paul VI also reminds us that "each man is also a member of society; hence he belongs to the community of man . . . therefore we cannot disregard the welfare of those who will come after us to increase the human family. The reality of human solidarity brings us not only benefits but also obligations." (PP #17)

Paul's thoroughly holistic notion of development, advocating at all times for solidarity and social justice, sought not only to realise the potential inherent in every man on a personal level but also aimed to foster the same values on a communal, global level. By widening the concept of development and by including spiritual values, Paul VI provides "a basis for integrating personal development with community development and reconciling national development with global development. His inclusion of self-sacrifice in the definition of development challenges in two ways the assumption of Western economists and

[38]Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*,156.
[39]Ibid.

development planners that people are motivated mainly by self-interest."[40] Furthermore, PP stands out as unique due to its prophetic analysis of the current crises and future concerns. Paul VI is arguably the first pope to truly discern the 'signs of the times' and declare that industrialisation and unbridled liberalism posed serious threats to our future:

> The introduction of industrialisation, which is necessary for economic growth and human progress, is both a sign of development and a spur to it . . . certain concepts have arisen out of these new conditions and insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society. These concepts present profit as the chief spur to economic progress, free competition as the guiding norm of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, having no limits or concomitant social obligations. This unbridled liberalism paves the way for a particular type of tyranny rightly condemned by Our predecessor Pius XI, for it results in the 'international imperialism of money' (PP #26).

This does not mean that Paul VI rejected capitalism outright. Dorr argues that like Pius XI before him, Pope Paul condemns the injustices perpetrated by unchecked capitalist trading and insists that a just economic order cannot be built on the principles and ideology of liberal capitalism. He "proposes instead the guiding principles of *solidarity* of rich and poor (PP 48-49, 76-77), and of *dialogue* (PP 54, 73), leading to *planning* on a global scale (PP 50-52, 60-61, 64, 78). Truly ahead of his time, Paul VI had even spoken of the need to establish a world authority. As told to the United Nations General Assembly in New York: "your vocation is to bring not just some peoples but all peoples together as brothers… who can fail to see the need and importance of thus gradually coming to the establishment of a world authority capable of taking effective action on the juridical and political planes." (PP #78). One main reason why Pope Paul emphasizes the need for such a world authority is due to the fact he stands as witness to the ever-widening chasm in power that exists between the rich and the poor. If the

[40] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 158.

principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good in tandem with proper dialogue and planning were to exist alongside the virtues of fortitude and prudence as singled out by Dorr, a strong defence would be created against structural injustice. Taking this stance even further, *Justitia in Mundo*'s response to injustice was even more pronounced and substantial. For Dorr, this document was, and remains, one of the most concerted responses to the plight of the poor.

4.4 Justitia in Mundo (1971)

Seeking to resolve the social evils caused by injustice and oppression, The Roman Synod of Bishops produced the statement *Justitia in mundo* (JM) in 1971. Dorr underscores the fact that it is through the clarity and realism of the document, that a "genuine attempt is made to begin from the real situation in the world, in order to discern there 'the signs of the times' the specific ways in which God is speaking to today's world and calling people to respond."[41] One of the unique features of the document was that bishops from the poorer regions of the world actually helped shape it.[42] Although it is "relatively brief, it is one of the most important statements on social justice ever issued by Rome."[43] It is clear from the outset that this was a document inspired by *Populorum Progressio* but also by *Gaudium et Spes* as it sought "to detect the meaning of emerging history, while at the same time sharing the

[41] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 204.
[42] Significantly, "more than half of the bishops came from the third world . . . it was the first time leaders of churches in poor nations had a formal opportunity to dialogue about justice with members of the curia and bishops from the wealthy nations." Kenneth R. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo*(Justice in the World)," *in Modern Catholic Social Teaching* (Washington: Georgetown UP, 2005),335. This was in sharp contrast to what happened at all the later synods, according to Dorr. In "subsequent synods the bishops left it to the popes to issue some time later a document based on whatever parts of these deliberations were acceptable to the Vatican. If this had happened in the case of the Synod of 1971, the final document might not have included its more radical and controversial aspects; they probably would have been tones down or edited out entirely." Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 202.
[43] Ibid., 202.

aspirations and questionings of all those who want to build a more human world (JM #2). It has been argued, that it was more a call to action rather than a doctrinal statement as "the bishops were concerned with stirring up a new resolve to eliminate the social evils caused by injustice. Yet despite its brevity, the biblical and theological reflection explaining why the Church must take up the struggle to achieve justice in temporal life has proven significant."[44] Similar to Pope Paul, the bishops stressed the right to development and furthermore for the right to participation. More realistic and urgent than any other document up to that point however, the bishops warned about the failure of development thus far:

> In the last twenty-five years a hope has spread through the human race that economic growth would bring about such a quantity of goods that it would be possible to feed the hungry at least with the crumbs falling from the table, but this has proved a vain hope in underdeveloped areas and in pockets of poverty in wealthier areas. because of the rapid growth of population and of the labor force, because of rural stagnation and the lack of agrarian reform, and because of the massive migratory flow to the cities, where the industries, even though endowed with huge sums of money, nevertheless provide so few jobs that not infrequently one worker in four is left unemployed. These stifling oppressions constantly give rise to great numbers of "marginal" persons, ill-fed, inhumanly housed, illiterate and deprived of political power as well as of the suitable means of acquiring responsibility and moral dignity. (JM#10)

This may have proved somewhat shocking at the time due to the fact, as Dorr suggests, that "the overall tone indicates support for the view that things have gone wrong not so much in spite of 'development' but more *because* of it."[45] Taken as a whole Dorr argues that the bishops set out a response that "amounts to a very radical criticism of the 'development' process that has actually taken place (as distinct from some ideal development that might have occurred). It is not simply that this so-called development has failed to meet the needs

[44]Kenneth R. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World)," *in Modern Catholic Social Teaching* (Washington: Georgetown UP, 2005), 333.
[45] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 206.

of the poor. It is that it has actually *increased* the numbers of the poor by creating a whole category of marginal people. In fact, then, the document makes a far more trenchant criticism of 'development' than appears at first sight."[46] This was not to be the totality of the bishops' criticism however. Dorr emphasizes the following passage as exceedingly critical:

> Furthermore, such is the demand for resources and energy by the richer nations, whether capitalist or socialist, and such are the effects of dumping by them in the atmosphere and the sea that irreparable damage would be done to the essential elements of life on earth, such as air and water, if their high rates of consumption and pollution, which are constantly on the increase, were extended to the whole of humanity (JM#11).

Here, the synod puts forward a further, even more serious, criticism of the kind of development that has taken place so far. Arguing that the environmental cost of this type of 'development' seriously outweighs any apparent benefits, this document establishes an environmental principle that would continue to be a driving influence throughout Dorr's life and work. It should be of little surprise that his response to this passage is at once devastating and inspiring:

> this passage, if taken seriously, would on its own completely demolish the myth of development on which the rich and poor countries had lived for a generation. Both the wealthy and the deprived had assumed that what had been achieved by some could soon be achieved by others, and eventually by all. This would suggest that the relative poverty of some nations compared with others could be endured by them so long as people thought it was temporary. And the use of the term 'developing countries' to describe what were really very poor countries (sometimes growing still poorer) helped to ease the consciences of the well-off in the face of the absolute and abject poverty of millions of people. To recognize that what had been called 'development' is available only to a limited amount of countries is, in effect, to accept that it is not true development at all but rather a kind of *exploitation*. This is a less obvious type

[46] Ibid.

> of exploitation than one finds in colonialism or in failure to pay proper prices for products from the 'developing' countries. For what is being directly exploited in this case is not other people but the resources of the earth.[47]

The care and concern for the earth demonstrated here by the bishops, Dorr argues, was truly remarkable given that it came long before society or any government took serious note of it. The document stresses that it is "unjust and exploitative for the 'developed countries' to refuse to share more fairly the benefits they have received from what was the common heritage of all."[48] This also severely negates one of the simplest yet most profound tenets of Catholic social teaching, that 'we live simply so that others can simply live.' Arguably, for the first time, this document saw through the prevailing forms of development and fundamentalist belief in unfettered economic growth and argued against such views with cutting clarity. This is in no small part due to the fact that the bishops behind the document were writing from their experience, that of standing with the poor in their lives, in solidarity. In addition to the strong emphasis on solidarity that permeates the document, the principle of participation is also at the heart of JM. The bishops recognised that unless "combated and overcome by social and political action, the influence of the new industrial and technological order favors the concentration of wealth, power and decision-making in the hands of a small public or private controlling group. Economic injustice and lack of social participation keep people from attaining their basic human and civil rights" (JM #9). Once again, the experience of the bishops and their personal witness to the reality of the lives of the poor 'on the ground' is undoubtedly what enabled them to truly understand their plight and foresee the form in which future trouble would come. The fact that this passage accurately describes the current global situation for all of us, and not only the poor, should provide the strongest motivation yet to start truly listening to the people most affected.

[47] Ibid., 206-207.
[48] Ibid., 208.

The bishops make a strong case for an approach entitled 'educating to justice' in order to affect stronger participation for all members of society. It "is an 'education for justice that involves 'a renewal of the heart'; and its purpose is to 'awaken consciences leading to the beginning of a transformation of the world' (JM 51)"[49] While this would certainly mean that people would no longer be controlled or manipulated by outside forces, social or political, Dorr argues that the authors could have gone further, by distinguishing clearly between educating the rich and educating the poor:

> If church people devote most of their energy and resources to providing education for the rich - as they did in the past in Latin America – this implies that they assume that change is to come mainly from the top. If, on the other hand, they focus mainly on providing the poor with the kind of education that is described in the document, then it is likely that they will have to face up to some measure of confrontation. The document does not make this distinction or point out the implications of a focus on education of the poor. Consequently it glosses over the crucial point that church leaders who seek to promote effective change in society can hardly escape the need to make a certain option. They can assume that those at the top of society are the key agents of change, or they can acknowledge that the poor are more likely to bring about the of changes that justice requires.[50]

This argument is highly indicative of Dorr's spirituality. The participation of all and for all in the working together for justice and dignity is crucial to his spirituality. In fact, the main principles of Catholic social teaching, option for the poor, solidarity, the common good and the principle of subsidiarity at all times underpin Dorr's spirituality. The principle of subsidiarity is one which Dorr believes should have been expounded more explicitly in JM. Taking the worldwide church organization Caritas as an example, which has hundreds of thousands of employees around the world working together for justice and dignity for the poor while only entertaining 20 or 30 employees at its headquarters in Rome, Dorr asks why

[49] Ibid., 211.
[50] Ibid.

the Catholic church cannot be organised along these lines? Would it not be "a very good example of the principle of subsidiarity which has been an important element in the church's social teaching?"[51] While the bishops may not argue explicitly along such lines, JM does introduce the first crucial aspect which should underscore the principle of subsidiarity:

> Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church's vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted (JM #5).

What is most striking about this statement is the realization that *listening* to the poor is of extreme importance in hoping to build a more human world.

To hear such cries and to respond is, the bishops argue, to live the Gospel and such action demonstrates the true Christian meaning of love. At the synod, there was also the feeling that action for justice was needed in the internal affairs of the Church although many

[51] Dorr, *Time for a Change*, 246-247. The Compendium states: "The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community. Experience shows that the denial of subsidiarity, or its limitation in the name of an alleged democratisation or equality of all members of society, limits and sometimes even destroys the spirit of freedom and initiative. The principle of subsidiarity is opposed to certain forms of centralisation, bureaucratisation, and welfare assistance and to the unjustified and excessive presence of the State in public mechanisms . . . An absent or insufficient recognition of private initiative – in economic matters also – and the failure to recognise its public function, contribute to the undermining of the principle of subsidiarity, as monopolies do as well." Compendium, #187 - 89. Dorr adds that "this principle of subsidiarity has now become an embarrassment to the Vatican. At the Synod of Bishops in 2001, there were repeated requests, by bishops from many parts of the world, that the principle be taken seriously by Rome. The formal response of Pope John Paul II to these requests came in the post-synodal document *Pastores Gregis* dated 16 October 2003, which stated: 'the concept of subsidiarity has proved ambiguous.' This response is itself remarkably vague and ambiguous. But the document makes it clear that the Vatican is unwilling to accept that the principle of subsidiarity is applicable to the church. It insists instead on the concept of 'communion' which it uses as a justification for the present highly centralised approach. Gonzalez Faus is trenchantly critical of this 'distorted' understanding of the word 'communion', describing it as a 'manipulation of communion in favour of power." Ibid., 247.

saw this as an attempt to 'escape' from the wider social issues. Such was not the case as "the motive behind this concern was not to avoid dealing with larger questions of social justice but the belief that "the church must be just before preaching justice to others"[52] A concern, it has to be noted, that is still incredibly pertinent today. The nature of the Church and what it preaches must be a more harmonious endeavor. Just as Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated neither can action for justice be separated from the preaching of the Gospel. This is the central issue for the synod of bishops as it is stated, in the most quoted and debated section of the text,

> action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation. (JM 6).

The key word here and one which caused some controversy was *constitutive*. Most would interpret *constitutive* as being something which cannot be separated, or *constitutive* as meaning being part of something's very being; in this case action for justice cannot be separated from the Gospel as it is part of the Gospel's very being, it is part of its core. The word *essential* was suggested as an alternative to which there was no objection as both are rather similar. It is important to acknowledge that action on behalf of justice was not to be considered a mere accompaniment to the Gospel as if there is an option whether it is present or not. Rather action on behalf of justice is at the core of the Gospel, it is part of its body and as such can never be removed or ignored. This is similarly striking to the firm commitment to an option for the poor and for the earth that Dorr takes. At no point is the impression given that this option or action for justice is an add-on to spirituality. It is at the heart and centre of

[52]Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in mundo*," 347.

Gospel and therefore it is the core of Dorr's spirituality. This key message was given great emphasis and impetus by certain bishops present at the synod and as this document and the authors behind it helped to inspire much of Dorr's future work, it is crucial to quote it at length. It is said that the speeches given by Bishop Carter and Cardinal Flahiff, made a noticeable impact on the bishops gathered for the Synod, and also made headlines in the press:

> A paragraph from Flahiff's speech has been quoted hundreds of times by social educators and activists. He asks why our Church's social teaching seems to have had so little impact. He suggests that this is because we have believed that teaching a theoretical knowledge of the guiding principles of social justice is the most important, if not sufficient, responsibility of leaders of the Church with regard to justice. And he goes on to say:
>
> "I suggest that henceforth our basic principle must be: only knowledge gained through participation is valid in this area of justice; true knowledge can be gained only through concern and solidarity. We must have recourse to the biblical notion of knowledge: experience shared with others.
>
> Unless we are in solidarity with the people who are poor, marginal, or isolated we cannot even speak effectively about their problems.
>
> Theoretical knowledge is indispensable, but it is partial and limited; when it abstracts from lived concrete experience, it merely projects the present into the future.[53]

The implications of this speech, and of the synod, would prove to be far reaching and clearly provided much inspiration which helped to shape and form Dorr's theology and spirituality. Central to Dorr's approach to theology and spirituality is the belief that drawing from people's own experience, especially the experience of the poor and marginalized is what "helps to set them free to be fully Christian, fully human, fully alive."[54]

[53] www.jesuitforum.ca/open-space/justice-world accessed 30/08/2017.
[54] Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda*, 157.

4.5 Role Reversal: Theology reflecting Spirituality

Much more than what shapes him, spirituality for Dorr essentially is what *moves* him. Dorr, making use of one his favourite poets, explains this distinction: "As the poet Patrick Kavanagh says, 'no one loves you for what you have done but for what you might do'. And the actions that really count are the ones I do in response to something that moves me deeply. The point is that even though I have been moulded in a certain way, nevertheless I am free. That freedom is even more important than the mould I have taken."[55] The question is then raised however; if one gives priority to spirituality, does this eliminate the need for theology? Absolutely not. For Dorr, theology and spirituality always exist in relationship as one compliments and informs the other.

Theology "does more than simply give expression to our value system and beliefs; it also involves some attempt to introduce order and consistency into them."[56] It is clear that, for Dorr, theology is first of all a personal matter. Once this is recognised, only then does it become possible to go on and try to make sense of a theology which is shared by a whole community of people. Unfortunately though, "quite a lot of people who use theological words and propound theological ideas are not really doing theology at all; they are merely mouthing words and phrases that do not truly represent their deepest values and beliefs."[57] Arguably then, neither are they really doing spirituality. In contrast, Dorr argues that in one sense, a person's theology may actually be more evident in active participation as "a person may be

[55] Ibid., 20.
[56] Ibid., 25.
[57] Ibid.

so much part of a community that both the religion and theology of the community represent the basic outlook of that person. Such a community value system may be carried on from one generation to the next; in this way an authentic tradition may come into being. Christianity is one such community and the reflective part of that tradition of belief is its theology."[58] What Dorr is effectively stating is that the personal and social dimensions of a person's faith are so intertwined one easily flows into the other. And so it goes with theology and spirituality; where one ends the other begins. According to Dorr, theology in its most positive aspect can be the mediator between people's religious experience through different ages and cultures:

> Theology, then, can play an important role in combining the historical dimension of the Christian faith with the uniquely personal dimension (the fact that it is my individual spirituality that is ultimately in question) . . .[concerning] the personal, the interpersonal and the public spheres of spirituality, when I proclaim that I am a Christian, I am saying that in each of these spheres I find that the experience of Christ is in some way normative for me. For instance, his way of addressing God as 'Abba' teaches me to do the same. His washing of the feet of his friends shows me how to relate to others. His silence before Herod and his words before Pilate suggest ways in which I might take a stance in public affairs. Some aspects of the life and words of Jesus speak directly to my heart, despite the gap of space and time. Others are meditated to me through a more scientific theological understanding. In this sense theology should be seen as being at the service of spirituality: at its best it mediates between Christ's religious experience and my own . . . This means that doing theology is not a neutral activity, quite independent of the content of one's faith. The very way in which theology is done is deeply affected by the person's beliefs and values.[59]

Theology, expressed in its most positive aspect as a mediator, is a gift available to everyone.We all experience the urge, in some degree, to do theology. Therefore:

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 28-29.

> It follows that everybody is called to be a theologian, at least in some rudimentary sense. Most people keep this urge to theologise under a tight rein; it may find expression only in the rather inappropriate setting of a bar or a cocktail party. Perhaps the fact that it breaks through in such situations shows just how strong the urge really is. It would be wrong to sneer at such amateur theologising; for the work of professional theologians must be rooted in the fundamental need, which we all share, to reflect on our beliefs.[60]

In theology, as with spirituality, it is by drawing from people's own Christian experience, which "helps to set them free to be fully Christian, fully human, fully alive."[61] However, the long-held assumption that theology tends to come first and that the task of pastoral theologians and of spiritual writers is to ensure that the theological 'theory' is applied in spiritual 'practice' is now a mode which Dorr thoroughly rejects. Having now come to understand theology and spirituality in a much more personal sense than he did previously, Dorr argues unequivocally that:

> It is not enough to think of God speaking to us first of all in the Bible and through Church authorities; and then to see theology as working on this material, helping us to assimilate it, and to apply it in practice, through pastoral theology and spiritual theology. Now I prefer to begin at the other end – to accept that the most privileged 'place' in which God speaks to me is in my own spirituality. This means I can no longer think of a person's spirituality as something that comes from outside. Rather it is that which is most deeply personal. My spirituality is me. Not the 'me' that so often is distracted,

[60] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 25.

[61] Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda*, 157. This search for meaning, to seek what it is to be fully human and fully alive "grows as more and more people search for more meaningful, more responsible forms of life in a confused and spiritually bankrupt world." Jack Finnegan, an Irish priest who teaches spirituality and psychology responds to this question of meaning through spirituality while simultaneously articulating a definition of spirituality:
Spirituality is about many things. It is about the sublime and the deep, and the inward and the outward turn. It is about oneself and others, about the world and everything in it and the quality of the webs of relationship we spin and knit. Spirituality is about life and how we live it. It is about culture and society and how we shape them. It is about stillness and great efforts, about solitude and the insights it brings; it is about knowing and acting on the quality of that knowing. Spirituality is the space where we work with the creative potentials of human similarity and difference, or struggle with the enemy – making forces that betray the potentials for harmony and peace with all that is. It is about social justice; it is about equality and a world to save. Spirituality generates ecological awareness and response as the earth is rediscovered as the Holy One's good gift. It is a space of healing and purification, a place of enlightenment and a call to wholeness. Jack Finnegan, *The Audacity of Spirit* (Dublin: Veritas, 2008), 44.

> scattered, and inauthentic; but the most genuine and profound 'me' that exists.[62]

Theology then becomes the treasured space where our spirituality can be reflected upon and articulated, in both expressive and systematic ways. In fact, theology enriches a person's faith by allowing the space for meaningful reflection and allowing articulation of that faith in a systematic way.

4.6 A Challenge to Western Theology: A Frontier Faith or A Laboratory Faith?

Unfortunately, "Western theology in recent centuries contains a good deal of material that will give some appearance of legitimacy to inadequate theology. Western dogmatic and systematic theologians were very hesitant to speak about the experience of God."[63] Dorr's conviction is that that theology is not a neutral activity and the way in which theology is done is affected greatly by a person's beliefs, values and experiences. However, a problem arises when the conversion called for is inadequate, where the *openness* to the other is not fully appreciated or developed nor is the sense of *entrusting* oneself to be vulnerable before the other and indeed before God. If conversion is tainted or governed by other forces such as anxiety, fear or ambition this will undoubtedly affect the doing of theology. When this happens, Dorr argues, while "continuing to use the traditional theological language of Christianity, I will find it more and more unreal. I will be half aware that the more deeply personal and experiential aspects of the Christian tradition are simply not relevant to my own religious experience."[64] Therefore, the experiential aspects of the tradition will be played

[62] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 19-20.
[63] Ibid., 30.
[64] Ibid.

down and focus will concentrate solely on the parts of theology that support a narrow outlook. This kind of editing process is commonplace within the tradition and with theologians. The "most unfortunate effect of this editing is that the resultant theology functions as a support and justification for the inadequate religion of the person concerned."[65] This is why Dorr asserts that at times that theology can be a dangerous weapon.

Theology can be "used as a defence against anything that might challenge the theologian's beliefs and way of life. This defensive element is most common in the theology that is concerned with how we relate to society at large, in the public sphere."[66] Many examples of this kind of defensive use of theology can be found as soon as theologians become involved in looking at political and economic issues. In this respect "theology is especially likely to reflect the self – interest of the theologians who write or teach it . . .for the fact is that most Western theologians belong to a particular class in society – and many are content to fit rather comfortably into the privileged niche which society gives them."[67] Dorr observes that one particular area certain theologians like to engage in is the intellectual jousting about the meaning of words. This has been demonstrated in the encyclical *Justitia in Mundo*, to name but one example,where much time was spent wrangling over the word *constitutive* in regard to whether action on behalf of justice was inseparable from the Gospel message or an accompaniment to it. Obviously, argues Dorr, such controversies have practical implications:

> But these are seen as a matter of applying the theory to life; the truth itself is to be discovered not by living it but by study. For the most part it is assumed that the theologian is to seek the truth by examining the documents of the past with as much scholarship and detachment as possible. Involvement, in, say, work with the poor would be a distraction from this theological task. No wonder

[65] Ibid., 31.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

> then, that most Western theology is carried on in the security and relative comfort of universities and seminaries.[68]

A detached or objective theology, or one that espouses values and principles yet is written by those who do not live in true solidarity with the people they claim to represent, is ultimately harmful.

Dorr obviously acknowledges the important role and function of the theologian. His argument is simply that precisely because of their special role concerning God and the deepest aspects of human life, the theologian must be a witness to the many dysfunctions of the prevailing system. Following the role of witness, the theologian is called to be a first responder, be moved into action, by the plight of the poor, and to step outside of such a system. Otherwise, "the would-be detachment and objectivity of the dominant theology of the West would in practice amount to collusion in the social evils that mar our world."[69] It means that without the conviction and credibility of truly authentic authors, guiding principles will remain, at best, only theological reflections. Theology could not therefore function as a true reflection of spirituality as a chasm is created. This separation is also an issue that is to the forefront of the current Pope's concern. Reflecting on this very danger, Pope Francis' articulation of the matter is in itself incredibly insightful. Furthermore, it actually elucidates Dorr's assertion that an authentic Christianity is one which involves an *openness* to the other while "*entrusting* myself to the other, allowing myself to be vulnerable."[70] As such it is essential to quote Pope Francis at length:

> When I insist on the frontier, I am referring in a particular way to the need for those people who work in the world of culture to be inserted into the context which they operate and on which they reflect. There is always the lurking danger of living in a laboratory. Ours is not a 'lab faith,' but a 'journey faith,' a

[68] Ibid. 42.
[69] Ibid. In fact, Dorr goes on to argue that "any theologian who fails to challenge the Western way of life and the unjust world order to which it gives rise, is acquiescing in a form of idol worship." Ibid., 45.
[70] Ibid., 13.

> historical faith. God has revealed himself as history, not as a compendium of abstract truths. I am afraid of laboratories because in the laboratory you take the problems and then you bring them home to tame them, to paint them, out of their context. You cannot bring home the frontier, but you have to live on the border and be audacious. When it comes to social issues, it is one thing to have a meeting to study the problem of drugs in a slum neighbourhood and quite another thing to go there, live there and understand the problem from the inside and study it. There is a brilliant letter by Father Arrupe to the Centres for Social Research and Action on poverty, in which he says clearly that one cannot speak of poverty if one does not experience poverty. The word insertion is dangerous because some religious have taken it as a fad, and disasters have occurred because of a lack of discernment. But it is truly important. The frontiers are many. Let us think of the religious sisters living in hospitals. They live on the frontier. I am alive because of one of them. When I went through my lung disease at the hospital, the doctor gave me penicillin and streptomycin in certain doses. The sister who was on duty tripled my doses because she was daringly astute; she knew what to do because she was with ill people all day. The doctor, who really was a good one, lived in his laboratory; the sister lived on the frontier and was in dialogue with it every day. Domesticating the frontier means just talking from a remote location, locking yourself up in a laboratory. Laboratories are useful, but reflection for us must always start from experience.[71]

Dorr asserts that all Christians have the right and the duty to reflect on the meaning of their faith and such a reflection is the initial and fundamental form of theology. However, specialised theologians, he argues, have a service role to fulfil. The specialist must "try to respond to the need and questions of the community"[72] as a part of that community and not someone outside of it. The theologian "can no longer afford to be cut off from the experience of the poor, and from the struggle to overcome injustice. Rather, he or she must seek ways in

[71] Antonio Spadaro SJ, "The Heart of a Jesuit Pope: Interview with Pope Francis" in *Studies* volume 102, number 407, Autumn 2013, 255-278, here, 276.The interview of Pope Francis has been heralded as a new moment in Catholic church history. "Theologically the style of Francis is pastoral, after the manner of the Second Vatican Council, with its fearless openness to the world . . . 'thinking with the church' now means, as well as respect for the hierarchical Magisterium and theologians, a close listening to what the faithful are saying, in particular those who are poor . . . Hence the frequent references in the interview to dialogue and consultation, a consultation that is real, not simply token or ceremonial. And truth is to be 'discerned' – Francis is here referring to a prayerful reflection on lived experience which includes, but cannot be reduced to, rational discussion." Gerry O'Hanlon SJ, "The Pope's Interview: A Reflection" in *Studies* volume 102, number 407, Autumn 2013, 279-282, here,279.

[72] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 48.

which that experience can be articulated."[73]For Dorr, the experience of being with the poor in friendship and solidarity is the first charge of the theologian, and the reflection, articulation and expression of that experience comes after. Correspondingly, spirituality is the first response and it is theology that provides the support to the response.

The Second Vatican Council brought about for Dorr a "quite radical revision and re-orientation of my Christian faith and spirituality, and in the theology in which I articulated them."[74] The key to understanding Dorr is evident in the subtlety of this remark. Dorr's spirituality is the initial source of his values and his beliefs and theology is the place where he reflects on and articulates these beliefs although it is the relationship between the two that is *essential*. Dorr's theology is deeply and personally affected by his spirituality and in a mutual relationship, his theology gives a voice to that spirituality. A lot of theology is written in an academic desert according to Dorr and in highlighting this fact he tries to breathe new life into theology. The restriction of theology to a highly - specialized academic aridity denies true and authentic access and appropriation of theology and is a 'form of domination' which Dorr is highly critical of:

> There is another way in which theology is misused – one that happens so frequently that we may find it difficult even to recognise it as a theological domination. What happens is that preachers or theologians trot out some traditional formula which is presented as 'the truth'. There may be nothing wrong with the content of the theology. But it is imposed without giving people any real opportunity to appropriate it personally or articulate it for themselves. This deprivation is a form of domination. It denies people the right as humans and as Christians to give personal expression to their deepest values, hopes, and concerns. Furthermore, it robs them of the life, excitement, and inspiration which . . . comes from such personal theological activity. It deprives the Christian people of a most important source for the nourishment of their faith. Finally, it leaves them dependent and open to manipulation because they have not learned to articulate their own personal and community religious experience. In integrating theology with spirituality, Dorr believes he is working out our heart's deepest desire as he explains, "for many of the people with whom I work . . . I believe that behind all [their] immediate, practical

[73] Ibid.,46.
[74] Dorr, "What If We Had Taken Vatican II More Seriously?", 347.

> preoccupations lies a hunger for some richer, deeper meaning and purpose . . . and that in their more reflective moments they would wish to be in on- going touch with that spirituality."[75]

This form of theological domination has been challenged most vociferously by Third World theologians. If theology denies people of the opportunity to express their deepest held concerns, emotions and hopes, if theology can rob a people of joy, inspiration and life and if an imposed theology means people are easily manipulated and left voiceless as a result, then something is very wrong. It would be a violation of people's human rights and a violation of their dignity and goes against all of the Catholic social teaching which is integral to Dorr's spirituality. The Third World have accused the West of condoning and supporting such injustices through their imposition of a thoroughly Western theology over many decades. They believe that the failure to make an authentic option for the poor "has infected Western theology as a whole – turning it into an ideological defence of the unjust structures which divide our world into the rich and poor, the oppressors and the oppressed."[76] Instead of reacting to such accusations with incredulity or suspicion, it may prove more healthy and fruitful to actually *listen* to their truth. For if, as Dorr and Pope Francis both acknowledge, there exists at present a gulf between who we say we are and what we actually do as followers of Christ, if the needs of the frontier are not being met by our current approach then an alternative remedy must be sought. Dorr's vision is that a more abundant theology is born. A theology that reflects the spirituality of a persecuted people; a theology that embraces the poor and embodies their spirituality.

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[75] Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Heart's Deepest Desire* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2008), 7. Echoing this sentiment, I am reminded of the author Jack Kerouac who captured the spirit of a generation in his novel *On the Road*. Kerouac was never able to convince his critics that the Beat Generation was 'basically a religious generation,' but his friend Holmes understood that the characters in *On the Road* were actually 'on a quest and that the specific object of their quest was spiritual. Though they rushed back and forth across the country on the slightest pretext, gathering kicks along the way, their real journey was inward; and if they seemed to trespass most boundaries, legal and moral, it was only in the hope of finding a belief on the other side. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), xxx.

[76] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 34.

4.7 *Listening* to Third World Voices: A Different Kind of Theology

Opting to give a practical, rather than an abstract, theoretical account of Third World Theology, Dorr makes specific reference to the song of praise attributed to Mary in the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke.[77] The reason for doing so is that through it, Dorr sees not only a beautiful prayer but also a profound theological reflection. This is precisely "what Third World theology would like to be at its best. It is not an academic statement propounded in carefully detached and objective language. Rather it is a proclamation of personal faith and hope, rooted in Mary's own experience – while being at the same time a theological interpretation of that experience."[78] For Third World theologians, as indeed for Dorr, Christian theology must be done from the perspective of the poor, the oppressed if it is to be authentic. Third World theology radically challenges the notion that the poor are unimportant. Instead, its "fundamental claim is that the apparently insignificant ones . . . are the people called by God to play the central role in making human history."[79] Wounded in spirit, the poor and hungry 'lowly' ones from Mary's reflection have often endured "the experience of being harassed and down-trodden which causes psychological damage; it leaves people with a very poor self-image. They will be lacking in confidence – and even to some extent in the basic knowledge and skills needed to live a dignified life."[80] Third world

[77] "My whole being proclaims the greatness of God and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour. For he has remembered me, his lowly servant, and from this time onward people of all times will call me blessed, because of the marvels the Almighty has done for me. His name is holy; He shows mercy from age to age to all who fear him. He stretched out his mighty arm to shatter the plans of the arrogant. He has brought down mighty rulers from their seats of power and lifted up the little people. He has filled the hungry with the best of food, while the rich were sent away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, fulfilling the promise he made to our ancestors, a promise of mercy to Abraham and his children's children forever." (Lk 1: 46-55)
[78] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 37.
[79] Ibid., 38.
[80] Ibid., 39. Sheila Cassidy coined the term 'Good Friday people' to refer to the poor and oppressed. Medical Director of St Luke's Hospice in Plymouth she made headlines when she was arrested in 1975 for medically

theologians ask that we listen not only to their needs and concerns but to their solutions which are aimed at helping the poor and oppressed. If this endeavour was taken even half as seriously as the minute study of textbooks, law and doctrine, a transformation could truly begin. Third World theologians ask us then to close the books and open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to the poor. After all, Mary's theological reflection in Luke "makes no concession at all to those who would like to imagine that the oppressed can be set free without disturbing those who hold power and without dismantling the structures of oppression."[81]

Third World theology is described by Dorr as both a prayer of hope and a theological reflection. Specifically though, it stands out and makes sense only as part of a wider commitment to human liberation:

> This theology is an articulation of an engagement in the task of working for justice, for human rights, and against oppression. It is genuine theology not mere propaganda. But it does not stand in isolation; it does not have the kind of autonomy that would leave it unrelated to the rest of life in those who practice it. Third World theologians express this idea by insisting that their theology is a 'second act'; it follows on from the 'first act' which is involvement in the struggle of the Christian for human liberation and the promotion of the Kingdom.[82]

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treating someone who was considered to be a 'revolutionary'. She has worked among many oppressed communities, Chile and El Salvador for example. "Poverty, the way I understand it, consists not simply in the deprivation of material things, food, shelter, education and so on, but in the absence, or loss of what most people need to live their life fully. Understood in this light, poverty encompasses a multitude of losses: bereavement, physical and mental handicap, illness, depression and plain ordinary loneliness and misery. A multitude of people, therefore are called to suffer, though for many this secrecy will be endured in the secrecy of their own hearts, as they yearn for love or for freedom or simply for a greater fulness of living . . . Good Friday people is a term that I have coined to refer to the people, for whatever reason, find themselves called to powerlessness and suffering. It is in some ways synonymous with the Hebrew word *anawim*, the little people, the marginated, disenfranchised ones, but it is broader than that, for it encompasses men and women from all walks of life who are called by name, summoned to climb *down* the ladder, to share 'the same fate as the poor." Sheila Cassidy, *Good Friday People* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991), 1.

[81] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 39.

[82] Ibid., 40-41.

The key problem of theology as a laboratory faith is that an intellectual defence of the status quo is created. One may never understand or feel moved enough to tackle structural injustices if not personally effected by them. Third world theologians absolutely reject this mode claiming that failing to challenge structural injustice is to fail to live out the Christian faith in practice. To play the struggle down is to condone it. The crucial point, according to Dorr, is that "before ever the theologian engages in the 'second act' of theological reflection, he or she will have taken some option in practice – either to challenge or condone the evil. There is no room for neutrality. Third World theologians hold that the only theology that is authentically Christian is one that is preceded by, and springs from, the 'first act' of an option for the poor and a commitment to liberation."[83] Developing this point, Dorr notes that while most theologians in the West are aware of the injustices facing the poor:

> They do not appear to feel any particular responsibility for this injustice. Nor do they indicate that they see themselves as called to do much to overcome it. Individuals among them have, of course, taken on various pastoral commitments; and some of these are related to the problems of poverty. But there is no evident *intrinsic* connection between the practical commitments of these people and their theology.[84]

In criticizing this lack of connection, Dorr, albeit inadvertently, pinpoints the precise problem with laboratory faith. It "requires a certain detachment from the immediacy of involvement in a struggle to change the world . . . I have recently been asking myself whether theology has lost as much or more than it has gained by the rather secluded and privileged life which most of us Western theologians have lived."[85] Rather, theology should endeavour to seek ways to articulate the experience of the poor. In order to do this, firstly we must listen. Then we must

[83] Ibid., 41
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 43.

witness their reality, share in their experience. Then, and only then, will it be a proper articulation. For Dorr believes that if we read the 'signs of the times' through the eyes of the poor, we will read them more correctly. A sign suggests Dorr is a communication between people. This "means that 'the signs of the times' are more than merely *objective* historical events. They have a personal *subjective* aspect."[86] This also means that interpretation does not just involve objective data but should embrace a strong emotional element.[87] He warns that:

> If we do not read the 'signs of the times' through the eyes of the poor, much of our work to promote the reign of God in the world will be misguided and defective. Furthermore, if theologians and church leaders do not take sufficient account of the perspective of the poor, even the guidance given to Christians in the form of the official social teaching will be incomplete and imperfect – and may even lead people astray.[88]

Traditionally, theology has been defined as faith seeking understanding; it is a reflection of the Christian faith. What differentiates the Third World theologians' definition is that they insist that "the kind of theology done by a person is determined to a very considerable degree by the way that person interprets the faith in practice and lives it out."[89] This mirrors Dorr's idea of a balanced spirituality perfectly. A balanced spirituality is one integrated with a theology that affirms personal interpretation of faith and values actual lived experience.

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[86] Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Heart's Deepest Desire*, 51.

[87] Moral theologian Kevin T. Kelly says that it involves "*intelligently listening* to the deepest hopes and desires, sufferings and anxieties, of the human family of today." Kevin T. Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology: The Challenge of Being Human* (London: Chapman, 1992), 22. *Italics* added. Dorr notes that what Kelly is suggesting is that it is not a matter of noting the events and responses in a coldly intellectual manner; rather we are allowing ourselves to be profoundly moved by the deep feelings of people as they react to what is happening . . . the central point here is that the way the 'message' is heard by us is by allowing it to touch our hearts. So, in reading the 'signs of the times,' we look first of all at our own *feeling* response to what is going on in the world and the reactions of people to these events. This is well put by Kevin Kelly who says 'the signs of the times have to be *felt*'" Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Heart's Deepest Desire*, 51.

[88] Ibid., 145.

[89] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 41.

4.8 Conclusion. The Integration of Theology and Spirituality: A Balanced Approach

Spirituality is more than a set of theological ideas. For Dorr, spirituality is "revealed not so much by the theories we propose as by the way we act and react. It is an *implicit* theology which, if we are reflective and articulate, may eventually become explicit – and then it is very convincing because it represents a truth that is lived."[90] A balanced spirituality he argues, is exemplified in the passage from the book of Micah "this is what Yahweh asks of you, only this: that you act justly, that you love tenderly, that you walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8). Sharing an affinity with Jon Sobrino and liberation theologians, Dorr highlights this passage as it refers to both his personal relationship with God and the commitment to the poor which is a natural extension. It is, in short, his vision of a balanced spirituality. Dorr looks at the demand to 'walk humbly with God' as referring to our own personal relationship with God. What really matters however, is not so much the process but the effect. Gradually or suddenly there comes an "awareness that God has carved my name on the palm of his hand . . . this sense of the love and care of God is what changes the notion of providence from an abstract theological theory into a living experience. It is a consciousness that even the hairs of my head are numbered and that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's permission (Mt 10:29)"[91] In order to become "fully human, fully healed and therefore a person who is of the kingdom, as Jesus was,"[92] Dorr believes that his personal relationship with God and with Jesus is what enables him to overcome obstacles and

[90] Ibid., 8.
[91] Ibid., 9.
[92] Ibid.

therefore grow as a person. However, Dorr is keen to stress that religious conversion and personal religion are not to be reduced to *only* a purely private affair:

> I see the hand of God not merely in my own life but also in the lives of my friends. I can be led on to believe that that God's plan of salvation is all-embracing – it touches the lives of nations as well as individuals. My trials, my rescue, my being led into a more authentic pattern of living, my whole destiny – all these are fitted by God into the destiny of my people and of all peoples . . . the sense of providence is so central to religious conversion that it would seem that it must be present, at least in some implicit way, in *any* authentic religion.[93]

As humans, we live in relationship with others, in community not in isolation. A truer account of religious conversion therefore would take account of the power of our personal relationships to heal us and help us become better 'kingdom people'. Developing this idea further, Dorr includes intimacy as part of a balanced spirituality. Deep friendships play an important part in our spirituality. At its deepest, "it goes beyond support and comradeship and camaraderie. It is about intimacy. It is a meeting of souls"[94] This sense of friendship also relates to the second demand of a balanced spirituality.

To 'love tenderly' can be taken to refer to the second major area of Christian spirituality, namely the interpersonal aspect. Whether it is in the deepest of friendships or in extending our hand to the stranger, "I am called to love them all – even to love them 'tenderly'. This means treating everybody with respect and gentleness in a manner appropriate to the kind of relationship."[95] If 'walking humbly' required a religious conversion then Dorr suggests 'loving tenderly' requires a moral conversion. The "person who is morally converted in a deep degree has been given the gift of being other-centred, genuinely

[93] Ibid., 10.
[94] Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Deepest Heart's Desire*, 91. Here, Dorr laments the fact that friendship is not, as yet, given much prominence in books and articles on spirituality. However, he reminds us that "in the Irish Christian tradition the *anam-chara* (soul-friend) was an important figure. This was somebody with whom one could share one's very soul." Ibid.
[95] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 12.

interested in other people."[96] Central to moral conversion is being in a state of *openness*. There exists the "willingness to expose oneself, by trusting the other person. It is really a matter of entrusting myself to the other, allowing myself to be vulnerable. This is what 'openness' means – being willing to take the risk of leaving myself open to rejection or hurt."[97] If it is a true openness to others, not only will a vulnerability be present but also an ability to really *listen* to the other. This is a clear example of where theology and spirituality overlap for Dorr. Admiring Third World theologians for developing the concept and importance of *listening*, Dorr advocates the concept as an essential ingredient to a balanced spirituality. To really "listen to a person is already to affirm that person in a deep way. It allows the person to 'feel heard' and accepted rather than judged. Mostly that is the kind of affirmation people need and want . . . spontaneous openness and patient listening must be offered not just in the first flowering of friendship"[98] Our love, argues Dorr, has to be modelled on the enduring, faithful love that God shows us. Our 'loving tenderly' involves staying with people especially in difficult times and circumstances.

Essential to Dorr's approach to a balanced spirituality is that 'we act justly.' Although also a moral consideration, Dorr argues that it deserves special mention because moving out from our personal relationships we move into the public arena and the political sphere. By 'acting justly' I believe Dorr means this in the broadest, deepest sense. To 'act justly' is to help others to truly live, to help everyone become who they are truly meant to be. This definition comes out of his own experience and from his deep reflection on Catholic social teaching. It also means that we must build a society in which the structures are just. To "struggle to bring justice into society means in practice making an 'option for the poor,"[99] To do this effectively there needs to be a true conversion, a change of outlook. In addition to a

[96] Ibid.,13.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 16.

religious and moral conversion, to 'act justly' requires a political conversion and this involves two things:

> We need some *understanding* of how our society works – and particularly how it is structured in ways that favour certain groups and give them an unfair advantage over others, even when the privileged ones do not intend to be unjust.
>
> We need a *commitment* to correcting injustices, not just on an *ad hoc* basis but by replacing the unjust structures with ones that are equitable.
>
> The test of a genuine conversion at this public or 'political level' will be the extent to which we are working to protect the poor and marginalised.[100]

As Dorr has previously argued, this has implications for the way in which we do theology which is why he searched for an alternative way. However, it also has implications for his spirituality. It means "I must refuse to accept that the actions of 'the important people' are what really shape the history and progress of the country, the Church, and the world. Instead, I will set out to see as really significant the events which touch the lives of the poor, for better or worse."[101] It is clearly evident that for Dorr, theology and spirituality are not the separate entities many would argue.

Dorr's unique approach reverses the roles and places spirituality first and theology functions as a reflection and articulation of that. However, it is in matters of content or, what *moves* Dorr, that theology and spirituality are twinned; they are integrated in their concern for the poor. In this respect, they complete each other. For Dorr, and indeed for Christians, a balanced spirituality necessarily includes both. Similarly, in emphasizing the three conversions, religious, moral and political, Dorr stresses that they can only be complete conversions if linked to the other two:

[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 17.

> A proper balance and integration of all three is the basis for a truly balanced spirituality; and this is more important than ever in today's world. If I am not *religiously* converted, or if this aspect of my conversion is inadequate, then I am allowing false God's to rule my life – ambition, or greed, or anxiety. If my *moral* conversion is absent or inadequate then I remain distrustful and closed to others; or else I am unfaithful, unreliable, disloyal. If I am not properly converted in the *political* sphere then I will assume that religion is just a private or interpersonal affair and so I will condone the structural injustices of society.[102]

Spirituality must be rooted in all three forms of conversion if it is to be holistic and balanced. Christians must work for a full integration of the three so as to 'act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly.' Dorr's describes his own spirituality as an outlook, an approach and a set of attitudes and values which are the expression of 'me' at my most authentic. I would argue that Catholic social teaching and Third World theology contribute significantly to Dorr's outlook, approach and values. More than this, they are so integral to his spirituality that it is hard to differentiate his theology from his spirituality. And therein lies the crux. For Dorr, theology and spirituality exist in an infinite and reciprocal relationship. One compliments the other and establishes the balance. Concerning the personal and social aspects of spirituality, the "two approaches come together and are fully integrated with each other . . . it does not make sense to me to try to choose between them. This is because my relationship with God permeates my commitment to justice, my interpersonal relationships, and the other 'worldly' aspects of my spirituality."[103] One of the most obvious and most important areas where theology and spirituality integrate is in the emphasis on an 'option for the poor.'

An emerging approach to spirituality is being put forth by Dorr at a crucial time. It is one which "finds its roots in the real experiences and felt needs of people engaged in any

[102] Ibid., 17-18.
[103] Dorr, *Time for a Change: A fresh look at Spirituality, Sexuality, Globalisation and the Church*, 13-14.

kind of business – or indeed almost any kind of work in the modern globalised world."[104]His belief is that this emergent spirituality "is more credible and attractive to [people]than an ethics of business life proposed by church leaders, or preachers, or theologians . . . transformation can never be imposed from outside. Calls for radical change can be heard only when they strike a chord that the Spirit has already touched within."[105]In order to rise to the challenge of globalisation, a significant number of people are seeking a shift to a more harmonious, healthy, humane way of life and Dorr notes that many are feeling their heart calling them to make an 'option for the poor.' It will provide the opportunity for many people disillusioned with economics, politics and 'the system' with a choice, the "choice to disentangle themselves from serving the interests of those at the "top" of society and to begin instead to come into solidarity with those at or near the bottom."[106]Many are hesitant or even outraged at this suggestion as it appears to suggest we all become poor. However, in taking this option Dorr describes it, not as opting for poverty, but opting for people. It is "to proclaim by one's actions that people are more important than the systems that deprive them of their basic rights."[107]To opt for the poor is a response to the many structural injustices prevalent in our society and our world. Dorr has demonstrated to great effect how an option for the poor permeates Catholic social teaching and is the foundation for his theology; it is a serious challenge to change the present dominant model of development. Regarding an emerging spirituality, an option for the poor is a natural response from the heart. It is a human response to suffering and injustice. It is a call to reach out and help, a capacity innate in each and every one of us. The delicate balance of reflection and response is struck once again where Catholic social teaching and theology help to firmly ground and structure the appropriate response.

[104] Ibid., 171.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 9.
[107] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 77.

One of the main principles in Catholic social teaching is 'to live simply so that others may simply live.' Reminding us that the Church has had a theology and spirituality of poverty for hundreds of years, Dorr emphasises that it was a poverty that sought detachment from the things of this world and not the type he wishes to see renewed. What Dorr develops is the concept of a theology and spirituality of frugality and voluntary simplicity. The emphasis would not be on personal penance but on "finding a way of life that would allow everybody to have a reasonably fulfilled life of frugal comfort."[108] One of the key factors of such a spirituality is that it is not just for a select few but is a spirituality for everybody, no-one is excluded:

> To speak of a spirituality of voluntary simplicity is not to open up a whole new agenda . . . what a spirituality adds is not new content – new things to be done – but a *vision* that can inspire one to work for such changes, and a sense of tranquillity and deep joy in living a life that is not wasteful and not cluttered with unnecessary possessions. To adopt such an outlook is to call in question the basic driving force of modern 'development' . . .surely it is eminently Christian to challenge a model of development that appeals to greed and envy?[109]

The advantage of a spirituality of simplicity is that for people who seek to make an option for the poor and to challenge injustice it offers a starting point for action when it is all too easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand. In addition, "changes of lifestyle can have a profound effect. They symbolise one's commitment to radical change and are a constant reminder to oneself of the need for, and the possibility of, an alternative world."[110]

An integrated theology and spirituality could also be the catalyst to believing that we are not trapped in the present system and change is possible. Comparing our situation to that of the Jewish people in the time of Moses, Dorr states that "like them we have been driven by

[108] Ibid., 143.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 145.

economic necessity into the 'Empire' Like them we find ourselves near the bottom of that affluent society and unable to envisage a life of independence."[111] Which is precisely why we need to believe in an alternative vision. Dorr proposes that we need to start changing our 'mindset.' The ideas each of us hold concerning the nature and role of the Church are many and varied and give rise to a certain mindset or belief, that is, a complex of beliefs, values and attitudes. This "mindset colours our interpretation of situations, influences our judgements, and even affects our choice of allies and friends. Each mindset underpins a different spirituality."[112] The dominant first mindset viewed the Church as a fortress. It was an image of the church incredibly militant in nature. The military image emphasised discipline and obedience. If the "church is an army, then the role of the generals and officers is all important . . . the crucial virtue in the spirituality of the lay 'foot-soldiers' is obedience . . . at its worst this spirituality was ghetto-like, individualistic and escapist."[113] Importantly though this image or mindset was replaced with one which viewed the Church as a pilgrim people. The emphasis was on togetherness and equality and all Christians felt they were God's children and not just a separate spiritual elite. However, the third mindset and spirituality represented a significant shift, according to Dorr. The major change of focus viewed the starting point as the world instead of the Church. Of crucial importance to this mindset is the word 'service' These Christians saw themselves as called to serve the world by "cooperating with the Lord of History in transforming the world into the Kingdom. This requires a major change in spirituality; there emerges a whole new set of values and attitudes – a spirituality of the world."[114] It is this mindset and spirituality which, Dorr argues, has effected the biggest

[111] Ibid., 187.
[112] Ibid., 198.
[113] Ibid., 199. Dorr adds that this was still the main view of the Church in 1961, the year before Vatican II started. "Quite a lot of Christians have never left it behind. They may have adapted some of their ideas and practices to take account of more recent developments; but their fundamental outlook and spirituality have not changed significantly." That is why Dorr employs the term 'mindset' to describe people "moulded and shaped a generation ago; and their attitude is now 'set.'" Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 200.

change. The "great strength of the new approach is that it removes the traditional split between the sacred and the secular. Here we have a spirituality which evokes commitment to every aspect of authentic human living."[115] This is indeed a significant strength however, the mindset which Dorr himself goes on to propose is equally significant. Dorr suggests that the church should see itself more as a *movement* than as an *organisation*. This, he argues, would make it much more like the early church and bring it closer to the ministry of Jesus. It would involve a change of outlook and mentality. If "the church saw itself primarily as a movement, it is likely that it would not burden itself with so much canon law . . . there would be far less need for the safeguards of a complex legal system if we had a really effective participative style of leadership in the church at every level."[116] Developing the vision of the church as a movement even further, Dorr saves his piece de resistance for last.

What is needed today, argues Dorr, is a "kind of Copernican revolution leading to a major paradigm shift. We need to locate all our human concerns – and especially our approach to economics – within the far wider context of an ecological and cosmic vision."[117] Fostering an ecological spirituality is *the* major concern enveloping all of Dorr's current endeavours. With the greatest sense of urgency, Dorr realises a new mindset is once again called for. We need to imagine a new story, a new way of 'being' in the world before our home is completely destroyed. Citing Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin as examples of thinkers who have developed a new creation story, Dorr states that "they hold that our understanding of evolution can nourish our sense of God rather than undermining it . . . we may even visualise the Spirit of God hovering over the primeval waters, shaping the whole process of evolution, according to the creative, loving plan of God."[118] Dorr holds that this way of thinking and experiencing the world is fundamental to a truly ecological spirituality.

[115] Ibid., 201.
[116] Dorr, *Time for a Change*, 248.
[117] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 431.
[118] Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Deepest Heart's Desire*, 102.

Of vital importance is the point that according to this 'new story' "God is not to be seen as 'intervening' from outside in our world, but rather as the primary creative cause who lies behind the process of evolution as a whole."[119] It is impossible to underestimate the importance of these new 'stories' at this precise point in our history. Never before have we needed new mindsets, new stories, new myths so desperately. As our earth is being laid to waste before our eyes and as our current mindset seems to be laden with fear, anxiety and depression, we can look to an ecological spirituality and beyond in order to keep evolving and moving forward with positive purpose. As easy as it would be to turn inward and retreat from such global problems, now is the time to reach out and explore our interconnectedness. We can begin by fully embracing the integration of theology and spirituality as espoused by Dorr.

To sum up, Donal Dorr, arguably more than any other theologian, has established the pivotal role which Catholic social teaching plays in the integration of theology and spirituality. Dorr's spirituality is informed first and foremost by his personal experience. It is through this that he finds himself confronted with the many levels of oppression and injustice suffered by people who are poor in Africa and Latin America in particular. Reflecting on this experience Dorr finds, through Catholic social teaching, a solid core of principles and values which genuinely seeks ways to overcome inequalities and promote justice and dignity for all. That a myopic, thoroughly 'Western' bias permeates the teaching is the critical point that Dorr laments. In order to overcome this bias, we have to be with the poor and share in their vulnerabilities, and truly know them, otherwise *solidarity* and *option for the poor* become hollow turns of phrase. Dorr argues that our spirituality must first be formed by the experience of being with the poor and places theology at the service of such a spirituality.

[119] Ibid., 103.

Although Dorr gives priority to spirituality, theology and indeed experience always exist in relationship with it as one compliments and informs the other. A trinity is formed where each part is unique and distinct but cannot be separated from the other. According to Dorr, theology is actually a gift available to everyone and deserves to be treasured as a place where we reflect on our beliefs. For Dorr, theology is what gives a voice to his spirituality. Specifically, it is in Third World theology that Dorr finds a voice that blends Catholic social teaching with his spirituality; Third World theology does not detach itself from the reality of the poor. Actual lived experience is of paramount importance to Dorr and a balanced spirituality must involve a theology that values and supports such experience.

Ultimately, a balanced spirituality necessitates incorporating an alternative vision, means imagining an alternative world, an alternative future. Integrating theology and spirituality could provide the impetus to transform the present system but in addition a change, or more precisely an overhaul, of our mindset is required. A broader scope is vital. One which not only includes true solidarity with the poor but which also encompasses a new ecological and cosmic vision. Therefore, only a balanced spirituality, as advocated by Dorr, can truly respond to the signs of our times with respect to its unique challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE
THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY INTEGRATED: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES OF A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

5. Introduction

It is evident that for all three theologians an interrelationship exists between theology and spirituality. What other scholars hint at Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr affirm emphatically: spirituality and theology are integral to each other. It is no longer enough to think of God speaking to us first of all in the Bible or through Church authorities and then to see theology as working on this material. No, it is imperative we now understand that our reflection starts at the other end in accepting that the most privileged 'place' in which God speaks to me is in my own spirituality. From out of this foundation, the three theologians share similar roots evident not only in the theme of conversion but in Catholic social teaching, the primacy of experience and the hope for transformation in the world. Therefore, this chapter begins by outlining these four key areas which Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr have in common and also what differences are encountered between them. The chapter then highlights the collective fruits of the research of the work of Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr; the future possibilities of their work is explored. The chapter then moves purposely to illuminate why philosophy, the natural sciences and mythology are exciting and inspiring possible dialogue partners in spirituality. As such, the final chapter looks at philosophy, the natural sciences and mythology in three distinct sections. However, to begin, the four foundational beliefs the three theologians share will be outlined. All three theologians affirm that a person's spirituality is not something that comes from outside. It is not something external. A person's spirituality is their very *inner* being and the most genuine and profound

'me' that exists. Therefore, listening to this inner voice is a radical act; it is an act of conversion which is a foundational belief shared by Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr.

5.1 Conversion

An emerging spirituality is one which requires true, ongoing inner conversion.For Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr, Vatican II marked a conversion moment for the Church itself. It was a gospel - inspired imaginative conversion, a new way of seeing and a re-orientation of being, life and action that had radical and profound implications for the Church. However, the conversion involved listening to the other and learning from their wisdom in order to move forward and bring about justice for all.The only way to engage the world on the scale the council called for is in community. This may at first seem like an external endeavour. However, all three theologians firmly believe that in learning to engage and listen fully toothers, you as the instigator will change as well. An inner revolution takes place. Sharing this sentiment, all three highlight that unfortunately the Church is only comfortable talking to 'the other' as long as it is the Church is instructing them on how they should change. However, this approach is deemed wholly unfit for purpose by Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr. For all three theologians, to truly listen with an open heart and to hear the truth of another means we also have to change and this, they point out, is a great source of fear and discomfort for the Church. It need not be the case. Once another's truth is truly heard, new accounts of reality, new stories and new visions all open up. Schneiders argues that engagement with the full panoply of human reality will only enrich us and give us cause to hope. Learning from others only ever enriches our understanding. Sobrino also shares this viewpoint understanding that often the person who is believed to be bringing the 'Good News' to a suffering people is the one who actually receives it among the poor. This is service to the poor's best kept secret. It is not they who are transformed but it is often the 'Western' visitor who experiences conversion. Actual conversion that takes place as a result

of bearing witness; authentic witness that engages the reality faced as much more than mere spectator. Far more than a mere change of location, for Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr such an engagement involves a change of mind and heart, a true conversion. The three theologians make clear that following this conversion, compassion for the poor and marginalised becomes a wholly natural response from the heart. It is a human response to suffering and injustice. It is a call to reach out and help, a capacity innate in each and every one of us. The delicate balance of reflection and response is struck once again when Catholic social teaching and theology help to firmly ground and structure the appropriate response. For all three theologians Catholic social teaching is intimately bound with their spirituality.

5.2 Catholic Social Teaching

The relevance and importance of Catholic social teaching, the option for the poor and for the earth and issues concerning spirituality and justice have remained the most important issues throughout Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr's work. These issues are as pertinent today as they were just after Vatican II, arguably even more so, as the destruction of our environment takes its toll, most notably in the lives of the poor themselves. Vatican II, in relation to issues of poverty, injustice, and oppression in society asks to what extent the Church is on the side of the poor and the powerless in the struggle against injustice? This is the key issue for Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr and is one which continues to remain a challenge to CST. For Schneiders this means bringing in the 'other' who all too often remain outside of the church: women, people of different sexual orientation, people of different faiths and of no faith. Clearly, much more work needs to be done to turn this vision into reality. To embrace such inclusion would be to truly live out the call of John XXIII and is the turn to the world that pivotal church document *Gaudium et Spes* envisaged.Perhaps most significantly,liberation theology, the tradition which Sobrino emerges from, can be understood as not only emerging after the Second Vatican Council but from within the larger

framework of Catholic social teaching. *Populorum Progressio* contributed to the rise of liberation theology in Latin America. It is within the organic tradition of CST, that the principles of solidarity, justice and an option for the poor, so pivotal to all three theologians' arguments, are to be found. Catholic social teaching, for Dorr in particular, represents the rightful and preferred place of reflection. Spirituality, for all three theologians, is informed first and foremost by personal experience and is grounded in the reality of poverty and injustice. To reflect further on this experience is to do theology.

5.3 Experience Essential

It must be stated that the ground of experience for all three theologians is the place of the poor and marginalized. This means anyone who finds themselves disempowered or without a voice. Consequently, Schneiders chooses to highlight the plight of women. Such commitment is necessary because Schneiders reminds us that feminist spirituality is both rooted and oriented toward women's experience, especially their experiences of disempowerment. For this reason, "story – telling, the narratizing and sharing of the experience of women which has been largely excluded from the history of mainline religion is central . . . feminist spirituality is deeply concerned with the reintegration of all that has been dichotomized by patriarchal religion. This involvesrehabilitating what has been regarded as inferior and reappropriating that which has been alienated."[1] Similarly, Sobrino notes that the point of experience is not to be able to speak of many things but to allow many things to speak for themselves. In this instance, theology in its capacity as Logos is practiced with an adequate spirit and communicates Light. The "logos is genuinely spiritual when it genuinely enlightens. It is not the same thing to treat things scientifically and doctrinally as

[1]Sandra M Schneiders, *Beyond Patching*, 87.

really to shed light on them . . . [then]it is integrated by them in their spirit as well.[2] If experience was fully embraced as suggested, this may help begin to change that thoroughly 'Western' mindset that Dorr laments. In order to overcome this bias, we have to be with the poor and share in their vulnerabilities, and truly know them, otherwise solidarity and option for the poor become hollow turns of phrase. Dorr argues that our spirituality must first be formed by the experience of being with the poor and marginalised and places theology at the service of such a spirituality. Humble service to the world, in actual fact, is the golden thread which unites Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr.

5.4 A Movement: From Spirit to Action in the World

Evidently, all three theologians are motivated by an inner impulse which moves them to take action in the world. In particular, it was a quote from Sandra Schneiders which first inspired me to look into the relationship between theology and spirituality. When asked to define what theology is, the stock answer is always that it is 'faith seeking understanding.' I always felt there was something more to be said but didn't have the words as to what that 'something' was. Schneiders articulated it though. Theology, for her, is faith seeking understanding but furthermore it is understanding seeking transformation. So simple and yet profound. At first, I took this to mean full engagement with the world and all of its problems in a perhaps an all too headstrong and activist way. However, in real life, as in this dissertation, it was not until I actually lived and worked with the poor families of Peru that I truly understood myself and what transformation really meant. I learned quickly to listen to the stories of this particular people and once heard they are never forgotten. My conversion experience was both instant and continuous and spun my headstrong and activist viewpoint around 180 degrees. The families, the children, their joys and struggles, became a part of my

[2] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 70-71.

very being. As Sobrino and Dorr explained so clearly, I learned it is indeed only through listening to the people and in sharing their life with them with an open mind and with an even bigger heart that we can understand anything or anyone. Only when we change our own inner being is the possibility of transformation possible. Dorr and Sobrino rightly state that the best kept secret is that it is in being welcomed into a relationship with the marginalized and misunderstood 'poor' that makes transformation possible and this is their great gift given freely and with love. As Sobrino argues it is in 'doing' mercy that our very inner being will change. Such a 'mercy' involves being a witness, actually being present, sharing in the joys and sorrows. Most importantly is to be at the service of the poor and marginalised by truly listening to what they need rather than trying to impose ready-made ideals. Only then, with this type of understanding and experience, with this inner motivation, theology can be understood as 'faith seeking intelligent action.' All three theologians see the relationship which exists between theology and spirituality as one which is budding, not yet in full bloom. In order to nurture this relationship further however, the three theologians begin to move away from their shared roots growing in different directions.

5.5 Differences In Approach

While Schneiders' shares the same roots as Sobrino and Dorr, she makes a very deliberate choice to frame her argument with philosophical underpinnings. Before exploring the nature of spirituality any further, Schneider's unique contribution is to ground the discipline first with a solid, academic base. Employing a serious and rigorous scrutiny of what is involved in the study of the discipline of spirituality, while thorough, it does have the unfortunate effect of making a large part of her work appear to be rather clinical and somewhat dry. However, I believe this type of careful consideration, scrutiny and focused analysis is necessary and is due to the difficulty which she and many others face when trying to get spirituality recognised as a credible, academic discipline. Schneiders has to place

spirituality under the extreme scrutiny she does because so many were and I would argue still are, capable of dismissing it and disregarding it so casually. Therefore, a huge debt is owed to her for providing the solid ground out of which spirituality is becoming respected and recognised as a promising academic discipline. However, her true ingenuity is evident in placing hermeneutics at the centre of the approach to the study of Christian spirituality. Indeed "her casting of the discipline itself as essentially hermeneutical . . . allows for fruitful exploration in Christian spirituality."[3] This, I believe, is Schneider's masterstroke. In placing hermeneutics centre stage Schneiders has created the solid academic backdrop necessary for spirituality to flourish. It is hard to imagine how the interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary nature of the field could be supported and encouraged without her work on this matter.

If Schneider's unique contribution is to provide a base for spirituality, Sobrino is truly original in his advocacy of a spirituality which evolves in the face of reality and yet is also consistent when undertaken with the principle of mercy. In developing this, Sobrino moves liberation theology in a slightly different direction. More importantly, I believe this has created a safer space, vocabulary and dialogue which may seem less off-putting to those opponents of liberation theology who deem it dangerous. By emphasizing honesty in the face of reality and the principle of mercy, Sobrino skill is to make it more than a theory, academic argument or a philosophy. Inspired by Zubiri and Ellacuria, Sobrino makes a real-life application of them too. I think that a future study that would involve these three great friends and thinkers work would be an exciting prospect as they are in different ways concerned and consumed by questions concerning the nature of reality itself. I believe if studied alongside a field such as quantum physics the research could be exhilarating.

[3] Lisa E. Dahill, "The Genre of Gender: Gender and the Academic Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality,* 100. Here, Dahill states that there is a commonality between analysis of *gender* and that of *genre* in literary studies, arguing that "in both cases categories often viewed simplistically as merely classificatory are better understood as hermeneutical.

It is not any one individual difference which marks Dorr out. Rather it is his big-picture thinking and the holistic, ecological and cosmic vision which he has for a balanced spirituality which makes him truly stand out. If Schneiders provided the academic foundation stone for spirituality and Sobrino moves it forward in the direction of honesty to the real with the principle of mercy, Dorr's branches right out into the universe. Dorr proposes nothing short of a 'spirituality of the world.' For Dorr, the starting point of any spirituality is the world (instead of the Church) and the keyword of this universal spirituality is *service*. This is unique as it evokes a commitment to *every* aspect of human living. The poet W.B. Yeats once said that language is used to communicate and also to evoke and inspire communication of a divine nature. In this respect, all of the cosmos is to be embraced and welcomed and Dorr holds a similar motivation for spirituality. Fostering an ecological spirituality is the major concern for Dorr and in this respect, Dorr argues for the Church to take ecological issues in hand and lead the way as an inspired movement and not as an organisation.

5.6 Future Possibilities

Following the three theologians' emphatic arguments have for the integration of theology and spirituality, the final chapter seeks to explore what such an integrated reality may involve. I was inspired to imagine what the study of spirituality might actually look like in practice and in doing so, found that there are many potential partnerships which would prove prosperous not only for spirituality but for theology too. I find it a promising and exciting endeavour. Of the many possible partnerships, I have chosen to focus and develop on philosophy, science and mythology as three key areas which are important for spirituality as they open the imagination and encourage alternative visions of the world. The three key areas are more than capable of rising to meet the challenging signs of our times.

Inspired by Schneider's hermeneutical vision, a closer look at Paul Ricouer's philosophical hermeneutics proves insightful. Philosophical hermeneutics fits suitably within spirituality as it too employs a cyclical pattern: revelation, response, revelation. Poetry, art and scripture alike have the potential to invoke a moment of profound realization or revelation within each of us which causes us to act and such action in turn can inspire another. An understanding of Ricouer's theories concerning revelation and experience could prove invaluable for spirituality. Thus, making the case for philosophy as a suitable dialogue partner.

Imperative to Sobrino and Dorr's work is the need to foster a sound ecological awareness. In fact, for Dorr, nothing short of an ecologically spiritual revolution will suffice. However, the question arose in my mind as to how to further inspire care for the earth (and for the poor) when we are already inundated with climate change warnings and either look away from the problem or feel powerless to do anything. I believe in order to inspire a new way of 'being' in the world, it is important to consider the natural sciences as an important dialogue partner for theology. Not only do the natural sciences provide the facts and figures about the nature of climate change or the nature of the universe and everything in it; in its own unique way the natural sciences open up many pathways which lead to alternative visions of our role in the world as protectors and stewards of the earth. Dorr recognised Teilhard de Chardin as an important figure who already merged his theological work with his scientific and I further explore the fruits of his findings from this intriguing integration.

Leaving what I would describe as the best until last, the field of mythology is one which I believe to be profoundly important to theology. Both Sobrino and Dorr both maintain that in order to see real change, we need to find new ways of thinking about and experiencing the world. Dorr only briefly hints at the need for different creation stories. Inspired by this, I

chose to look further at the many different versions of the creation story, found abundantly in the field of mythology. It holds enormous potential. Not only can creation myths help us imagine a more ecologically sound way of being in the world, it also gives a voice to the voiceless. Through the many already existing creation accounts (not to mention the possibilities of future accounts) women have a stronger voice and role, a care of the poor and of the earth is implicit as is harmony with nature and animals. Therefore, mythology is a field which addresses the concerns raised by all three theologians.

Ultimately, in essence, this chapter hopes to affirm that integration amongst these seemingly diverse fields have one key important element in common: they all emphasize and promote contemplation *of* the world that can ultimately lead to transformative action *in* the world. It is hoped that through this integrative lens, the 'understanding that seeks transformation' that Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr anticipate, can emerge and be advanced as a real and tangible possibility.

A. Theology, Spirituality and Philosophy: A First Step

5.7 Following a Multi-Disciplinary and Inter-Disciplinary Approach

Unequivocally, underlying the study of spirituality, is the search for meaning. In studying texts of history, science or theology we can receive an explanation of them but what of their meaning? Or what do they mean today? To ask these questions is to move into the realm of understanding. Questions of understanding lead to further explorations of the meaning of texts in today's world for individuals and communities. When a text is not only explained, but understood, movement towards the actualization of the text in the life of a person or community begins. Whilst "explanation provides information about the text,

understanding leads to transformation of a life, a new way of being-in-the-world."[4] It is precisely such issues of meaning, understanding and transformation which shape Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr's approach to Christian spirituality.

Such an approach requires engagement with an open – ended, phenomenological and hermeneutical method which is specifically the kind advocated by Schneiders. Spirituality, as a discipline, does not "seek to deduce from revelation what Christian spirituality must be . . . It seeks to understand it as it actually occurs, as it actually transforms its subject toward fullness of life in Christ, that is, toward self-transcending life integration within the Christian community of faith."[5] Understanding the phenomena of the Christian spiritual life as experience is the primary aim of the discipline of spirituality. Furthermore, this critical study must be ecumenical, interreligious and cross-cultural. The context within which spiritual experience is studied is therefore anthropologically inclusive. In addition, spirituality is a holistic discipline that explores the 'interior life.' The psychological, bodily, historical, social, political, aesthetic, intellectual and other dimensions are integral to that experience insofar as it is the subject matter of the discipline of spirituality. Seeking to understand experience as it actually occurs, in all of its uncertainty and messiness is one of the key insights that linked Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr. Christian spirituality is not concerned with Christian perfection but with trying to understand our life with God and our life with each other. To respond to contemporary experience of the natural world in this way means:

> attending carefully to the range of experiences described without moving too quickly to impose a theological meaning on them. It also means being prepared to engage in a rigorously interdisciplinary investigation of experience. To understand the spiritual significance of nature as it emerges in contemporary literary texts requires attention not only to spiritual language and symbols, but

[4]David B. Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 326.
[5]Sandra M. Schneiders I.H.M, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit:The study of Christian Spirituality*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005),6.

> also to rhetoric, ecology, geography, biology and any number of other cognate fields that shape a particular writer's understanding of nature. It may be that certain theological patterns will emerge from such an inquiry, but they must be allowed to emerge from the work itself, however unexpected or disturbing such patterns may turn out to be.[6]

In the quest for meaning, questioning will involve stepping into unknown and unfamiliar territory. Students of spirituality "learn to exist in the world of borderlands – between theory and practice, theology and other disciplines, the sacred and the secular, interiority and exteriority. Indeed, spirituality as reflection on "felt experience" and "lived practice" is necessarily a venture into the ambivalent[7] because of its fundamental horizon of otherness and transcendence. In this, as in so much else, "spirituality reminds theology of its task of crossing thresholds and questioning human absolutes."[8] Schneiders in particular has argued the case for the necessity of a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach to spirituality stating that this is the only way of dealing with the excessive fragmentation of the critical revolution. Such fragmentation is emblematic of post-modernism. However, a fitting and timely response is found through constructive postmodernism which attempts to understand the natural world as a living, value filled, meaningful whole.

5.8 Constructive Post-modernism

Constructive post-modernism is one of several forms of post-modernism. Three main points appear as crucial to constructive post-modernism. First, dualism is rejected. Human beings recognize their kinship to allthings. Second, individuals do not exist apart from one another. Everything is interrelated. Human beings are part of a complex web of existence.

[6]Douglas Burton-Christie, "The Weight of the World: The Heaviness of Nature in Spiritual Experience," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, 144.
[7]Graham Ward, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000), ix.
[8]Sheldrake, "Spirituality and Its Critical Method", 20.

And third, every actual occasion is of value.[9] The study of spirituality can develop in this context as "constructive postmodernism may be the intellectual climate in which spirituality as an academic discipline will finally discover breathable air."[10] Making the case for constructive postmodernism Schneiders argues that:

> Constructive postmodernism is willing to admit, even embrace, the superiority of holistic approaches to the human subject that reject the matter-spirit, nature-culture, subject-object dichotomies in favour of a definition of the human as embodied spirit. It recognizes the transcendent dimension of human experience as constitutive of personhood rather than illusory, and as susceptible of respectful investigation that can be validated even if not proved. It acknowledges the integration of the human into a universe that is not dead matter but living organism. It is comfortable with, even intrigued by, mystery. And its ideal of understanding is less control, prediction, and domination than mutuality and relationship in wholeness. Such constructive postmodernism is perhaps a context in which Christian spirituality as an academic discipline can find dialogue partners. The conversation will be humbler, no doubt, but perhaps more in tune with reality than either the totalizing discourse of medieval Christendom which knew it was the only game in town, or the inflated rhetoric of the Enlightenment "man" who was the exultant measure of all things, or yet the deconstructivist who makes and unmakes a tinker toy reality as a playful diversion until cosmic bedtime. For the immediate future, spirituality, in the context of the modern academy, will have to march to a different drummer. But the postmodern beat is getting louder. In a constructive postmodern context, spirituality as a self-implicating discipline will be no stranger.[11]

The key here is the ideal of mutuality and relationship in wholeness that lies behind the endeavour of an integration that seeks partners in dialogue. Spirituality as an academic discipline is intrinsically interdisciplinary because the very object of study, transformative

[9]David Griffin speaks of this constructive post-modern understanding of the natural world in terms of re-enchantment. Instead of a world of dead, passive, valueless, matter we inhabit a world of living, active, intrinsically valuable occasions. Instead of alienation from a merely objectiveworld, we experience kinship andparticipation in nature. This has two types of implications. First, it calls for a re-enchanted science, that is, a science that seeks to understand the world as living, active, and valuable. Second, it calls for rethinking the public policies that have been based on the modern worldview. This is especially important with respect to economics, since that has become the reigning discipline in the shaping of governmental policies. John B. Cobb Jr., "Constructive Postmodernism," **http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2220** accessed on 12/04/2017.

[10]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 21.

[11]Ibid.

Christian experience, is dynamic and multi-faceted. Every topic of study in this field requires that "several disciplines be used together in a reciprocally interactive and not merely juxtaposed way throughout the process of investigation."[12] For spirituality, the absolute certainties and precise knowledge which pertains more to the 'alleged' scientific method is not sought. Instead of technical observation, data extraction and clinically formulated conclusions, there exists currently the realization that "knowledge, even scientific knowledge, requires some element of interpretation opens up the possibility of multidisciplinary research and the hermeneutical approach."[13] This involves outlining a method for research that allows for the scope of human and divine life to be explored in a systematic and critical way. This essentially follows on from Schneiders argument that the focus on experience demands an interdisciplinary method. In effect, spirituality as a discipline does not have *a* method rather it has an approach "which is characteristically hermeneutical in that it seeks to "interpret the experience it studies in order to make it understandable and meaningful in the present without violating its historical reality."[14] Before assessing the fruits of such an approach, it is important to briefly outline some of the key points of a hermeneutical approach.

[12] Ibid.,7.

[13]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 320. Ongoing interpretation is indeed evident in the field of scientific knowledge. In the field of physics, some scientists readily admit that the idea of finding a grand, final theory of everything is not the certainty that Stephen Hawking may claim. Theoretical physicist and cosmologist, Professor Marcelo Gleiser argues thatcontemplating "a final theory is inconsistent with the very essence of physics, an empirical science based on the gradual collection of data. Because we don't have instruments capable of measuring all of Nature, we cannot ever be certain that we have a final theory. There'll always be room for surprises, as the history of physics has shown again and again. In fact, I find it quite pretentious to imagine that we humans can achieve such a thing. As I argue in my book [*The Island ofKnowledge: The Limits of Science andthe Search for Meaning*] it's much more realistic to take science as a self-correcting narrative where new theories spring from the cracks of old ones. There is no indication whatsoever that such modus operandi is close to completion due to the advent of a final theory." Marcelo Gleiser, "Hawking and God: An Intimate Relationship," *Cosmos and Culture*: *Commentary on Science and Culture*, **http://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2010/09/08/129736414/hawking-and-god-an-intimate-relationship** Accessed 07/05/2017.

[14]Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality:Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," 6-7.

5.9 The Hermeneutical Method

In outlining the parameters for the study of spirituality as a discipline, Schneiders draws on the idea of philosophical hermeneutics as one possible approach. Philosophical hermeneutics, through its evolution as a secular research method in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, considers experience as "sedimented in cultural traces and then subject to interpretation, which is paramount in the search for an ever-deepening understanding of life in the world."[15] This continual spiral of experience/interpretation/experience is similar to the method employed by the praxis model of doing theology as highlighted by Bevans.[16] The praxis model also gives ample room for all forms of expression of personal and cultural experience.It is in the embracing of the many and varied forms of experience that philosophical hermeneutics stands out as a wholly positive and inclusive approach. Paul Ricoeur expands on our notion of both experience and interpretation in the analysis that meaning can be found in texts in the broadest sense. Meaning about God, life, suffering and death can be found in *texts* which for Ricoeur means all cultural traces: literature, poetry, art, nature for example. Such *texts* reflect our own lives and narrative stories in that they enjoy a beginning, middle and end. Significantly though, our open-endedness means we are always in "the process of revising the text, the narrative of our lives. In this sense, we may construct several narratives about ourselves, told from several points of view."[17] Furthermore, *texts* are potentially revelatory not in the sense "that they are deposits of divinely inspired truths but because they faithfully enact a productive clash, and sometimes a fusion, between their world and the world of the reader."[18]The type of textual friction Ricouer speaks of fits suitably

[15]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 328.
[16] Stephen B. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 2013), 78.
[17] Paul Ricouer, Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), Chapter 20, Kindle.
[18] Ibid.

within spirituality as it follows once more a cyclical pattern: revelation, response, revelation. Poetry, art and scripture alike has the potential to invoke a moment of profound realization or revelation within each of us which causes us to act and such action in turn can inspire another. A *text* is first "a link in a communicative chain. To begin, one of life's experiences is brought to language. It becomes discourse . . . discourse consists of the fact that someone says something to someone *about something* . . . this issue of the text is the object of hermeneutics. It is neither behind the text as the presumed author nor in the text as its structure, but unfolded in front of it."[19] Understanding revelation in this way also opens up the possibility of a new meaning between *text* and interpreter, in a dynamic way, rather than revelation remaining *only* a static body of received doctrines under the control of a particular magisterium. The focus on experience, therefore, allows an inquiry into any and all aspects of human life, whether deemed relevant to the 'holy' or not. God cannot be contained within our current understandings of where and how God is active in the world. The hermeneutical method and "its focus on all experience – as opposed to appealing only to activities already seen as religious or theological in nature, allows us to remain open to God's mysterious unfolding of divine love in our world."[20] Understanding Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy of interdisciplinarity in particular is timely and important but is an expansive study in itself. However, Kenneth A. Reynhout has summarized five key implications of Ricoeur's philosophy of interdisciplinarity:

> (1) The recognition that interdisciplinary work involves acts of *interpretation* should encourage one to be critically self-reflective of the ways in which prejudices shape interpretations of other disciplines, especially if one suspects a prior understanding might be encouraging a mistranslation or faulty interpretation.
> (2) At the same time, we should embrace the fact that we each come to the interdisciplinary task with a *particular perspective* and stop pretending that we

[19]Ibid.
[20]Perrin, "Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality," 329.

> can construct an alternative, third discourse that can somehow rise above disciplinary differences or fund a perfect translation.
> (3) The contextual specificity of interdisciplinary work does not, however, licence an anything-goes relativism, because interpretation passes through explanation on the way towards new understanding. There will always be some degree of *objectivity* to support rational conversation aimed at resolving conflicts of interpretation or adjudicating between rival translations.
> (4) When engaging in interdisciplinary interpretation, we must be attentive to semantic subtleties between disciplinary contexts and work hard to *translate* them appropriately.
> (5) Because there is no algorithm for establishing a perfect translation, no way to anchor a perfect interpretation, the task of interdisciplinary hermeneutics is *never complete.* This means interdisciplinary dialogue is never finished, nor is the conversation with other interdisciplinarians who may critique and challenge us with alternative interpretations.[21]

The idea that dialogue is never truly finished and is open to critique and alternate interpretations may prove problematic for some in the field of theology. However, with respect to theology, this summary is important as it points out quite emphatically, that contextual interdisciplinarity does not equate with an anything goes relativism (as highlighted in point 3) which is one of the most oft - cited concerns when discussing the integration of theology and spirituality. Therefore, interdisciplinary work can be both risky and rewarding. It is risky because "one may seriously fumble a translation, or an interpretation may challenge some treasured aspect of one's self-understanding. The potential reward, however, comes from the hope for an appropriation of new self-understanding that liberates one towards greater meaning and significance."[22]

If scholarship in the 21st century is to become increasingly interdisciplinary, it follows that "Ricouer's hermeneutical philosophy of interdisciplinarity could prove to be a valuable resource on this new scholarly landscape."[23] Schneiders certainly espouses this view and maintains that while the spirituality scholar needs a functional knowledge of Christian

[21]Kenneth A. Reynhout, "Ricoeur and Interdisciplinarity" *Literature & Theology*, Vol 27. No. 2, June 2013, 147-156, here 155-156.
[22]Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

scriptures, being well versed with the content of scriptures and have a methodological competence in dealing with it, they need not be an exegete or an expert. Significantly though, a good case can be made for the inclusion of culture as a third source for Christian spirituality. Without the explicit inclusion of culture as a third source it could be argued that Christian spirituality may be isolated within the confines of sacred text and tradition and become further separated from actual life. Instead, it has been proposed that:

> if we include culture as a third source for Christian spirituality, then it follows that science influences Christian spirituality through its role in culture . . . this wondrous knowledge [Big Bang, evolution of life on earth, DNA for example] is the common inheritance of our age and the framework that shapes every dimension of culture from education to the media, from international space programs to modern medicine, communications and travel. Just as the prevailing cosmologies, anthropologies and natural histories shaped the culture in which scripture was formulated and historical Christianity unfolded, so too is contemporary culture contoured by the discoveries and horizons of science. In sum, science, transmitted through culture, impinges profusely on Christian spiritual experience.[24]

It is beyond any doubt that culture and science deeply impinges on every facet of our existence and therefore profoundly effects our understanding of theology and spirituality. Therefore, substantially more than a fragmented, partial account of reality is called for and that's why "we need an enriched vision of reality that consolidates and expands what science can tell us about reality"[25] If science becomes a natural partner in dialogue with theology and spirituality, the bigger picture of reality can begin to take shape and the fruits of their interaction can be grasped. It is to this interaction we now turn.

[24] Robert John Russell, "The Contributions of the Natural Sciences" in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders I.H.M.* Eds., Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert SNJM (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 122-123.
[25] Alister McGrath, *Enriching Our Vision of Reality: Theology and the Natural Sciencesin Dialogue* (London: SPCK,2016), Chapter 1, Kindle.

B. Theology, Spirituality and the Natural Sciences:

Natural Partners in Dialogue?

5.10 Introduction

Looking through any companion or guide to the history of theology and spirituality, one fact is clear: centuries can pass before era-defining change comes about. This is indeed clear in the movement of ages from the *Reformation Age* to the *Age of Reason* for example, developing from around the years 1450 to 1900. Since the 20th century however, it could be argued that era-defining shifts in thought and culture have happened, not over centuries, but from decade to decade. This is evidenced in the rapid movement from modernist to post-modernist to constructive post-modernist modes of thought which has occurred over mere decades in the 20th century. Markedly, such modes of thought in the 20th century were also defined or punctured by the grim reality of war. The shifts involved moving from WWI to WWII, from Vietnam to the War in Iraq, radically changed any previously held views on reality.[26] From our 21st century vantage point, it does not seem like a gross over simplification, nor is it a case of looking at the past through rose-tinted glasses, to say that the times really are a changing once more. From this perspective though, not only have the times changed absolutely, but the fact that they continue to do so at an ever-increasing rate, raises

[26] "The loss of faith, the groundlessness of value, the violence of war, and a nameless, faceless anxiety . . . at once individual and social . . . It is fair, and indeed important, to preserve memory of an alienation, an uncanny sense of moral bottomlessness, a political anxiety. There was so much to doubt: the foundations of religion and ethics, the integrity of government and 'selves and the survival of a redemptive culture."[26] Michael Levenson ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2007), 5.

questions. Mark Patrick Hederman deftly captures the challenges but also the opportunities ahead:

> The Catholic Church, as well as everyone else, must understand that the world was hit by a cultural tsunami in the 20th century. We must humbly begin to pick up the pieces and put them back together again. The 20th century was a crucible. The world which has emerged from this time-machine is changed, changed utterly. There is no going back; our only way is forward. Discovery of the world of the unconscious; full acknowledgement and acceptance of the dimension of femininity, both inside and outside of ourselves, with all this implies in terms of gender balance and sexual diversity; recognition of the immensity of scientific discovery; and humble apprenticeship in a laboratory of ever-expanding technology; these are some of the characteristics required for access, capability and survival in the new world we have inherited.[27]
>
> .

If the 20th century can indeed be described as a crucible, a severe trial, then the 21st century is undoubtedly pointing the way ahead to something new. However, it is the speed at which advances are happening that are without equal. In the last twenty years, the rise of technology and social media has undoubtedly affected, for better and for worse, all of the social spheres of politics, religion and science.[28] Advances in science have occurred so rapidly as to appear at times overwhelming. Physics, in particular, has undergone a seismic shift in its 'big picture' outlook in the last twenty years thanks to the discovery of 'dark energy.'[29]The

[27]Mark Patrick Hederman, "The Catholic Church has at most Ten Years to Adapt," *Irish Times*,16th May 2017, **http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-catholic-church-has-at-most-10-years-to-adapt-1.3084834** accessed 16th May 2017.

[28] Charles Taylor exhaustively examines the development in 'Western Christendom' of the aspects of modernity which we call 'secular.' He argues that Western modernity, "including its secularity, is the fruit of new inventions, newly constructed self-understandings and related practices," rather than the mere casting off of previously held knowledge or illusions. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Belknap Press, 2007), 22.

[29]Dark energy is the term used by scientists for that 'something' in the universe which they don't understand. The 'dark' is a reference to their ignorance of what it is rather than denoting colour. For roughly 80 years Einstein's theory of general relativity afforded physicists the luxury of believing that they more or less understood everything in their field. However, when dark energy appeared unexpectedly at the end of the 20th century scientists realised they knew much less than they thought they did. In 1999, Professor Saul Perlmutter pondered what was believed to be the only two options available in understanding the nature of the universe. The first option open was that the universe will expand forever but at an incredibly slow rate. The second option available stated that universe will eventually slow to a halt and collapse in on itself and come to an end.

realization that we live in a universe that is accelerating in its expansion shook the foundation of the physics world to the core.[30] However, its response illustrates an adaptability and openness to change on a big-picture scale that has a lot to offer theology and spirituality. The natural sciences and Christian theology could be seen as "two different ways of exploring a complex and wonderful reality. Sometimes they might be in tension with each other; more often they could enhance each other's grasp of reality and open up a deeper vision of life."[31] Theology, spirituality and science have much to offer each other. Both are currently learning to adapt to and deal with monumental changes in their understanding of big – picture questions. Therefore, rather than viewing science in a traditional and sceptical way as an attempt to reduce or desecrate all that is sacred, it is imperative that we see their integration as mutually beneficial and enlightening:

> In point of fact, however, something much more important is happening in intellectual history. These emerging developments reflect, and presage, a profound shift in the foundations of science – as momentous as anything that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (when natural philosophy and theology originally sundered). Once the magnitude of these changes is comprehended, the threat to what matters eases, and the way is opened to an urgent intellectual task: reconciling our scientific, intellectual and religious worldviews.[32]

Perlmutter applied the latest computer technology to the problem and measured the expansion of the universe through observation of supernovae. For the physics world the data that came back told the wrong story.The universe was not slowing down at all but is in fact speeding up in its expansion; we live in an accelerating universe. For physicists, this was such a paradigm shifting discovery that it was initially met with shock and disbelief. However, for Perlmutter it led to a Nobel Prize in physics.

[30]"The discovery that almost three-quarters of the present cosmic energy density is to be ascribed to an almost uniform dark energy component able to produce, via its negative isotropic pressure, the accelerated expansion of the Universe, represents the most severe crisis of contemporary physics . . . The visible material, to which physicists and astronomers paid all of their attention for millennia, appears now as a sort of minor "detail" in the cosmos." Sabino Mataresse, "Introduction" in *Dark Matter and Dark Energy: A Challenge for Modern Cosmology* Eds.,Sabino Mataresse, Monica Culpi, Vittorio Gorini and Ugo Moschella (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), xi. In fact, as it is currently understood, the sum of dark matter and dark energy's contribution to total cosmic energy is 96% which means that previous to this, what science had historically been observing amounts to only 4% of the available 'stuff'' which makes up the universe.

[31]Alister McGrath, *Enriching Our Vision of Reality*, Preface, Kindle.

[32]Brian Cantwell Smith, "God, approximately" in Eds., W Mark Richardson, Robert John Russell, Philip Clayton and Kirk Wetger-McNelly, *Science and the Spiritual Quest: New Essays by Leading Scientists*(London: Routledge, 2002), 207.

5.11 Conflicting Accounts?

For many scientists, a natural harmony already exists between their worldviews.[33] Encouragingly, astrophysicist Jocelyn Bell Burnell[34] is completely at ease weaving her writing, and indeed her life, around three major strands: science, spirituality and religion.

[33] Although Richard Dawkins may be chiefly responsible for the public perception that science and religion are engaged in an ongoing bitter war, fortunately, there are a number of academics working in the harmonised field of science *and* religion. While my focus is on some of the work by McGrath, Bell Burnell and Polkinghorne, the field of those involved in the science and faith dialogue is vast. For more see: Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969); *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1976); *Reality and Scientific Theology: Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979); *The Sciences and Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming Divine and Human* (London: SCM Press, 1993); *God and Science – A Quest for Credibility* (London: SCM Press, 1996), Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); "Ways of Relating Science and Theology." In Eds. R.J Russell, W.R. Stoeger and G.V. Coyne, *Physics, Philosophy and Theology* (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988); *Religion in an Age of Science* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990). In addition, British philosopher and theologian Keith Ward argues strongly for the compatibility of relationship between religion and science, none more impressive and timelier that in his book *God, Chance and Necessity* (London: Oneworld, 1996), where he argues that Dawkin's conclusion that there is no God is based more on a hatred of religion than it is on any scientific fact.

[34]Involved in the discovery of pulsars, Dean of Science at the University of Bath and Vice President of the Royal Astronomical Society, Jocelyn Bell Burnell's achievements and credentials are impressive. Born in Northern Ireland, it wasas a research student in the 1960s that Bell Burnell "noticed a mysterious pulsing signal in data from a radio telescope. In time, and after much painstaking observation on her part, this was revealed to be a new type of star: a pulsar. She was the first scientist ever to have detected one – but in the end the Nobel prize recognising the discovery went to her male PhD supervisor." Bell Burnell is one of those rare scientists who, instead of being driven by an ambition for titles or prizes, actively encourages inclusion and diversity in her field. Recently she donated her 2.3-million-pound prize money to help and enable students, who were underrepresented in physics (mainly women), to be able to study the subject. She notes that: "Increasing the diversity of physics could lead to all kinds of good things." https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/07/jocelyn-bell-burnell-scienctist-women-breakthrough-prize-physics-pulsars Accessed 07/10/2019. It is this ethos and her willingness to break down boundaries in order to explore new possibilities in her field which makes Burnell an inspiration for how we could imagine a new approach to spirituality:"Science is a quest for understanding. A search for truth seems to me to be full of pitfalls. We all have different understandings of what truth is, and we'll each believe, or we are in danger of each believing, that our truth is the one and only absolute truth, which is why I say it's full of pitfalls. I think a search for understanding is much more serviceable to humankind, and is a sufficiently ambitious goal of itself." https://bigthink.com/words-of-wisdom/jocelyn-bell-burnell-science-is-about-understanding-not-truth Accessed 10/10/2018. This also provides a good foundation for an approach to the discipline of spirituality. In addition to this, Burnell is also a Quaker and is one of only a few scientists who, I would argue, manage to weave the world of science with their spirituality almost seamlessly. For more see: Burnell, S. Jocelyn, *Broken for Life* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1989),Bell Burnell, Jocelyn, *A Quaker Astronomer Reflects: Can a Scientist also be Religious?* (Australia: Quakers, 2013).

Recalling being part of a British delegation that visited the churches in the former Soviet Union, Burnell shares a conversation she had with the Soviet Government Minister for Religious Affairs in 1986 that, even though light-hearted, leads to an important conclusion:

> At one point in that meeting he said to us "We know that God does not exist. We have sent satellites up into space and He is not there." One smiles at that, for the image of a white bearded God sitting on a cloud went out some time ago! Will future generations smile at our world picture? I suspect so, for it seems a while since it has changed, and it seems some evolution is due.[35]

An evolution is indeed due. One which builds on all of the gains made from current research in all fields available but especially in theology, spirituality and science. Before any building occurs, conflict at a foundational level needs to be resolved. However, scientists like Burnell would question whether there is any such conflict. There is "perceived to be a science and religion "problem" . . . What the problem is or is supposed to be, escapes me. Perhaps it is less obvious in Britain than it is in the United States."[36] While it may be argued that the perceived conflict between science and religion appears more pronounced and antagonistic in the United States, the effect of militant atheism, on the whole, cannot be ignored. Not every discussion of the relationship within theology, spirituality and science is as calm, sincere and open-minded as the ones Burnell and her colleagues engage in. However, Burnell does note that the perception of such problems and gaps "can be widened when scientists appear too confident, too arrogant, too abstract, or too detached."[37]

[35]Jocelyn Bell Burnell, "Science, Spirituality and Religion: An exploration of Bridges and Gaps," *Science and the Spiritual Quest,* 27.
[36]Ibid., 21.
[37] Ibid., 22.

The belief or perception that science and religion are in major conflict is in large part due to the polemical stance taken by militant atheism exemplified by Richard Dawkins.[38] His work *The God Delusion* actively encourages a strict contempt for all things religious or spiritual in their own right. He portrays religion as a deluded state with no basis in reality.[39] Faith requires no rational thought and as such is "evil precisely because it requires no justification, and brooks no argument."[40] Dawkins uses science, in particular evolutionary biology, as a weapon in his very public crusade against religion. Exploring the nature of this crusade, Alister McGrath explains:

> Science and religion are locked into a battle to the death. Only one can emerge victorious – and it must be science. The Dawkinsian view of reality is a mirror image of that found in some of the more exotic sections of American Fundamentalism. The late Henry Morris, a noted creationist, saw the world as absolutely polarized into two factions. The saints were the religious faithful. [ ] The evil empire consisted of atheist scientists. Morris offered an apocalyptic vision of this battle, seeing it as being cosmic in its significance. It was all about truth versus falsehood, good versus evil. And in the end, truth and good would triumph. Dawkins simply replicates this fundamentalist scenario, while inverting its frame of reference.[41]

Dawkins, in addition to creating a false battleground, also pits the natural sciences firmly on the side of atheism even though "they are nothing of the sort; yet Dawkins' crusading vigour has led to the growth of this alienating perception in many parts of North American

[38] There are other well-known voices who join Dawkins in this stance: writer Christopher Hitchens, philosopher Daniel Dennett and neuroscientist Sam Harris to name but a few. All take a divisive, disturbingly distorted and narrow view of religion, faith and God.
[39] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006). Deranged, deluded and deceived are just some of the words used by Dawkins to describe people of faith who are apparently immune to intellectual argument due to having faith. In this respect, Dawkins copies the style employed by Freud, who also presented his argument in a way that is intended to make it almost impossible to argue with given the fact that if one did one would be accused of suffering from 'mass delusion' as he condescendingly states, "Of course, no one who still shares such a delusion will ever recognize it as such." Sigmund Freud, *Civilizations and its Discontents* (London: Penguin Group, 2004), 23.
[40] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 308.
[41] Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion* (London: SPCK, 2007), 23.

conservative Protestantism."[42] As is common between two poles of extremism, with fundamental Christians on one side and militant atheists at the other, in the middle ground stand many who approach their research endeavours with more honesty, humility and openness. In fact, many scientists deem Dawkins' approach to such matters detrimental to the scientific endeavour. As soon as "someone asserts that his views on design in the universe, or lack thereof, is the only scientific position, this view becomes a dogma. This is bad science, and it is bad *for* science."[43] Indeed, more scientists argue that the theory of evolution does not *automatically* lead to an atheist worldview. The theory as it stands on its own certainly allows for an atheist interpretation. However, "nature is open to many legitimate interpretations. It can be interpreted in atheist, deist, theist and many other ways – but it does not demand to be interpreted in any of these."[44] Therefore, if Dawkins' approach to such matters is deemed limited and detrimental even to fellow scientists, what approaches or alternative conversations are evolving in relation to theology and spirituality among the scientific community?

Philip Clayton identifies four categories that best summarize the major approaches of scientists to the question of science and the spiritual quest. Firstly, for some scientists, 'spiritual' expresses solely their religious beliefs and the practices of their tradition. Secondly, another group of scientists give content to their spiritual quest through the ethical convictions they hold and the actions that follow. In this approach, "what we might broadly describe as 'moral questions' provide a significant entrée into the spiritual quest and even become defining moments of it."[45] However, it is in the third and fourth categories that a positive integration between science and spirituality is illustrated and future possibilities are

[42] Ibid., 25.
[43] George Sudarshan, "One Quest, One Knowledge," *Science and the Spiritual Quest*, 248.
[44]McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 23.
[45]Philip Clayton, "Some Concluding Reflections," *Science and the Spiritual Quest*, 255.

hinted at. In these categories and for these scientists there is not even the slightest sense of the conflict that Dawkins actively promotes. For in the third category:

> The bridge is constituted by philosophical questions. Thus [scientists] Andrei Linde and Geoffrey Chew believe that the nature of consciousness in the physical world is a key to understanding how there is still a place for spirituality after the massive success of the physical sciences. Brian Cantwell Smith explores the recent emergence of "intentional sciences" and speaks of a new "age of significance" in answering the question of spirituality. These thinkers draw no sharp distinction between the philosophical quest and the spiritual quest.
>
> A final group of thinkers comes to the question of spirituality from the level of experience – from their experience of doing science and from the experience of existing in the world. Thus George Sudarshan focuses on experiences such as "the openness of scientists in the moment of discovery." He bemoans the fact that so many scientists "avoid any talk about the role of their personal experience in their discoveries." In his tradition, Hinduism, "there is no time which is not a time for prayer, no place which is not sacred, no event in which God is not present and involved." Jocelyn Bell Burnell puts the point with equal clarity: "Quakerism appeals to many scientists, for the openness and search that this experiential attitude implies is similar to the experimental approach of the research scientist." . . . she sees "strong parallels between the way scientific understanding grows and the way one's knowledge of God grows." For these scientists, the key elements of the spiritual life are not religious doctrine and metaphysics, but rather an intense awareness of and attention to the richness of our daily experience in the world.[46]

What is immediately striking about this final category is the parallels it shares with liberation theology. For the above scientists, as for Sobrino and indeed Dorr, openness, experience and an exposure to reality are key themes shared. Arguably, both Sobrino and Dorr could be said to be advocates of the praxis model of doing theology which is similar in spirit and approach to the one discussed by Sudarshan and Bell. The praxis model "is a way of doing theology that is formed by knowledge at its most intense level – the level of reflective action. It is also

[46]Ibid., 255-256.

about discerning the meaning and contributing to the course of social change, and so it takes inspiration from neither classic texts nor classic behaviour but from present realities and future possibilities."[47] Intelligent, responsible action is espoused as the highest level of knowledge or insight within the praxis model. While, "for more traditional ways of doing theology, theology might be described as a process of "faith seeking understanding," the praxis model would say theology is a process of "faith seeking intelligent action."[48] Therefore it is evident, in many respects, that far more unites the natural sciences and theology and spirituality than divides.

5.12 Converging Accounts of Reality

Rather profoundly, John Polkinghorne[49] describes the fusion of the concerns of science and theology in terms of sacrament. The "interlocking character of the world of creation finds its fullest expression in the concept of sacrament, an outward and visible sign

[47]Stephen B. Bevans, *Model of Contextual Theology*, (New York: Orbis, 1992), 70.
[48]Ibid., 73.
[49]John Polkinghorne is an English theoretical physicist and also an Anglican priest. He was a professor of mathematical physics at the University of Cambridge before resigning in order to study for the priesthood. Polkinghorne writes on the relationship between science and religion and in 2002 was awarded the Templeton prize for exceptional contributions to life's spiritual dimension. Polkinghorne (and Jocelyn Bell Burnell) can be set apart from the field because his approach to his work is not first of all as a scientist with a later secondary involvement with theology. Rather, it is an approach where science and theology are considered in kinship and harmony with each other. More specifically though, like Burnell, emphasizes that "neither science nor theology can be pursued without a measure of intellectual daring, for neither is based on incontrovertible grounds of knowledge. Yet both can, I believe, lay claim to achieving a critical realism. Each demands commitment to a corrigible point of view as a necessary starting – point in the search for truth. Each has to be open to the way things are and must conform its mode of inquiry to the nature of the reality it encounters."John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1991), 1. It is the belief that science and theology's starting point is one which is open to being reformed or corrected that offers a template for the future study of spirituality. It too must operate from a departure point of exploration and adaptability to whatever it finds. It is this very openness to reality which is the thread binding Schneiders, Sobrino, Dorr, Teilhard, Burnell and Polkinghorne. See also: *One World*: *The Interaction of Science and Theology*(London: SPCK,1986),*Exploring Reality: The Intertwining of Science and Religion* (London: SPCK, 2005), Science *and Creation* (London: SPCK, 1988), *Science and Providence* (London: SPCK, 1989), *The Quantum World* (London: Longman, 1984), *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), *Science and Creation: The Search for Understanding* (London: SPCK,1988)

of an inward and spiritual grace."[50] Furthermore, "science discerns a world of rational order developing through the unfolding of process, a fusion of Greek and Hebrew insights. Theology declares that world in its scientific character to be an expression of the Word of God."[51] Exploring four points of interaction that theology and science share, it is Polkinghorne's third point of interaction in particular that is worth quoting:

> A third point of interaction between science and theology is provided by the mutual influence of their habits of thought. We have already noted that science and theology, whilst concerned with radically different kinds of subject matter, are not quite as distinct from each other in their procedures for seeking knowledge (epistemology) and in their problems concerning reality (ontology), as the popular caricature supposes. Each is corrigible having to relate theory to experience, and each is essentially concerned with entities whose unpicturable reality is more subtle than that of naïve objectivity. Moreover theology has to use analogy as one of its principal theoretical tools and in ages of broader culture than the one in which we live science has played an important part as an enlarger of the human imagination.[52]

Reflection and action, or indeed contemplation and being, are intertwined and need not be separate entities. This is true for science and theology. The motivation to question the nature of reality is as imperative for scientists as it is for Sobrino who argues for the integration of theology and spirituality on the grounds of an absolute honesty and fidelity to the real, which is exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is the way in which both disciplines question that is a key point of convergence.

Science and Theology seek to explore aspects of reality; a reality that demonstrates unity through diversity. We live "in one world and science and theology explore different aspects of it . . . the two disciplines have in common the fact that they both involve corrigible

[50]John Polkinghorne, *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1986), 98.
[51]Ibid.
[52]Ibid., 64.

attempts to understand experience. They are both concerned with exploring, and submitting to, the way things are."[53] While both certainly explore the way things are, I would add that both disciplines are also very concerned with exploring the possibilities of what could be. Imagination is central and the concept of 'the already and not yet' actually applies to both disciplines. However, both disciplines are concerned with the search for motivated belief and their understandings originate in interpreted experience. In the case of science, "the dimension of reality concerned is that of a physical world that we transcend and that can be put to the experimental test. In the case of theology, it is the reality of God who transcends us and who is met with awe and obedience. Once that distinction is understood, we can perceive the two disciplines to be intellectual cousins under the skin, despite the differences arising in their subject material."[54] Without doubt, science addresses important problems but it is a very specific, arguably limited, range of problems. Most of life's problems "lie outside the realm of science and reside in ourselves as subjective subjects. Spirituality is one of these areas . . . because science is *value neutral*, and religion *is value intensive*, religion is a necessity for man as a spiritual being. The inability of science to provide a basis for existence, purpose, moral value, and free will is what makes religion necessary."[55] In order to interact with one another, scientist-theologian Ian Barbour offered a classification of the possible interactions. The varieties of interaction include modes of conflict, independence, dialogue and integration. It is in the categories of dialogue and integration that are proving most fruitful to the endeavour. Polkinghorne has since redscribed these categories in terms of consonance and assimilation however I believe it is in a comparison of the terms integration and assimilation that best captures the sense of the future possibilities available to science and theology:

[53]John Polkinghorne, *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1986), 97.
[54]John Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 1998), 20.
[55] Allen Sandage, "Science and religion: Separate closets in the same house," *Science and the Spiritual Quest*, 61.

> [With regard to Integration] the aim here is more ambitious, for it encourages the unification of science and theology into a single discourse. An example would be the writings of Teilhard de Chardin which wove together biological evolution and spiritual development into a single account, culminating in Omega, which was envisaged as both the goal of physical process and the coming of the cosmic Christ.
>
> [With regard to assimilation] here there is an attempt to achieve the maximum possible conceptual merging of science and theology. Neither is absorbed totally by the other (that would be to turn back to the picture of conflict, with a clear winner) but they are brought closely together. An assimilationist would be tempted to use evolutionary ideas to provide a clue to understanding the status of Jesus, seen as representing a 'new emergent', further unfolding of human potentiality. [56]

The single unified enterprise, indeed exemplified by de Chardin, will be explored further on. Both of these terms however appear to allude to an evolution of a new worldview (the very kind Burnell spoke of). Spirituality could arguably be the best meeting ground for such an interaction to take place.

Real convergence would become possible as theology and science could come together to form a new whole in spirituality. Those who wish to keep a compartmentalized approach to the areas of theology and science would continue to do so. But for those with a keen sense of how the pieces can fit together, spirituality offers an exploratory option: the opportunity to unite an approach that endeavours to utilize all available forms of knowledge. The lived experience that Sobrino places so much emphasis on can be explored and the fidelity to reality that is a prerequisite for his spirituality, can be realized. Ultimately for Sobrino, "honesty about the real, then, is hope. But the hope it calls for is an active impulse, not the passive hope of mere expectation. It is a hope bent upon helping reality become what it seeks to be. This is love. Hope and love are but two sides of the same coin: the conviction,

[56]John Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology*,22.

put into practice, of the possibilities of reality."[57] As evidenced in this chapter, scientists are just as convinced about the possibilities of reality. The question then arises: if the fabric of human existence is capable of being described in a multi-layered fashion with varied approaches, are the differing accounts equally valid? I would argue exactly that. They are to "be taken with the same seriousness and taken together forming a total picture through their consonant and complimentary combination."[58] Those who take this view "are called holists – for them humanity is an integrated package of rich complexity that must be considered in its many-layered entirety."[59] The dawning of this new frontier is already taking place. Traditional concerns and questions of religious traditions "are being subsumed within the scientific juggernaut, independent of preference or protestation."[60] Some of these questions, such as the nature of consciousness and levels of evolution will be further explored. If science, as Cantwell Smith argues, is in for an almost total metaphysical overhaul then theology and spirituality must play a stronger and more responsible role in helping to steward the changes. Teilhard de Chardin is but one figure who has already taken on a metaphysical overhaul in his own areas of science, psychology and theology and it will help to retrieve the wisdom of such figures who have undertaken such a task and helped paved the way. The world that science is beginning to speak of "is far *less* like the mundane physical world classically set up in contradistinction to God, and far *more* like what the religious traditions, if I understand them, took God (or anyway, the ultimate realm of the sacred) to be. It is because of that fact, and only because of that fact, that we have a prayer of forging a sustaining intellectual vision."[61] All of the virtues that theology is so confident at speaking about involves an orientation up and out of oneself to embrace the world as a whole. The common application to truth and compassion and justice and generosity and beauty and grace

[57]Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation* (New York; Orbis Books, 1988), 19.
[58]Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology*, 50.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Brian Cantwell Smith, "God, approximately", 224.
[61] Ibid., 226.

realized in work of Sobrino and Dorr is now increasingly becoming the orientation which science is pointing toward. Cantwell Smith argues that "orientation is not to the world as *other,* since each of us is inexorably part of that world"[62] The possibilities that a merging of these visions opens up is intriguing. An integrated approach amongst theology, spirituality and science will have exciting implications. If science and theology understand the poor not as *other* and our world not as *other* but as reflections and extensions of ourselves then it can be said that they are most definitely natural partners in dialogue. Both receive reality as it is rather than imposing their own agenda on reality. Furthermore, upon their integration, the possibility of transformation within ourselves and for the world seems within our reach.

5.13 Transforming Action in the World

To assume responsibility for reality:

> expresses the fundamentally ethical nature of intelligence. Intelligence was not given to humanity so that it might evade its real obligations, but rather so that it might pick up and carry what things really are, and what they really demand. Sobrino interprets this to mean that intelligence is interrogated by reality and must respond to its demand.[63]

Also choosing to respond to the demands of reality are the many scientists who are religious and they pursue their inquiry into both fields with the same motivation. An openness exists that allows them to follow the research no matter where it may lead or what results it brings. Burnell explains that:

[62] Ibid.
[63] Robert Lasalle – Klein, *Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuria, Jon Sobrino and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America* (New York: Orbis Books, 2014), Chapter 5, Kindle.

> we are enjoined to speak of our own experience of the living God, and from our own experience of the living God. Quakerism appeals to many scientists, for the openness and search that this experiential attitude implies is similar to the experimental approach of the research scientist . . . scientists are trained to check their data, but having checked it, to respect its integrity, respect what it is telling them.[64]

Therefore, the demands of science and of liberation theology/spirituality are but two fields which both call for a rigorous interrogation of reality, carried out with the greatest respect and fidelity to that reality. Seeking to understand reality as it *is* and experience as it actually occurs, in all of its uncertainty and messiness is one of the key insights that linked Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr and furthermore it links science and spirituality. However, science is also a complimentary partner to the theological and spiritual endeavour as a whole. Regarding the 'whole of reality' the natural sciences have a "profound, if often implicit, effect on Christian spirituality by the way they shape our intuitive understanding and lived experience of ourselves in relation to the 'whole of reality.' . . . they offer analogies and mirrors and images of that truly ultimate horizon of divine life in which our Christian spirituality is constituted and through which it lives in hope."[65] An integration of theology and spirituality that embraces the many important discoveries of the natural sciences is a state of affairs not only called for but long overdue. The study of spirituality absolutely requires the contributions of theology and the natural sciences. In the fields of physics, biology and geology, to name but a few, important discoveries are being made at an overwhelming rate. If there is any doubt as to what an integration of theology, spirituality and the natural sciences has to offer Christianity in particular, a closer analysis of the theory[66] of evolution, as understood by Teilhard de Chardin, will help to illustrate this. In fact, exploring the theory of

[64]Burnell, "Science, Spirituality and Religion", 21.
[65]Robert John Russell, "The Contributions of the Natural Sciences", 123.
[66]*Theory* is being used here in the scientific sense. In science, a theory is the most logical explanation for how a natural phenomenon works, tested and supported by abundant evidence.

evolution has positive connotations for Christianity and demonstrates how an integration of this nature can lead Christians to transformative action in the world and as a consequence, communion with God. For to "exert constant pressure on the whole area of reality, is this not the supreme sign of faith in Being, and therefore of worship?"[67] To demonstrate what an integrated reality looks like, I would like at this juncture to look briefly look at certain aspects of the work of French Jesuit scientist and theologian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.[68]

[67] Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy* (London: Collins, 1969), 38.

[68]Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a French Jesuit priest and also a palaeontologist and geologist. In all of the fields in which he worked, one purpose united his endeavours: to understand evolution and faith. I would argue Teilhard epitomizes Sobrino's principle of fidelity to the real as even when faced with the brutality of war, Teilhard's vision only grew stronger and he gained clarity from his experience on the battle field. Teilhard served heroically in World War I, winning the Croix de Guerre and the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur medals. However, it was in "the midst of this slaughter and crippling of millions of men, [that] Teilhard's faith was shaken. But his insight into the evolving flow of history helped him to see, even in the midst of human tragedy, a sense of communion with the world and communion with God united in the crucified Christ . . .Through his theological studies and continued studies in the natural sciences, Teilhard sought to create intellectual space in which the physical and spiritual world could be appreciated for their unique contribution to human life . . . In his thinking and writing Teilhard studied the intimate relationship between the evolutionary development of the material and the spiritual world, leading him to celebrate the sacredness of matter infused with the Divine presence."
https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-voices/20th-century-ignatian-voices/pierre-teilhard-de-chardin-sj
Accessed 20/10/2018. Even in his time, Teilhard's attempts to integrate what science was suggesting about evolution with the truths of his faith led to a ban on teaching and publishing anything. Furthermore, Teilhard's impulse to understand the evolutionary relationship of matter *and* spirit, is arguably still a revolutionary idea today given that so much of the debate centres around *only* the evolution of matter. Teilhard's approach was groundbreaking because "it was not a simple reconciliation of science and faith; it was integrating, creating a single, wholistic vision because the past danger was having a radical separation of the two . . . Before Teilhard, the Church had been looking at how to defend God, the creator, against evolution, and now here was a Jesuit who saw evolution in God's plan . . . [Moreover] Teilhard's overall vision greatly influenced the council fathers in their document, *Gaudium et Spes*, and every recent pope, starting with Blessed Paul VI, has favorably cited from the priest's works. Pope Francis even gave him a footnote in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, incorporating his sense of a mysterious, beautiful unfolding of the world where the ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God."Msgr. Melchor Sanchez de Toca, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, and an expert in the relationship between science and faithhttps://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/05/10/inquiry-or-inquisition-looking-again-at-father-teilhard-de-chardin/ Accessed 19/10/2018. In his desire to see the world as a unity, Teilhard was compelled to ask the following question, "How can the two realms of our experience, those of the outer and inner world, be brought to unity within the framework of an evolutionary universe?" Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, 11. It is questions such as these and the fact that Teilhard did not only speculate as to the answers through philosophy but sought actual results from working scientific hypotheses that make him so unique.The idea that evolution on every level is part of God's plan, is one that cannot be ignored any longer. It is an idea that is coming of age now as science is capable of expressing our interconnectedness more effectively through the language of quantum physics. Through this field, Teilhard's hypotheses on energy, consciousness and the noosphere can be developed and as such, theology can understand and learn more about God and our place in the universe from the fruits of this endeavour. For more see: Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959); *TheDivine Milieu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); *Hymn of the Universe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); *Human Energy* (London: Collins, 1969).

5.14 A New Kind of Spirituality

Realizing that "we needed a radically new kind of spirituality – an understanding of God and creation and our part in it – that could welcome and easily integrate all these important scientific facts of our existence into itself"[69], Teilhard's spirituality is unique, innovative and radical and merits a short excerpt:

> *The age of nations has passed. Now, unless we wish to perish we must shake off our old prejudices and build the earth*. I know the kind of smiles that are exchanged when someone dares to suggest that man is confronted in the immediate future with the possibility of something new and greater than himself: the smile of the sceptic and the dilettante, the scribe and the pharisee. The more scientifically I regard the world, *the less can I see any possible biological future for it except the active conscious of its unity*. Life cannot henceforth advance on our planet (and *nothing* will prevent its advancing – not even its inner servitudes) except by breaking down the partitions which still divide human activity and entrusting itself unhesitatingly to faith in the future.
>
> But let there be no mistake. He who wishes to share in this spirit must die and be reborn, to himself and to others. To reach this higher plane of humanity, he must not only reflect and see a particular situation intellectually, but make a complete change in his fundamental way of valuation and action. In him, *a new plane* (individual, social and religious) *must eliminate another*. This entails inner tortures and persecutions. *The earth will only become conscious of itself through the crisis of conversion.*[70]

In opposition to the treatment of knowledge gained from scientific discoveries as unimportant or irrelevant to our spiritual lives, what is sought and achieved here in is an active integration of scientific facts into his spirituality. Teilhard did not put scientific facts aside because for him, "everything we learn about creation is something we are learning about the body of Christ – the Christ that lives today, the Christ who is as big as the cosmos."[71] Similar to the

[69]Louis M. Savary, *Teilhard de Chardin - The Divine Milieu Explained: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (New Jersey: Mahwah, 2007), Foreword, Kindle.
[70] Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, 37-38.
[71] Ibid.

writings of St. Paul, when Teilhard discusses Christ it is mostly to the risen Christ that he refers. For him, "Christ today is not just Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead, but rather a huge, continually evolving Being as big as the universe. In this colossal almost unimaginable Being each of us lives and develops in consciousness, like living cells in a huge organism."[72] This Christ has been referred to as the Total Christ, the Whole Christ, the Universal or Cosmic Christ or the Mystical Body of Christ. It is in this sense that Christ is understood as evolving. It is his belief that in integrating the discoveries of science with scripture, we can understand the creative transformation at work in the world; a transformation that could create the world anew. This is the guiding belief underpinning his spirituality. Therefore, even though it is beyond the purpose and scope of this chapter to explore the body of Teilhard's work in depth, it is possible to highlight two key themes central to his work. By briefly considering Teilhard's description of the nature of evolution and the grander account of the Body of Christ we can begin to understand this radically new kind of spirituality.

5.15 An Evolving Spirituality; An Evolving Body of Christ

Concerning the evolution of spirituality, Teilhard himself was "in search of a force of integration, a spirituality that could be related to all levels of our experience."[73] Similar to Sobrino and other liberation theologians, Teilhard's spirituality is one that seeks to better understand God *and* the world and does not view them in an either/or fashion. This is in complete contrast to many writers who promote a retreat from the world in matters of spirituality and as such it is a spirituality which passionately loves God and the world and in fact views the entire cosmos as an extension of God. In actuality, when Teilhard talks about Christ he is envisioning a grand Being connected to the body of the entire universe

[72] Louis M. Savary, *Teilhard*, Foreword, Kindle.
[73] Ursula King, *The Spirit of One Earth: Reflections on Teilhard de Chardin and Global Spirituality* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 27.

encompassed in divine love. As Sobrino, Schneiders and Dorr have all emphatically argued, spirituality is not a static concept but rather is to be considered a dynamic process which seeks transformation. Therefore, it could be argued that just as our material world grows and moves forward in an evolutionary manner, so too, our spiritual selves evolve too. Drawing on his scientific knowledge of the pervasiveness at every level of being of the evolutionary process, Teilhard argues that the evolutionary process also applies to the Total Christ. Since the Total Christ is not pure spirit but is developing itself in a material universe, it follows that the Total Christ is constantly changing along with the universe in its evolutionary process. Inspired by a cosmic sense of the world which seeks to explore the whole world beyond all frontiers, this "cosmic Christ is now related to the whole world as we experience it today – the world which science makes us see in its infinite complexity, the world of nature and outer space, the world of many cultures, diverse races, and religions."[74]

The Total Christ, in which we belong and participate as members, is the most important reality. In the same way that cells live and grow in our bodies, so our bodies live and grow in the Body of Christ. It is a reality which evolves and matures in complexity and consciousness. At "each successive moment that Christ Body is the culmination and embodiment of what has gone on before and what is happening now – and it's still developing. It is a body that has a unique history yet continues to evolve."[75] Teilhard explains that:

> the Body of Christ must be understood boldly, as it was seen and loved by St. John, St. Paul, and the Fathers. It forms in nature a world which is new, an organism moving and alive in which we are all united physically, biologically . . . It is first by the Incarnation and next by the Eucharist that [Christ] organizes us for Himself and imposes Himself upon us Although He has come above all for souls, uniquely for souls, He could not join them together and bring them

[74] Ibid., 20.
[75] Lavery, *Teilhard*, "In Eo Vivimus", Kindle.

> life without assuming and animating along with them all the rest of the world. By His Incarnation He inserted Himself not just into humanity but into the universe which supports humanity, and He did so not simply as another connected element, but with the dignity and function of a directing principle, of a Center toward which everything converges in harmony and in love.[76]

Such a view proposes that at every moment we are in God's presence and that God is both transcendent and immanent; we are always living and moving within the divine milieu.[77] This view can be described as pan*en*theist, as opposed to pantheist, as it affirms that everything has its own existence but is living in God as in a milieu. This is in fact similar to a sentiment expressed by Dorr as one way of viewing the belief behind many modern ecological movements. The Body of Christ is living and growing and moves towards its fulfilment and completion as a body, not only spiritual but as a physical body. If we live, move and have our being in the Body of Christ, this implies that all action taken in the world has the potential to affect the health and development of the Body of Christ. Just as the cells in our individual bodies affect our personal growth, every single cell that makes up the Body of Christ affects the collective growth.

Teilhard the scientist "had come to realize that we as humans could not – as much as we might like to believe we could – separate ourselves from our earth, the oceans, the atmosphere, the animals, plants and other living creatures. Science assures us that everything on this planet contributes to make the earth a single organism."[78] However, it is not only our planet that must be a part of the Body of Christ. Our entire solar system is also a part of the Total Christ. So "for its truest fulfilment, the Total Christ must be at least as large as the

[76] Christopher F. Mooney S.J. "The Body of Christ in the Writings of Teilhard de Chardin" in *Theological Studies*,12/1964, Volume 25, Issue4, PP 576 -610, here, 579.**http://cdn.theologicalstudies.net/25/25.4/25.4.2.pdf** Accessed 20/10/2018. Mooney notes that this is taken from Teilhard's unpublished work *La Vie Cosmique* (1916).

[77] The French word *milieu* has no exact English equivalent, so the translators have simply kept the French word in the text wherever it occurs. *Milieu* encompasses both our English words "atmosphere" and "environment" yet for Teilhard it connotes still something more that he tries to capture in images of light, inner luminosity, or fire.

[78] Lavery, *Teilhard*, "In Eo Vivimus", Kindle.

entire universe. We cannot eliminate or reject any part of the universe from the divine milieu or place it outside the eternal loving embrace of God."[79] This has serious implications for ecology which will be explored later. However, it also implies that what we consider viable to be incorporated within Christian spirituality has to be seriously revised and expanded.

> The world can no more have two summits than a circumference can have two centers. This sentence from The Divine Milieu is echoed in 1933: "Concretely speaking, there is only a single process of synthesis going on from the top to the bottom of the universe," and "no element or movement could exist at any stage of the world outside of the 'informing' action of the principal Center of everything." Ten years later there is the same insistence: "You can turn things around again and again as you like, but the universe cannot have two heads—it cannot be 'bicephalous'.... A Christic Center for the universe fixed by theology, a cosmic center postulated by anthropogenesis: in the end these two foci necessarily coincide (or at least overlap) in the historical order in which we find ourselves. Christ would not be the sole moving force, the unique outcome for the universe, if the universe in some way, even at a lower level, could gather itself together independently of Him.[80]

The radical and revolutionary insight that Teilhard proposes is that the Total Christ is not a fixed concept but a reality that is being revealed to us and one which we participate in through an evolutionary process. If taken on board, the integration of theology, spirituality and the natural sciences becomes imperative and in actual fact, a matter of urgency. A larger study would have been able to incorporate Teilhard's discussion of the Omega point. However, to briefly summarize, his belief is that "from the dawn of creation, the universe has been following a certain upward trajectory. The universe's evolutionary direction, Teilhard discovered, is governed by a law of attraction-connection-complexity-consciousness. Because that same law also governs the development of the Total Christ, this law lies at the heart of Teilhardian spirituality. The task of spirituality for the twenty-first century is to learn how to put that law into practice."[81]

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[79] Ibid.
[80] Christopher F. Mooney S.J., "The Body of Christ", 584.
[81] Lavery, *Teilhard*, "In Eo Vivimus", Kindle.

Spirituality has been described by Sobrino, Schneiders and Dorr as being both a personal and collective enterprise. However, if spirituality is to evolve in a cross-cultural context then the contemporary political, social, cultural and scientific realities of the entire globe have to be understood. A pluralistic perspective implies that a truly global spirituality is called for: "when we speak of global spirituality, we think of a dimension that cuts across the present, extends back into the deep past, and reaches out toward the future to feed and strengthen the human spirit on its journey through time and space."[82] A global spirituality will motivate and inspire social transformation on a grand scale and on multiple levels. We "have reached a decisive point in human evolution, at which the only way forward is in the direction of a common passion, a 'conspiration' . . . either we must doubt the value of everything around us, or we must utterly believe in the possibility, and I should now add in the inevitable consequences, of universal love."[83] Universal love can only be realized by merging all scientific knowledge with a new spirit. Teilhard redefines the endeavour as involving a new humanism, which discovers a sense of transcendence beyond this world and a renewed Christian faith and mysticism which incorporates the values of this world in its own vision of faith. Therefore, theology and the natural sciences have a lot of reflective work to do to move forward or evolve in their own fields. Furthermore, the development of consciousness, of which present studies are still in their infancy in theology and science, is being explored. Consciousness is not merely a mental occurrence it "affects all aspects of human life – feeling, emotion, imagination and action. It is what Teilhard called the emergence and rise of the noosphere, of a global layer of thought and interaction. As such it has collective and individual, outward and inward aspects."[84] Teilhard's capacity to imagine such a global network of consciousness and to imagine the Total Christ, not simply as a historical person, but as *the* evolving force present in the universe encapsulating every fibre

[82] Ursula King, *The Spirit of One Earth*, 3.
[83] Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, 153.
[84] Ibid., 9

of that universe's being was truly visionary. His vision, rather than being formulated by what went before, was informed anew by what the evidence showed. In this respect, Teilhard shares a connection with Sobrino and his concept of 'fidelity to the real'. However, one only has to look at another Jesuit theologian/scientist to see a true kindred spirit of Teilhard's. Indeed, through his encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* and in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis begins to harness the ideas of his fellow scientist/theologian Teilhard and as such tries to turn the vision of a truly connected universe into a reality we can all contribute to. In taking the first tentative steps towards this, Francis discusses a network of interacting individual and collective aspects which can be acted on and from this I would argue a further bolder step may be taken in the form of re-imagining the myths we tell about ourselves and our universe. All of which has the power to awaken a different type of consciousness which can further inspire imagination and action.

C. A Different Story, A Different Vision: The Integration of Theology, Spirituality and Mythology.

5.16 Introduction

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), with insistence on structural change, has much in common with the themes of liberation theology. Highlighting the similarity, Dorr notes "that making an option for the poor is not a one-way process.

Francis maintains that we Christians 'need to let ourselves be evangelized by them."[85] This is at the very heart of Sobrino's own message of mercy and fidelity to the real:

> In today's world, Sobrino contends, this honesty cannot but become an engagement of reality guided by compassion. This is because letting reality be what it is without the veil of ideology and lies by which we suppress its truth means exposing ourselves to suffering on a massive scale, systematically produced, maintained, covered over, and tolerated. Not to be moved to compassion for those who suffer so needlessly means that one has not really confronted oneself with this reality in a human way.[86]

However, more pertinent, is the fact that Francis also stresses the need for an "attitudinal and cultural transformation alongside a change in political and economic structures."[87] In fact, I would contend that the attitudinal and cultural transformation must come first before a structural change can really begin or flourish as "changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual." (EG #189). To enable a change in attitudes, Francis seeks to promote a culture of solidarity and encounter. During his address to civil authorities in Tirana, Albania, [Francis] again linked human solidarity with respect for creation: "alongside the globalization of the markets there must also be a corresponding globalization of solidarity; together with economic growth there must be respect for creation,"[88] This is a recognition and a rebuttal of the popular notion that economic growth is a linear, never-ending and victim-less phenomenon: "So often we are driven by greed and by the arrogance of dominion, possession, manipulation and exploitation; we do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift which we must care for and set at the

[85]Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth* (Maryknoll; Orbis Books, 2016), 395.
[86] J.Matthew Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor" inEd. Stephen J. Pope *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology*(Maryknoll; Orbis, 2008), 66.
[87]Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth* (Maryknoll; Orbis Books, 2016), 395.
[88]Ibid., 412.

service of our brothers and sisters, including future generations." (Peace Message 2014 #9).[89] Dorr also stresses that Francis has "pointed out that an economic system which has as its centre the god of money makes it also necessary to plunder nature . . . climate change, loss of biodiversity, and deforestation are already having the catastrophic effects . . . and it is the poor people who live in precarious dwellings near coasts, or who are so economically vulnerable, you are the ones who lose everything when a disaster strikes."[90] Climate change has implications for the whole planet. Of course, unsurprisingly, whether in Ireland, in Europe or across the world, those who will be most seriously affected are once again the poor, the elderly and the vulnerable. A recent study in *The Lancet* notes that:

> certain social classes could be more distressed by weather-related hazards than others. In particular, the most vulnerable will be elderly people and those with diseases (who have reduced physiological and behavioural capacity for thermoregulation), as well as the poor (who have less access to technological means for private disaster stress mitigation than do rich people—eg, through air conditioning, thermal insulation, or floodproofing of dwellings). Consequently, population ageing in Europe, which emerges as a major demographic trend for the coming decades, could further increase the effect on human beings of weather-related hazards.[91]

[89] Message of His Holiness Francis for the Celebration of The WorldDayof Peace, 1 January 2014http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xlvii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html

[90]Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 414.

[91]Giovanni Forzieri, Alessandro Cesscati, Filipe Batista e Silva, Luc Feyen, "Increasing risk over time of weather-related hazards to the European population: a data-driven prognostic study", in *Lancet Planet Health*2017 http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(17)30082-7/fulltext?elsca1=tlpr Accessed: 7 August 2017. The striking growth in weather-related fatalities projected in this study reflects the increase of the European population exposed to intense hazards, which will probably result in an increase in other, non-lethal effects on human beings. Direct injuries from flooding, windstorms, and wildfires could rise in the areas hit by the hazard. Because of more frequent and intense droughts (a longer lasting and spatially dispersed hazard) in the future than at present, the number of people faced with reduced water resources for food production, domestic use, and other basic needs for human wellbeing could grow to 138 million people (uncertainty range 32 million to 322 million) per year by 2071–100, or more than 27 times the number during the reference period (5 million). With 211 million Europeans (83 million to 379 million) annually exposed to heatwaves by 2071–100—compared with the 5 million during the reference period —cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, and respiratory diseases might amplify.

To bring health back to ourselves and to the planet, (or what Teilhard called the 'total body of Christ'), we have to contemplate a new spirituality which first and foremost calls for a profound inner conversion. Realising this, what Pope Francis has called for is a complete turnaround in our attitude concerning our relationship with one another. For in the encyclical *Laudato Si*': *On Care for Our Common Home* (LS), particularly through Chapter Two – *The Gospel of Creation*, Pope Francis makes quite clear that he rejects the dominion theory that gave man complete dominance over creation:"we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures" (LS #67). Instead Francis, reflecting on Genesis 2:15, offers a different approach, one which sees us as stewards and protectors of the earth, who 'till and keep' the garden of the world:

> "Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. "The earth is the Lord's" (*Ps* 24:1); to him belongs "the earth with all that is within it" (*Dt* 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership (LS #67).

If any claim to rightful ownership of the earth is to be rejected, then Francis is correct in his assessment that, at times, Genesis has been viewed through a distorted lens. However, Francis recognises there is the potential to tell a different story as "these ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others" (LS #70). This interconnectedness comes with a greater sense of responsibility, not only for the earth but especially for the poor. In company with Sobrino, Dorr and Teilhard de Chardin, Francis

argues that the poor and the earth cannot be treated separately, for "we can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality: Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism. Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage" (LS #92). Furthermore, should this not prove to be motivation enough to care for our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, Francis astutely states that:

> The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others. That is why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment "Thou shall not kill" means when "twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive" (LS #95).

This is a firm indictment of the current capitalist and consumerist culture which highlights a key insight with respect to caring for our common home: namely that we must change our relationship with one another first before any meaningful change can occur on an ecological front.

Realising the profound inner conversion that must take place within us, Francis argues that:

> there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology . . . Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued . . . If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we

> cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships (LS #118-119).

This is the sense of solidarity and commitment in relationship and friendship with one another that unites the work of Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr. First, an inner conversion must take place; only then can we begin to act from a place of love and then, in true freedom, share that unconditional love in relationship with one another. Pope Francis acknowledges this when he states that:

> We understand better the importance and meaning of each creature if we contemplate it within the entirety of God's plan. As the Catechism teaches: God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other. (LS # 86).

Put simply "Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society"(LS#91). When we truly see our brothers and sisters through this lens, there will be a quite natural inclination to heal our common home. To advance this proposition more fully however, it is imperative to change the stories which we tell about ourselves and about our place in the world. This is in fact what many theologians, quantum physicists, poets and writers of all kinds aim to achieve in their work. While Pope Francis has certainly given momentum to this endeavour, in terms of spirituality, I believe that recovering what it means to be fully human in the world can best be achieved by way of reclaiming the myths inherent in our tradition and embracing those found outside of it.

5.17 Regaining Meaning: Myths and Imagination

The sense of the sacred is a key aspect which clearly differentiates myth from other forms of narrative. Only by interacting with the divine realm, deemed to be all around us, can our full potential be achieved. In fact, the mythology of most cultures speaks of this divine realm which exists alongside our own world. Myth often provides the foundational narratives for communities, helping to codify their beliefs and morals. Of most importance, myth helps us to make sense of the world and to understand our place in it. One of the key functions of myth therefore is to educate and influence. Taking into consideration scientific, psychological and religious theories, theologian Don Cupitt defines myth:

> So we may say that myth is typically a traditional sacred story of anonymous authorship and archetypal or universal significance which is recounted in a certain community and is often linked with a ritual; that it tells of the deeds of superhuman beings such as gods, demigods, heroes, spirits or ghosts; that it is set outside historical time in primal or eschatological [i.e. last, ultimate] time or in the supernatural world, or may deal with comings and goings between the supernatural world and the world of human history . . . the work of myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide action or to legitimate. We can add that myth-making is evidently a primal and universal function of the human mind as it seeks a more-or-less unified vision of the cosmic order, the social order, and the meaning of the individual's life. Both for society at large and for the individual, this story-generating function seems irreplaceable. The individual finds meaning in his life by making of his life a story set within a larger social and cosmic story.[92]

Psychological approaches hold that myths help to create awareness concerning our personal identity. However, in addition to this, myths have the capacity to reveal to us new goals and possibilities that reflect universal processes such as transformation and growth. Carl Gustav Jung believed that there was a personal as well as a deeper, collective unconscious which is

[92] Don Cupitt,*The World to Come* (London: Trinity Press, 1982), 8.

universal and refers to the contents of this collective unconscious as 'archetypes.' Archetypes are inherited potentials, actualised when they enter our consciousness as images and manifest in our behaviour as we interact with the outside world. In other words, they are autonomous unconscious forms which are transformed once they enter consciousness and are given particular expression by individuals. To better understand the implications of the Jungian notion that archetypes, or psyche, have an independent existence, it's useful to understand where it originally came from.

Generally, in Western civilisation we consider what is 'imaginal' to be lacking in concrete reality. But Henry Corbin, a theologian and philosopher who explored Islamic Sufi traditions, used the term *mundus imaginalis* to describe a particular order of reality which is referred to in ancient Sufi texts. These texts also tell us that, between the empirical/physical world and the world of abstract intellect, lies another world: the world of the image, the *mundus imaginalis*; a world that is just as real. In other words, the literal, material reality we take as real is in fact totally enveloped by a spiritual reality which influences (or perhaps even determines) it. In a sense, the *mundus imaginalis* is comparable to (or an aspect of) the *animamundi*, the world soul. Furthermore, comparisons can be made between this and Teilhard's Omega point. The act of imagining then becomes an act of reconnection. However, it must be noted that for these writers, imagination is not to be confused with the imaginary or fantasy or something that is unreal but that rather the *mundus imaginalis* maintains a very real presence. Corbin describes this insightfully:

> As a world beyond the empirical control of our sciences it is a supersensible world. It is only perceptible by imaginative perception and the events taking place there can be lived only by imaginative or imaginative consciousness . . . the active imagination guides, anticipates, moulds sense perception, that is why it transmutes sensory data into symbols. The Burning Bush is only a brushwood fire if it is merely perceived by the sensory organs. In order that

> Moses may perceive the Burning Bush and hear the Voice calling him… an organ of trans-sensory perception is needed.[93]

This type of active imagination then is "not a theory but an invitation to vision."[94] It is the ability and desire to imagine new ways of being in the world. Only if we can envision the world differently will we be able to act in it differently. No longer can we continue to ignore the plight of the poor and of the earth which is in such distress. First of all, we have to see that the poor and the earth are not separate from us but that the planet and all biological life on it function together as a whole and damage to one part of it is damage to the whole.For "the entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God" (LS #84). There is an argument to be made for actively seeking out ecological archetypes, that is, archetypes which help us imagine new ways of living in balance and harmony with the rest of the natural world, enabling us to turn away from the alienating effects of the wasteland we have created.In particular, this type of new interconnected imagination is at the centre of where the integration of theology and spirituality meet for Irish theologian Donal Dorr. It is my intention to show that the integration of theology and mythology into spirituality will result in the more balanced and holistic approach to ecological issues that Dorr advocates. But not only that, the proposed integration could mean a more mature spirituality can be enjoyed which leads us to a fuller understanding of what it means to be Christian in today's world. In order to demonstrate this, I will focus on the three main areas of mythology I believe are conducive to an ecologically aware, mature spirituality: Gnostic, Hindu and Celtic mythology with particular attention paid to their respective accounts of creation.

[93]Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton: Mythos, 1981), 80.
[94] Ibid.,93.

5.18 A Creative Response: Integrating Theology, Spirituality and Mythology

> Oh what a catastrophe, what a maiming of love when it was made a personal, merely personal feeling, taken away from the rising and setting of the sun, and cut off from the magic connection of the solstice and the equinox. This is what is the matter with us, we are bleeding at the roots, because we are cut off from the earth and sun and stars, and love is a grinning mockery, because, poor blossom, we plucked it from its stem on the tree of life, and expected it to keep on blooming in our civilized vase on the table.[95]

Most fundamental in helping to foster an attitude of care for the earth is in a certain way of 'being.' It is a matter of having an "ongoing awareness that we are part of the great web of life, of experiencing ourselves as linked to the animals and the plants."[96] Not only are we linked to the animals and plants but we are inextricably linked to the wider cosmos. It is important to appreciate this not just in our heads but in a bodily manner. We are an "integral part of the wider cosmos – the mountains, the rivers, the seas, the stars and the galaxies . . . we humans, together with the animals, the plants, the world, the planets and the stars are all elements of a single fabric composed of waves and atoms and sub -atomic particles – all parts of one cosmos."[97] This new way of 'being' with a central emphasis on care for the poor and the earth is at the heart of Dorr's unique way of integrating theology and spirituality.

Unquestionably, the earth is in a state of deep distress. We live mostly in ways that are displaced from the land, often from other people, and from the non-humans around us. And yet from time to time we may catch glimpses of a different way of being in the world; one that holds nature as truly sacred and embraces its wildness and mystery. We came to lose

[95] D. H. Lawrence, *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* ed. Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), iv.
[96] Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Heart's Deepest Desires*, 99.
[97] Ibid.

our sense of belonging to this world in part due to the dualistic worldview which emerged out of Western philosophy. This has led us to believe that not only are we separate from nature but that we are somehow above it. From this philosophical tradition, reason and intellect have become the unique and privileged domain of humans, superior to everything which is physical, emotional, instinctual and wild. All that is physical, emotional, instinctual and wild must be overcome by the power of reason and intellect. Yet through this superior stance, that is often the child of reason of pure reason and intellect, we are destroying our very own home. Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, storms, overheating and drought are all 'signs of the times' that our ecosystem, our home is approaching a tipping point of devastating consequence and irreversible change.

In order to tackle climate change, the Church should be at the forefront or the frontier, "If church leaders wish to genuinely tackle the problem of climate change, they need to seek accurate as well as independent science on ecological issues. It is imperative that they are sure that the research does not come from the perspective of those who have vested interests or are poised to make money from one outcome over another."[98] Unfortunately, the view commonly held by the Church throughout history was not truly grounded in an ecological vision of reality. *Gaudium et Spes*, for example, subscribed to what "is called 'dominion theology'; the natural world is for man's exclusive use . . .It claims almost universal agreement for the teaching that 'according to the unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown'"[99] Dorr has previously argued that Catholic social teaching, as expressed in official Vatican documents on ecological issues was anthropocentric in outlook. As Dorr's response to these concerns is critical, I will quote it at length:

[98]Sean McDonagh, *Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2007), 169. McDonagh points out that the hijacking of many academic and government institutions by the corporate world is one of the most pernicious developments in recent decades.
[99] McDonagh, *Why are We Deaf to the Cry of the Earth?* (Dublin: Veritas, 2001), 40.

> An authentic Christian faith recognizes that God is not only transcendent but also immanent in our world. Western Christianity has tended to put an unbalanced emphasis on the transcendence of God, playing down the immanent presence. Christian eco-theologians are helping us to return to a more authentic understanding of God by putting renewed emphasis on the presence of God in nature. But this does not, by any means, involve the denial or neglect of the transcendence of God.
>
> It is unfair to assume that eco-theologians agree with those who divinize nature or adopt a pantheistic position. Some, but not all, of them opt for what is called panentheism. Whether we accept this word or the worldview that it represents, we now have the possibility of developing a fully integral theology and spirituality. The insistence of the popes on the transcendence of God can be balanced by the emphasis of the eco-theologians on God's immanence in the world. The popes and eco-theologians agree on the particular responsibility of humans to care for creation.[100]

However, with the publication of the encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,in 2015, Pope Francis has urgently "moved the Catholic Church from the periphery of global engagement with ecology right to the very heart of the debate."[101] In a truly paradigm shift, "the new emphasis is on ecology and care of the earth. All our economic issues should now be dealt with in the context of the ecology, in other words, we don't solve the problems of the world, of poverty and injustice if we take some solution that's going to despoil the earth because we'd be stealing in effect from the next generation, even from poorer people of the present generation."[102] In return, the earth cares for us as it too is a mutually dependent relationship; we are all connected and interdependent on each other. Similar to the Native American tradition of looking at the effects of any decision on the next seven generations before acting, viable environmental solutions for the future are those that do not create any further problems in the future. To "use the term that has become a key term in the environmental movement, the only solutions that are acceptable are sustainable solutions.

[100] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 435.
[101] McDonagh, ed. *On Care for Our Common Home – Laudato Si* with Commentary by Sean McDonagh, (New York: Orbis, 2016), preface.
[102] Donal Dorr "Option for the Poor and for the Earth." Lecture given in St. Francis Xavier's Church, Gardiner Street, Dublin. A further interview on Pope Francis' Laudato Si is given by Dorr at http://www.icatholic.ie/laudato-si-donal-dorr/ (accessed August 25, 2016)

This concept of sustainability was defined by Lester Brown at the Worldwatch Institute: 'A sutainable society is one that satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of future generations."[103]. The mentality behind the current modes of development needs to change as it a mindset which is absolutely and unequivocally unsustainable. One of Dorr's key concerns is that care for earth is inseperable from care for vulnerable people, "Not only does [Pope Francis] not divide them but he absolutely insists on the linkage between the two and of course that has a lot to do with his own experience living with poor people, he is very strong on that point."[104] What Pope Francis is actually doing is "inviting us to adopt a new spirituality which would be the spirituality of his patron St. Francis of Assisi."[105] To clarify, a Franciscan fellowship with all creation is one where:

> The natural world is not seen from a utilitarian perspective, as providing food, clothing and shelter for human beings. Rather, there is a sense of joy, wonder, praise, and gratitude for the gift of all life. For Francis, every creature in the world was a mirror of God's presence and, if approached correctly, a step leading one to God . . . there is no will to dominate or transform nature lurking behind Francis' approach. In his 'Canticle of the Creatures' Francis shows a kinship with, and deep insight into the heart of all creation – animate and inanimate – which is probably unique in the whole European experience . . . the memory of Francis in our world today is a healing, reconciling and creative one. It inspires many people to become pacifists, to build a true fraternity among humans and to renounce war before it is too late for humanity and the Earth. It also inspires naturalists and ecologists to preserve nature untamed by humans . . . experiencing the wilderness is an expanding and uplifting sensation for the human spirit. It draws us out beyond ourselves. An untamed environment, untouched by human beings, whether it is a vast ocean, a rain forest or a desert, points to the ultimate mystery at the heart of the world which continually calls human beings to a deeper communion with the earth and with God.[106]

[103] Fritjof Capra and David Steindl – Rast, *Belonging to the Universe: Explorations on the Frontiers of Science and Spirituality(*San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 166.
[104] http://www.icatholic.ie/laudato-si-donal-dorr/ (accessed August 25, 2016)

[105] Ibid.
[106] McDonagh, *To Care for the Earth: A Call to a New Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 131-134.

Dorr argues that Pope Francis is advocating for just such a 'nature mysticism'; Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict were inclined to contrast on the one hand human ecology with a nature ecology on the other. While they argued for mutual respect between the two they did not press for integration. Francis however is the first to insist on linking the two. In taking an integral approach, Pope Francis stresses two basic themes, "first that we share DNA with the animals and plants and we should respect them as gifts, this is the similarity we share. Second, the difference is that we have the responsibility for them. We see God in them and this is the radical part of Pope Francis' integral ecology from a spiritual point of view, seeing God in nature."[107] If we see God in nature it follows that we must be responsible for it. Dorr argues that any decent spirituality must have these two sides. Both Pope Francis and Dorr argue for a spirituality with two sides, a contemplative side that reflects a Franciscan mysticism and an active side concerned with our commitment which operates on the three levels Dorr has already established: at the individual level, the political social level and between groups such as church groups and NGO's. Integrating a theology which emphasises an option for the poor built on principles of justice, solidarity and concern for the common good for all with a spirituality that is contemplative and committed to action has enormous potential to help reach out and transform the world. To achieve this Pope Francis is very clear on the need for ecological education:

> Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centred on scientific information, consciousness - raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the *'myths, of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market).* (Itallics added). It seeks also to restore the various levels ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the

[107] Donal Dorr, "Option for the Poor and for the Earth." http://www.icatholic.ie/laudato-si-donal-dorr/ (accessed August 25, 2016)

> leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care. (LS #210).

A re-imagining or reclaiming of our myths and mindset is indeed overdue. Our "modern alienation from myth is unprecedented. In the pre-modern world, mythology was indespensible. It not only helped people to make sense of their lives but also revealed regions of the human mind that would otherwise have remained inaccessible."[108] As Pope Francis insightfully observes an individual and competitive mindset is setting us off balance. We have become disenchanted with that particular narrative and it has led us to the environmental and social catastrophes we are now facing. Catastrophes have their origins in our own beliefs and behaviours, which have sometimes been centuries in the making. One of the problems Dorr hints at in his revised version of *Option for the Poor and For the Earth* is the understanding of the story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis which has influenced a number of papal encyclicals. While Dorr does not actually state outright that a one-sided, narrow interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve is at fault, I would argue it is implicit in his critique of the insensitive handling of ecological issues in papal encyclicals leading up to, but not including, the papacy of Pope Francis. Dorr argues that what is "needed today is a kind of Copernican revolution leading to a major paradigm shift. We need to locate all our human concerns – and especially our approach to economics – within the far wider context of an ecological and cosmic vision."[109] Although Pope Francis has contributed significantly to this conversation, by moving Catholic social teaching forward toward an integral ecology, the question still arises: where can a healthier ecological and cosmic vision be first located? If, as Pope Francis has argued, we need to heal our human relationships before health can be

[108] Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*(Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008), Chapter One, Kindle.
[109] Ibid.

restored to the earth, then it is urgent that the feminine principle, integral to every relationship, is restored. While the encyclicals *Laudato Si*' certainly challenge our current way of behaving toward the poor and toward the earth, it is a serious misgiving that it does not address women's issues directly nor does it acknowledge that redressing this balance is the foundational step toward the healthier home so sought after.[110] Therefore, we also need to change the very narratives which inform how we see ourselves in the world and in particular how the feminine part of our nature is represented.

Myth shows us possible ways to behave in the world and possible steps to be taken. Like science, mythology "extends the scope of human beings . . . [it] is not about opting out

[110]Feminist Theologian Dr. Teresa Toldy explains that: "It would have been interesting for the document to go deeper into the different impacts of poverty upon men and women, since, according to the UN, "while both men and women suffer in poverty, gender discrimination means that women have far fewer resources to cope. They are likely to be the last to eat, the ones least likely to access healthcare, and routinely trapped in time-consuming, unpaid domestic tasks. They have more limited options to work or build businesses. Adequate education may lie out of reach. Some end up forced into sexual exploitation as part of a basic struggle to survive" (See more at: http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/poverty#facts).The Encyclical Letter re-asserts the traditional teaching of the Church according to which "the Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and inviolable" (LS 93) and quotes Pope John Paul I. when he wrote that "'it is not in accord with God's plan that this gift be used in such a way that its benefits favor only a few'". (LS, Nr. 93). In reading these inspiring texts Catholics should not forget that there are many countries where women still have no access to property: this reality gives a new meaning to the assertion on the need to use private property in favor of all and on the need expressedby Pope Francis to recognize the equal dignity of all human beings.When reading the quote of the Bishops of Paraguay ("Every campesino has a natural right to possess a reasonable allotment of land where he can establish his home, work for subsistence of his family and a secure life. This right must be guaranteed so that its exercise is not illusory but real. That means that apart from the ownership of property, rural people must have access to means of technical education, credit, insurance, and markets". – LS. Nr. 94), we should keep in mind that, according to FAO, "women play a decisive role in household food security, dietary diversity and children's health: In developing countries, rural women and men play different roles in guaranteeing food security for their households and communities. While men grow mainly field crops, women are usually responsible for growing and preparing most of the food consumed in the home and raising small livestock, which provides protein. Rural women also carry out most home food processing, which ensures a diverse diet, minimizes losses and provides marketable products. Women are more likely to spend their incomes on food and children's needs - research has shown that a child's chances of survival increase by 20% when the mother controls the household budget. Women, therefore, play a decisive role in food security, dietary diversity and children's health." (see http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-programme/gender-food/en/). The problem of water pollution, and water shortage, abundantly mentioned by Laudato sì (see LS, Nr. 2, 8, 20, 24, 27-31, 35, 37, 40, 44, 48, 72, 140, 164, 185, 211, 234, 235), even if affecting all of the populations in some parts of the globe, represent a particular weight upon women shoulders, since "in many countries, women are responsible for finding and collecting water for their families. All the water they need for drinking, washing, cooking, cleaning. They walk miles, carry heavy burdens, wait for hours and pay exorbitant prices. The work is back-breaking and all-consuming. Often the water is contaminated, even deadly. In these instances, they face an impossible choice – certain death without water or possible death from illness. Once they are old enough, girls join this effort. They spend countless hours trying to provide this basic life necessity." (see http://water.org/water-crisis/womens-crisis/) Teresa Toldy, "Reading the Encyclical Letter 'Laudato Si' with Gender Lens"https://www.cidse.org/gender-equality-blog/reading-the-encyclical-letter-laudato-si-with-gender-lens.html Accessed 10/10/2018.

of this world, but about enabling us to live more intensely within it."[111] Furthermore, "correctly understood, mythology puts us in the correct spiritual or psychological posture for right action, in this world or the next . . .[it] points beyond history to what is timeless in human existence, helping us to get beyond the chaotic flux of random events, and glimpse the core of reality."[112] A major change in the way the story of creation is imagined and told could potentially change our way of seeing and relating to the world. Like "a novel, an opera or ballet, myth is a game that transfigures our fragmented, tragic world, and helps us to glimpse new possibilities by asking 'what if ?' a question which has also provoked some of our most important discoveries in philosophy, science and technology."[113]Rather than relying on one single interpretation of Genesis, the courage and the freedom to explore different creation myths can be fostered. I would argue there are three promising areas of possibility through which this can be achieved. Although beyond the scope of this chapter to give a thorough history of Gnosticism,[114] Hinduism or Celtic mythology, a brief account of it will help illustrate the importance of diverse creation myths in relation to spirituality.

5.19 Gnostic Creation Myth

The Gnostic Christians, whose legacy of sacred literature is now available to us in the Nag Hammadi texts[115], read Genesis not as history with a moral but as myth with a meaning.

[111]Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, Chapter One.
[112] Ibid.
[113]Ibid.
[114] The terms *Gnostic* and *Gnosticism* are "derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, which is usually (albeit somewhat misleadingly) translated as 'knowledge.' A Gnostic is often defined as a person who seeks salvation by knowledge. The knowledge the Gnostic seeks, however, is not rational knowledge: even less is an accumulation of information. The Greek language distinguishes between theoretical knowledge and knowledge gained through direct experience. The latter is gnosis and a person aspiring to this knowledge is a Gnostic." Stephan Hoeller, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2002), 2. Although imperfect, the categories remain useful. However, for further definitions on the terms gnosis, gnostic and for full analysis on what scholars mean by 'Gnosticism' and the argument that the term is a modern construction see Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1999).
[115] The discovery of the Nag Hammadi library around the end of 1945, is "transforming what we know about Christianity – and its mysterious founder. For more than fifteen hundred years, most Christians had assumed that the only sources of tradition about Jesus and his disciples are those contained in the New Testament, especially in the familiar gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Suddenly, however, the unexpected discovery of over fifty ancient texts, most of them Christian, had demonstrated what the church fathers had long

Rather than reading the Scriptures literally, Gnostics were more inclined to take each line of the Scriptures as "an enigma, a riddle pointing to deeper meaning. Read this way the text became a shimmering surface of symbols, inviting the spiritually adventurous to explore its hidden depths, to draw upon their own inner experience – what artists call the creative imagination – to interpret the story."[116] Consequently, Gnostic Christians were able to understand Adam and Eve "not as historical figures but as representatives of two intrapsychic principles present within every human being. Adam was the dramatic embodiment of *psyche*, or soul: the mind-emotion complex where thinking and feeling originate. Eve stood for *pneuma*, or spirit, representing the higher transcendental consciousness."[117] Gnostic Christians rejected the traditional and conventional portrayal of Eve we are all too familiar with; we are well acquainted with the Eve who was led astray by the evil serpent and who then proceeded to persuade Adam to disobey God. However, in the Gnostic Christian version of the myth, Eve was not the dangerous temptress at all; she was a wise woman, a true daughter of Sophia, the celestial Wisdom.[118] In this respect Eve awakens the sleeping Adam. In another Gnostic text, *On the Origin of the World*, Eve "is presented as the daughter, and especially the messenger, of the divine Sophia. It is in the capacity of messenger that she

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indicated: that these familiar gospels are only a small selection from among many more traditions – and gospels – that, from the early generations of the Christian movement, circulated among groups throughout the known world."Marvin Meyer and Elaine H. Pagels, "Introduction" in Marvin Meyer ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Gnostic Texts* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007),5. Furthermore, the discovery of these early Christian writings is of "inestimable importance in drawing aside the curtain of later perspectives behind which Christian beginnings lie, and exposing the vitality and diversity of early Christian life and reflection . . . some forms of Christianity focused almost solely on Jesus' teaching and did not even mention the doctrines [Nicene Creed]. Some of them rejected the idea of a benevolent God requiring blood atonement for sin, seeing Jesus instead as the living messenger of reconciliation and spiritual truth." Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First WomanApostle* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2003), 157.

[116]Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent: Sex and Politics in Early Christianity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 64.

[117] Stephan A. Hoeller, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2002), 26.

[118]The name *Pistis Sophia* denotes "the character of the thinker who, finding no solution in [the material world] strives for liberating wisdom. She is represented as a woman who seeks for initiation and who, defeated as to the *Pistis*, i.e. thinking with the intellectual faculties, may now receive this through and from the *Sophia*, the divine wisdom." Jan Van Rijckenborgh, *The Gnostic Mysteries of Pistis Sophia* (Haarlem: Rozekruis Pers, 2006), 16. However, similar to the term gnosis, many definitions and explanations abound of the name Sophia. Described as the nurturer of humanity, a "particular position of honor and importance belongs to the feminine emanation of the unity, Sophia (Wisdom). She was involved in the creation of the world and ever since has remained the guide of her orphaned human children." Hoeller, *Gnosticism*, 188.

comes as an instructor to Adam and raises him up from his sleep of unconsciousness."[119] In this version of the myth, man is actually indebted to woman for bringing him to life and consciousness. It is right to wonder just "how the Western attitude toward women might have developed had the Gnostic view of Eve been the widely accepted view."[120] In order to be creators of a better future for our earth, the feminine half or the feminine principle, inherent in *all* of our natures has to be restored to fullness from out of its current state of degradation.

As Pagels highlights, gnostic interpreters share in the conviction held by Dominican monk Meister Eckhart and many Hindu devotees, that "the divine being is hidden deep within human nature, as well as outside it, and although often unperceived, is a spiritual potential latent in the human psyche . . . according to Ptolemy, a follower of Valentinus, the story of Adam and Eve shows that humanity "fell" into ordinary consciousness and lost contact with its divine origin."[121] Following the teaching of Valentinus[122], arguably the greatest Gnostic spiritual master, who "urged Christians to go beyond the elementary steps of faith, baptism and moral reform to spiritual illumination"[123] many Christians interpreted the story of Adam and Eve as an account of the interaction between soul and spirit:

> It is an account of what takes place within a person who is engaged in the process of spiritual self-discovery. The gnostic text called Interpretation of the Soul, for example, tells how the soul, represented as Eve, became alienated from her spiritual nature, and so long as she denied that spiritual nature and distanced herself from it, she fell into self-destruction and suffering. But when she became willing to be reconciled and reunited with her spiritual nature, she once again became whole; the gnostic author states that this process of spiritual self-integration is the hidden meaning of the marriage of Adam and Eve: "This marriage has brought them back together again, and the soul has been joined to

[119]Hoeller, *Gnosticism*, 27.
[120] Ibid., 28.
[121]Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 65.
[122]Valentinus (c. 140 -160 C.E) "before coming to Rome . . . had already established himself among Christians of the Egyptian city of Alexandria as a poet, visionary, and spiritual teacher; and in Rome, where his abilities were widely recognized, he was considered a likely candidate for bishop." Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 60 – 61.
[123]Ibid., 61.

> her true love, her real master" that is, to her spiritual self. Many other gnostic texts reverse the symbolism; the majority of gnostic texts depict Adam (not Eve) as representing the psyche, while Eve represents the higher principle, the spiritual self. Gnostic authors loved to tell, with many variations, the story of Eve, that elusive spiritual intelligence: how she first emerged within Adam and awakened him, the soul, to awareness of its spiritual nature; how she encountered resistance, was misunderstood, attacked, and mistaken for what she was not; and how she finally joined with Adam 'in marriage,' so to speak, and so came to live in harmonious union with the soul.[124]

This altogether different way of looking at the story of Adam and Eve unleashes a power. However, it is not a power that is suffocating or dominating. As Dorr has observed, "we have become so aware of the dangers of power that we could forget there is a power which is liberating."[125] The gnostic myths, waiting patiently to be rediscovered, are more than capable of unleashing a liberating power. Whereas the "orthodox often blamed Eve for the fall and pointed to women's submission as appropriate punishment, gnostics often depicted Eve – or the feminine spiritual power she represented – as the source of spiritual awakening."[126] Dorr often recalls the day he recognised that "doing theology was a life - giving experience,"[127] although he admits it took fifty years to articulate this experience. Similarly, instead of formulating dogmas and creeds, some gnostic Christians instead preferred, through the use of gnostic myth, to discover and understand their inner selves or the "internal sources of desire and action,"[128] which is relevant to the experience of both men and women. The Valentinian *Gospel of Phillip* for example states that:

> Death began when 'the woman separated . . . from the man – that is, when Eve (the spirit) became separated from Adam (the psyche). Only when one's

[124]Ibid., 66.
[125]Donal Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice Ecology, Power and the Church* (Dublin; Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 145.
[126] Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 68.
[127]Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

> psyche, or ordinary consciousness, becomes integrated with one's spiritual nature – when Adam, reunited with Eve, 'becomes complete again' can one achieve internal harmony and wholeness. According to this Valentinian author, only the person who has 'remarried' the psyche with the spirit becomes capable of withstanding physical and emotional impulses that, unchecked, could drive him or her toward self-destruction or evil.[129]

This gospel illuminates a fundamental point: any conversion has to take place first and foremost from within. Dorr has stated that the "most privileged 'place' in which God speaks to me is in my own spirituality. This means I can no longer think of a person's spirituality as something that comes from outside. Rather it is that which is most deeply personal. My spirituality is me. Not the 'me' that so often is distracted, scattered and inauthentic; but the most genuine and profound 'me' that exists."[130] The creation myth contained in the *Gospel of Phillip* expounds this view; without beginning with an inner peace and harmony brought about by the marriage of psyche and spirit (Adam and Eve) in ourselves, an external wholeness or sense of paradise will remain elusive.

Therefore, we can absolutely look to the gnostic gospels for relevant, but perhaps radically alternative, models of human development. The gnostic gospels and creation myths offer us all (but especially for the first time, women), a chance to thoroughly and honestly explore and express their spirituality, Theology, if integrated with a field so seemingly contentious as Gnosticism, would offer women the access to a power that is liberating; women would be afforded a place in which to articulate and express their experience. Why is this so important? If we are in fact no longer at home on the Earth, no longer living in partnership with each other and with nature and are alienated, lonely unrooted and lost, then the gnostic myths offer us all a way back to harmony and fulness. For to borrow Dorr's own

[129] Ibid. 68-69. For the full text and commentary on the *Gospel of Phillip*, see Meyer, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 157 – 186.
[130] Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 19-20.

argument about the Jewish experience, I would argue that it is in the resurfacing and re-examination of gnostic myths that gives cause for hope. Hope "that the people of the world as a whole may also return from exile; hope that we too, by God's grace and our own efforts, may live in dignity on an earth where we can be both free and at home."[131] If spirituality is that which is most deeply personal to a person as Dorr affirms, then Hindu myths, resplendent as they are with feminine spiritual principles, offer another lens with which to understand this much forgotten aspect of our nature.

5.20 The Feminine in Hindu Mythology

A creation myth from the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*[132]could help us to re-imagine how we think about creation, the beginning and all of our potential creativity. Unlike the biblical account of creation in Genesis, which states in the beginning God created our selves out of nothing at all, Hindu myths begin by ultimately asserting that "before anything else there is always an original self . . . which must notice itself before anything else can happen."[133] Everything that already is and all the potentialities already exist within the self from the beginning. In Hindu myth:

> the beginning always follows on something that has gone before. One must look within, not to one who stands beyond us, in order to find the meaning of life. Because they have no clear-cut starting point, the possibilities latent within

[131]Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda*, 139.
[132] Brhadaranyaka Upanishad translates as 'The Great Forest Teaching.' The Upanishads are an investigation into consciousness itself and are among some of the most ancient texts available to us and remain just as relevant today. They "are among the earliest and most universal of messages . . . sent to inform us that there is more to life than the everyday experience of our senses." Eknath Easwaran, *The Upanishads* (Tomales; Nilgiri Press, 2007), 8.
[133] Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 3.

> the human are endless. If we want to be creative and learn creatively as we reflect on Hindu wisdom, the same point applies: no encounter with the 'other' even with a religion very different from my own, can be fruitful unless I also explore my own self, figuring out who I truly already am, from the beginning.[134]

This statement is in fact key to understanding the need to integrate our own theology with spirituality. To consider ourselves fully mature whether personally, as academics or as Christians, we must "stop being a spectator . . . and become irreversibly involved with those whom we used to consider alien to ourselves. Rediscovering ourselves personally and religiously we overcome our isolation and make ourselves honest and true in relation to the new friends and strangers around us."[135] Although in a different context, Sobrino advocates exactly this position in respect of the poor. As the documents of Vatican II consistently emphasize, we are born and exist within relationships. I would argue that when Sobrino advocates on behalf of the poor and Clooney advocates for an openness to other faiths, they are both actually appealing to the fact that we are born and exist in relationship. In Hindu myth, the original self already exists in relationship too. Similar to the gnostic myth of creation, the need to create, not to be narrowly understood biologically, comes from within oneself and whether we actually inhabit a male of female physical body, we are "always interacting with our complementary and contrasting other,[136] whether that's the male or female principle within us. Hindu myths provide a firm basis for which women, and men seeking to rediscover their lost feminine side, can find a space to discover and explore the often-hidden feminine aspects of God and therefore can come to a more mature spirituality.

[134] Ibid., 4.
[135] Ibid., 5.
[136] Ibid.

Many religions have their own feminine aspect often celebrated through visions and myths of goddesses. In the Hindu tradition in particular, God is also viewed as our Mother and is revered as the source of all life. The Goddess is also "the great Mother, the source and protector of every being. Life comes from the Goddess, and every experience is an experience of her."[137] Realizing the hesitance many experience in attributing female features to God, Clooney offers a gentle introduction to the study of goddesses through a Hindu text entitled the *Saundarya Lahari* or the *Ocean of Beauty*. In this text:

> although the Goddess is always with Lord Shiva, she remains independent. She is his spouse, his body, half of him. She belongs to him as his power, but this means that he can be powerful because he is with her . . . She is the Mother of all. So too, she is wisdom and speech, the flood of consciousness and bliss, the Goddess of learnings . . . Indeed she is everything in nature, external realities and their inner meaning.[138]

From a Christian perspective, gnostic texts excluded, goddesses are hardly, if at all, mentioned. However, Clooney argues that if we are serious about seeking wisdom, the goddess tradition is too valuable to bypass. To realize all nature as pervaded by the Goddess, as in the Hindu tradition, may initially appear very different from Christian theology. But we need only look to Teilhard's vision of the Christ that permeates everything on earth to see that our own tradition, along with gnostic and hindu myths, are invaluable in helping us consider new visions and new possibilities in our approach to caring for our earth. The "image of the Goddess presented in the *Ocean of Beauty* challenges us to deepen our spiritual roots and gain a deeper spiritual energy by which to ascend toward a full spiritual appreciation of the world in which we live. If we pay attention to life around us, we may find

[137] Clooney, S.J., *Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children*, 90.
[138] Ibid., 92-93.

the energy and courage to open ourselves more completely to God who comes to us as our life, our energy, our death. This, Hindu wisdom tells us, is what it means to meet the Goddess."[139] Clooney makes a compelling case for one of the most important features of the goddess tradition that holds much relevance for today. The goddess' voice and the voice we must find within us, is one of truth. Using the example of Mahasweta Devi,[140] Clooney argues that the voice we must find within ourselves is not only one of self-knowledge but it is a one which confronts the truth, no matter how painful. I would argue that what is meant here is very similar to Sobrino's principle of *fidelity to the real*. Likewise, the truth here is "a truth manifest and thrown back into the face of violence . . . it is raw, untreated, unmediated truth."[141] Like Sobrino, Devi's words describe her commitment to "speak, write, act in such a way that truth is uncovered, that severed, denied human relationships are presented for reconsideration and possibly healed. Her goal is to implicate everyone who comes by, making it impossible to view reality from a safe distance."[142] This healing, that must start within ourselves by recovering our feminine aspect, can then proceed to radiate outwards to heal all others and our environment. As Clooney ultimately argues, as do Sobrino and Dorr, if we are moving towards an integrated, mature spirituality, "we too must move beyond genial truths which can neither be verified nor proven wrong and seek a richer, living truth in the midst of life. What matters most is that we become involved, implicated in what happens around us, risking ourselves while learning to include the stranger in our midst; we need to become familiar with what is alien and frightening to us, and in the process reintegrate our original selves."[143] Our safe and sacred space in which to do this is one where our theology is integrated into our own spirituality where all facets of what makes us human beings in this

[139] Ibid., 111.
[140]Mahasweta Devi dedicated herself to people in need in India. She has focused her attention on the plight of tribal people, the indigenous inhabitants of India who have never been integrated into the wider Indian society and who have been marginalized and exploited. She is an activist, writer and journalist.
[141]Clooney, *Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children*, 128.
[142]Ibid., 129.
[143]Ibid., 129-130.

world can be explored. However, we need not only look to the East to recover a sense of deep spiritual roots. Closer to home, Celtic mythology is also waiting to be rediscovered.

5.21 Celtic Mythology

Celtic mythology is founded on ecological archetypes, and is filled with stories of powerful women who were incarnations or representations of the Sovereignty goddess, who was the guardian and protector of the land:

> Sovereignty in many senses represented the spirit of the Earth itself, the *anima mundi*, a deeply ecological force. During the reign of a king favoured by the goddess, the land was fertile and prosperous, and the tribe was victorious in war. But she expected in return that the king, and through his example, the people, would cherish the land. Throughout Gaelic (both Irish and Scottish) mythology we also find the ancient figure of the Cailleach, the old woman: the hag who made and shaped the land. The Cailleach, often seen driving her herd of wild deer across the mountain tops, is very much a guardian of the wild. Sometimes in Scottish folklore she appears as a Glastaig (a 'Green Maiden'), and one story which clearly shows her in this role of protector of the wild things.[144]

Stark warnings over the abuse of the earth and all of its inhabitants abound in Celtic mythology too. If "as a celtic woman, to be Elder is to be Cailleach, then to be Elder is above all to be the fierce protector of the Earth guardian of its balance . . . so she is seen to be carefully guarding the balance of the natural world – but if her instructions were not followed, there were serious consequences."[145] The use of such language alone awakens and empowers our feminine half to the role of protector of our environment. As Dorr has discussed, this is still a significant step as the use of language has nearly always been biased

[144]From "Archetypes and the Ecological Imagination" Oct 18 2016, www.sharonblackie.net Accessed 27 May 2017.
[145]Sharon Blackie, *If Women Rose Rooted*: *The Power of the Celtic Woman* (Tewkesbury; September Publishing, 2016), 337.

against women. Women, "are expected to see themselves as included when people use such words as 'man'. 'mankind', 'brothers', etc. And in matters of religion, God is spoken of as 'he' and as 'Lord' who calls us to a 'Kingdom.'"[146] However, the bigger issue is more than a question of language and in unison with the Celtic mythological narrative, Dorr pinpoints the problem concisely:

> The issue is wider and deeper than that of overcoming overt sexual discrimination. Many feminists believe that almost all of the problems of our world today can be traced back to a typically 'male' model of exercising power. Oppression and injustice of all kinds stem from the way men have tried to dominate other people and the Earth. These feminists (men and women) are challenging in a fundamental and serious way this whole 'patriarchal' model of life, which up to the present has been the norm in most societies. They are engaging in constructing and propagating a more feminine and feminist approach to community and authority – and to the Earth itself. This new approach is more participative and collaborative, refusing to invest all authority in one leader. It is suspicious of too much rationality, stressing affectivity and intuition as a balance to purely logical or rational thought. It seeks partnership with the Earth rather than domination and exploitation.[147]

In this respect, the principle of solidarity present in Catholic social teaching can be realised and put into action if as a community we take such an action and a new approach. Such an approach could only be understood and worked out through a spirituality integrated, not only with theology, but with a firmer understanding of our very own heritage, made available to us through incorporating Celtic mythology in our spirituality. Furthermore, Dorr maintains that when "women have taken their rightful place in decision-making in the Church, the world will have before it a living witness of how rich life can be when women and men work together in full mutual respect."[148] Working together in mutual respect for each other and for the land is a fundamental concept in the Celtic myth. The collective memory of the

[146]Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda*, 23.
[147]Ibid.
[148]Ibid., 120.

community is enshrined in dinnsheanchas.[149] Through dinnsheanchas we can "possess the land emotionally and imaginatively without any particular sense of or actual need for titular ownership. … a renewed interest in dinnsheanchas may enable us to share our love and admiration and wonder of the land of Ireland, and can cater in an imaginative way for the need of many for a place to belong to so that we may love and cherish it rather than killing ourselves over it."[150] Also at the heart of our native stories is the way that Celts view time and indeed life: as cyclical rather than linear and this concept of viewing time has much in common with the Hindu and Gnostic myths in that they all reflect the Earth as an evolving creation:

> This cyclicity isn't just an interesting historical curiosity lacking in practical consequence: it is evidence of an entirely different worldview. If you see the world as linear, then the dynamic forces which underlie existence are progress and growth. And over the past couple of thousand years, these concepts have become more than just the bedrock of Western economics; they have become the foundational ideas of our civilisation. If you see life as linear, so that progress and growth are what give it meaning, then it is hard to endure impermanence of any kind . . . but to the Celts, death was inextricably intertwined with life. Every month, the moon died and was reborn. Every winter, the sun died and was reborn. The tide came in, and the tide receded. To imagine that you could avoid these natural cycles was not only unthinkable, but undesirable. Out of all the dying' something precious and new is always born. Unending transformation, the greatest of all the gifts the Earth offers us.[151]

Through this concept, echoes of Dorr's argument for a thoroughly integrated approach to our spirituality can be heard. The at once individual and social nature of a mature spirituality is present in the ancient Celtic myth of the Elder as "to become Elder is to be comfortable with your place in the world, finally to have understood where all of your

[149] The word *dinnseanchas* is made up of two elements: *dinn*, a landmark, eminent or notable place, and *seanchas*, which is usually translated as 'lore', but in fact refers to the entire body of work of the professional learned classes in early Irish society. For more, see Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Dinnsheanchas: The Naming of High or Holy Places', in *Selected Essays*.(Dublin: New Island, 2005).
[150] Ibid.
[151] Blackie, *If Women Rose Rooted*, 339.

various journeys have been leading you, to understand your gifts as well as your limitations, and to tightly focus those gifts on service to the Earth and community."[152] One can only imagine the potential for transformation and change if those responsible for developing an ethics of ecology worked out of an integrated field of theology and spirituality. Furthermore, if that integration incorporated a philosophy of hermeneutics, scientific research and the empowering mythologies available from the multidisciplinary field of spirituality then our 'understanding that seeks transformation', could actually be realized. Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary endeavours could lead to holistic solutions to our ecological crisis. With the integration of theology and spirituality, the task of building a just, humane and ecologically sustainable world may not seem so daunting, "those who engage in this work receive inspiration, encouragement, and hope from the Catholic tradition of social teaching."[153] Not only that, with Pope Francis' encyclical, a body of theological teaching is continued while a complimentary spirituality is new, imaginative and inspiring. The full implications of a commitment to the poor and the earth will emerge more clearly. "Many Christians and Church leaders believe that they must be in effective solidarity with those who are powerless and voiceless, and must seek to empower them and give them back their voice."[154] Not only that but we must stand with them and our earth in total support and solidarity. In this way, the much sought-after paradigm shift might occur in our thinking and in our action. The notion of interconnectedness is at the very root of this new paradigm:

> The major problems of our time cannot be understood in isolation. Whatever the problem is – environmental destruction, population growth, the persistence of poverty and hunger throughout the world, the threat of nuclear war. To name a few – it has to be perceived as being connected to the others. In order to solve any single problem, we need systemic thinking because these are all systemic problems, interconnected and interdependent. This is one of the profound implications of new – paradigm thinking in society and in politics.[155]

[152]Ibid., 339-340.
[153] Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, 466.
[154] Ibid., 467.
[155] Fritjof Capra and David Steindl – Rast, *Belonging to the Universe*, 166.

To experience discomfort at the sight of suffering of vulnerable people and our injured earth means we feel a nearness to all of life and recognise the need to relieve the suffering. This type of consciousness is certainly dawning and the changes it entails will not come from more indifference, destruction or separation but will come as a result of love and the realization the hurt of one is the hurt of all or put another way that what we do to the least of our children we actually do to ourselves. To care for the earth and for our family, love and compassion are what is urgently needed. But what is compassion? It is not "simply a sense of sympathy or caring for the person suffering, not simply a warmth of heart toward the person before you, it is also a sustained and practical determination to do whatever is possible and necessary to alleviate their suffering."[156] The noblest of ideals, even spiritual ideals, will be of little value or relevance unless it can be employed to improve the quality of life and bring justice, in its truest sense, to all. And it is my contention that by understanding ourselves and our relationships with each other and with the earth, through the study of theology integrated with spirituality, that we can look forward with hope and dare to begin transformative action in the world for the benefit of all.

5.22 Conclusion

Fundamentally throughout, it has been my intention to make evident the need for theology to integrate with spirituality. Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr have, in their own contexts, demonstrated successfully that theology is one of the major roots of the foundation of spirituality. In this chapter however, my aim was to establish that from a Christian

[156] Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 187.

perspective, the disciplines of philosophy, the natural sciences and mythology are the other roots which can support a mature spirituality and which will in turn, inform theology, allowing it too to grow. In identifying philosophy, the natural sciences and mythology as key disciplines in the field of spirituality, it has been possible to develop and open up what it is they have to offer.

Initially, the argument was made that the context within which spirituality is studied must be anthropologically inclusive. It is a study not concerned with perfection but with trying to understand better our contemporary experiences. Therefore, the chapter began by highlighting Schneiders' argument for constructive post-modernism as the correct context through which spirituality can find dialogue partners. If spirituality is essentially about the search for meaning, then constructive postmodernism proves to be a promising climate as it allows for an understanding of a natural world which is alive with meaning and value. In addition to this, the chapter moves on to demonstrate Schneider's main contention that philosophical hermeneutics is one approach that would benefit the study of spirituality as a discipline. I believe Schneider's is correct in highlighting this approach especially as it opens up the possibility of understanding revelation in an entirely new way; as a dynamic discovery rather than a static body of doctrine. To focus on each individual's own account of revelation affords us an inquiry into all aspects of human life and experience. Ultimately, the hermeneutical approach, as highlighted by Schneiders, makes the case for Spirituality becoming an increasingly interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary endeavour. Having established the need for this, the chapter moves on to illustrate what an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach can look like by evaluating the natural sciences and mythology as dialogue partners and considering what they have to offer theology.

One of the most enticing and exciting findings when considering science as a dialogue partner in spirituality, is that 'big picture' thinking concerning the nature of our reality can be

fully and freely explored. In fact, in recognising the immensity of scientific discoveries and their impact on every facet of our lives, even this cursory glance leaves one humbled and in awe. Rather than indulge the misconception that science and religion are at war with each other any further, this chapter aimed to portray the approaches successfully utilized by scientists who are also religious. The findings are encouraging as the scientists highlighted actually blend their supposed 'two worlds' together harmoniously. Theologians engaged in the praxis model, for example, and scientists, harness knowledge gained at its most intense level, that is, the level of reflective action, meaning scientists surprisingly share common ground with liberation theologians. A concentrated awareness of and attention to the variety and richness of experience is garnered. Exemplifying scientists whose inquiries into the nature of universe merge effortlessly with their inquiries into the nature of their inner selves (that is, their spirituality) are Joyce Bell Burnell, John Polkinghorne and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. While being able to maintain their individuality through their diverse fields (Astronomy, Physics and Palaeontology/Geology respectively), what was most interesting to discover was that science *and* theology together are already united as a starting point for them, as openness and adaptability to the findings in reality are the common ground both grow out of. Remarkably, although Teilhard's work is around 100 years old, his vision is one that is only coming of age now. By comparing his work with Donal Dorr and Pope Francis' writings on the poor and on ecology, the importance of Teilhard's vision for science and spirituality becomes clearer. Understanding this vision has profound implications for theology: primarily, imagining anew what we mean when we talk about Christ. In addition, as Pope Francis and Teilhard have contended, this new spirituality asks that we are prepared to develop in ourselves and foster around us a new way of *being* in the world which aids the advancement of the earth and *all* of its inhabitants. This seeker who "devotes himself, ultimately through love, to the labours of discovery [is] no longer a worshipper of the world

but of something greater than the world, through and beyond the world in progress."[157] It is this very ability to imagine the 'something greater' or the 'bigger picture' at every turn which underpins all of his work and makes it such an exciting prospect for theology.

Although Pope Francis teases out some of Teilhard's thought between the lines in the encyclical Laudato Si', this chapter sought to demonstrate that a more thorough assessment of Teilhard's work would prove very fruitful for theology. Even in providing a brief introduction to his concept of the Total Body of Christ, the impulse to examine further concepts such as the noosphere and the Omega point naturally follows and, although beyond the scope of this chapter, is an exploration which would be fruitful for theology. Nonetheless, "a faith, a mysticism is necessary"[158] indeed in order to nurture and indeed grow a mature spirituality capable of supporting such extensive yet legitimate efforts to represent the full vitality and purpose of human activity. Whether "it is a question of preserving the sacred hunger that impels man's efforts, or of giving him the altruism he needs for his increasingly indispensable collaboration with his fellows, religion is the soul biologically necessary for the future of science. Humanity is no longer imaginable without science. But no more science is possible without some religion to animate it."[159] (I would argue for the replacement of the term religion here with spirituality I believe it is only in the context of Teilhard's time that the term religion is used.) To re-animate the scientific world we inhabit, it is necessary to re-examine our place and role in that world and in order to create a better future for all, it is imperative that the stories we tell about ourselves and our place in the universe are re-imagined. This is why the chapter moved to argue that mythology is a key discipline in the interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary field of spirituality.

[157]Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy,* 181.
[158]Ibid.
[159]Ibid.

This chapter concludes by identifying mythology as a key discipline in Spirituality. I argue and remain convinced that, from a Christian perspective, the study of mythology holds significant potential for theology. Just as Burnell, Polkinghorne and Teilhard navigate science to help shape their 'big picture' of the universe and beyond, so too mythology, by burrowing deep into the world of images, manages to capture another world entirely: and this is one world that is open to every human being, no matter the background. Only if we are able to envision the world differently will we be able to act in it differently. However, this is why mythology is so important for theology; before we can envision we have to belong. Mythology creates this space where those previously without a voice can be heard, express themselves fully and finally become part of the story. For, to reiterate a theme common to this chapter, how can we care about the earth if we have little concern for each other? How can we be concerned and moved to action for the other if their voices and stories are not made available to us? As I have argued, citing Dorr, if spirituality is that which is most deeply personal to a me, then no matter my gender, race or background, I must be able to fully express my experiences first in order to explore their potential further. Therefore, in the discipline of spirituality, through mythology, I can better express my experience of navigating the world for example, as a Christian who is female, and this experience can help inform theology which, despite being well-intentioned, is not yet polyphonic in nature. To illustrate a more melodious arrangement, I have chosen three different areas of mythology: Gnostic, Hindu and Celtic. The focus however was on their respective creation myths, as I believe they are helpful in portraying the many different experiences and the expression of the feminine.

Ultimately, I have discovered that in the many ways that the field of theology, together with philosophy, natural science and mythology combine, a different quality can be added to the results each time and this helps foster an environment of further learning and

deeper understanding. Essentially however, this chapter recognises that the knowledge from these three key disciplines, flowing into a synthesis and uniting together toward something beyond their own individual field, is ultimately greater than the sum of its parts. The proposed integration among these disciplines could lead to positive, transformative action in the world and it is this potential which this chapter sought to capture.

CONCLUSION

The call for a new ecological and cosmic vision can no longer be ignored. In fact, the cry is urgent. The onslaught of depressing facts and statistics, real-life footage of the consequences of poverty, climate change and loss of biodiversity, has done little to alleviate the problem. Our world is still one of inequality and suffering. The paradigm shift has not transpired. Yet, In waiting, I am reminded of Sobrino's *hope* in the face of reality and maintaining fidelity to that reality, no matter the level of suffering witnessed. I am reminded of Dorr's idea that the followers of Jesus are a *movement* which involves consistency and courage to keep moving forward. I am reminded of the initial inspiration for this dissertation which was Schneider's assertion that theology can be understood not only as faith seeking understanding but can actually evolve into understanding seeking transformation. It is hoped that at the very least, this dissertation captured the essence of hope, optimism and dynamism in the face of challenge, which exists in the work of the three chosen theologians.

What has also been demonstrated in this dissertation is not only the necessity of an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach for questions concerning God but the positive results which this approach provides. Such an incredibly open atmosphere can breathe fresh air into an academic climate that can be, at times, arid and one dimensional. The case made for this open approach is one of the notable areas of convergence for the three theologians. Even though Schneiders, Sobrino and Dorr come from completely different countries and work out of different contexts, the many points on which they converge proves once more that there is more that unites rather than divides in the search for meaning and the search for God. The accounts given of the three theologians provided the necessary framework to be able to move out of any boxed-in approach to theology. However, that is not to deny that in the most positive way, theology can truly ground spirituality. This was an

unexpected, yet pleasant discovery in the process of the research that instilled further confidence in theology's unique contribution to spirituality, if any was needed. Beginning with the inspiration of Vatican II, through to the shared foundations of scripture, moral theology, Catholic social teaching principles, option for the poor and for the earth, it proved grounding and empowering to understand how much theology truly has to offer spirituality.

To ground the argument for theology and spirituality integrated as an academic discipline was an important first step. Schneider's groundbreaking work in this area provided a deeper insight into the sense of nervousness and tension a more open approach can create. In choosing to focus considerably more on the positive aspects of an integrated, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach, it was nonetheless important on many levels to understand why such an approach can be viewed negatively. It is my conclusion that the compartmentalized academic approach which I find restrictive, with its many definitive and fixed boundaries, actually provides safety, structure and a sense of order for others. This was an important discovery as it provided a reason for much of the hostility which presents itself when discussing the discipline of spirituality. Neither side of the debate is completely right nor perhaps everyone will fall somewhere on the spectrum between a compartmentalized approach and a more open approach. Perhaps this very tension is itself positive. Schneiders captures the tension best acknowledging that the academic discipline of spirituality and its multidisciplinary approach creates risks and rewards. It is up to all involved to become more comfortable with this tension.

Again, tension can arise around amidst any discussion of liberation theology; it seems to foster strong reactions and opinions. With many liberation theologians work, the aspects which can actually unite and promote positive social change can be drowned out by a lot of

distorted rhetoric. In this dissertation it was my aim to challenge some of the preconceptions of surrounding liberation theologians. I have always maintained that Sobrino is quite unique among his peers while sharing a common bond and employing similar themes. I hoped, in providing analysis of his argument for the principle of mercy and the taking of the crucified people from the cross, to portray liberation theology in a different light. In the course of my research on Sobrino, I discovered just how pivotal Ellacuria and Zubiri were to his life, his work and his spirituality. As they are so crucial to understanding Sobrino, I found it difficult to not include more of their work in this chapter, instead choosing to remain focused on Sobrino's elucidation of the principles of mercy and of taking the crucified down from the cross. However, from both Sobrino and Dorr, I have learned much more about the call to conversion and understand the need to foster an intelligence of the heart in a profound way. It is for these reasons that I felt inspired to explore this further in the final chapter.

Rather than continuing to assess the three theologians further in chapter five, by imagining what an integrated approach might actually look like in the final chapter, I was instead inspired to give account of the exciting possibilities available through such an approach. It is hoped that even though somewhat of a leap from the previous chapters it may have honoured the revelatory impulse the three theologians encourage us to catch and the call to a more profound conversion. Putting forward Gnostic, Hindu and Celtic creation myths, which admittedly could not be fully comprehensive accounts, was intended to give only a snapshot of the many other voices we have yet to fully hear. Another dissertation could be filled with other voices, other stories, alternative views and the many inspired revelation and response cycles waiting to be told. The more comfortable we become unearthing and discussing long hidden creation myths and rediscover them anew, the more we learn. We may

even become so inspired as to write and give voice to our own stories. Careful attention to scientific accounts of reality and creation myths proves, even in this small and modest way, that the integration between diverse fields can be seamlessly woven together creating a harmonious and more inclusive picture that can benefit all. When a discipline allows space for the voices of the many to be heard something extraordinary begins to grow. In listening to the stories of people previously silenced or marginalized, forgiveness, compassion and conversion abound. When people recognise themselves in the stories we tell, and know that their voice matters and is in fact respected, only then will the conversion and transformation sought by the three theologians begin to truly blossom. A new ecological and cosmic vision is possible. Fostering an intelligence of the heart is imperative.

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