The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality

Edited by

Arthur Holder

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Introduction

Arthur Holder

The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality offers a comprehensive introduction to Christian spirituality, which has in recent years emerged as a distinct academic discipline in universities, colleges, and theological schools throughout the English-speaking world. The *Companion* is intended to be thoroughly interdisciplinary, broadly ecumenical, and representative of the most significant recent developments in the field. Without attempting to impose a single definition of Christian spirituality upon the contributors, as editor I have invited them to reflect on "the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship." The six parts of the volume deal with approaches to the study of Christian spirituality, biblical foundations, historical developments, theological perspectives, interdisciplinary dialogue partners, and selected special topics in contemporary Christian spirituality. My hope is that *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* will be of use to scholars in the field and in other related disciplines, to undergraduate and graduate students in theology and religious studies who desire a more accessible entry point to Christianity than might be provided by books dealing solely with doctrinal issues or institutional developments, and to Christians of all denominations and traditions who desire to learn more about the practice of their faith.

Defining Christian Spirituality

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God . . . When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8: 14–16). Although the apostle Paul never uses the word "spirituality," this earnest confession of faith suggests that any Christian understanding of that term must necessarily refer to the intimate loving relationship between God's Holy Spirit and the spirit (animating life force) of believers – a relationship that can be characterized both as kinship and as communion. The Christian life is always "life in the Spirit" (cf. Gal. 5: 25), in all its variety and unpredictability. The Spirit of God is one, but it manifests itself

in diverse ways. As members of the human race, we all share in a common human spirit, but that spirit takes a distinct and particular form in each one of us. The phenomenon that has come to be known as "Christian spirituality" is thus a complex subject that can only be understood and appreciated when approached from a variety of perspectives, and with careful attention to its particular manifestations in an infinite range of historical and cultural contexts.

The word "spirituality" does not have a very long history in English, at least not in its current sense. As a term referring to lived Christian experience, its recent popularity in English seems to have been derived by way of translation from French Catholic authors in the early years of the twentieth century (Principe 1993: 931; Sheldrake 1995: 42–4). Readers of this volume will find frequent discussions of matters of definition, the details of which may be best appreciated in the context of the individual essays. Here it seems appropriate simply to indicate some issues about which the contributors are in general agreement, and some on which they disagree (or at least offer significantly different emphases).

Contemporary scholars of Christian spirituality, including the contributors to this volume, have readily accepted Walter Principe's demarcation of three different but related levels of spirituality: (a) the "real or existential level," (b) "the formulation of teaching about the lived reality" as constructed by influential spiritual leaders, traditions, or schools, and (c) "the study by scholars of the first and especially of the second levels of spirituality" (2000: 47–8). Which of these three senses is operative in a particular discourse can usually be determined from the context, just as speakers of English are accustomed to thinking of "history" as referring sometimes to past events, at other times to a narrative account of those events, and at still other times to the academic discipline that studies both past events and the accounts of them subsequently provided by later writers. (But note that in the academic discipline of Christian spirituality, as in that of history, postmodern theorists often question whether we ever have direct access to the first "existential" level for anyone except ourselves; if not, then these disciplines are in truth able to study only the discourses and artifacts that appear on the second level, and any inferences they draw about the first level are necessarily provisional or perhaps even illusory.)

All of the contributors to this volume seem also to hold that the study of spirituality appropriately involves a focus on "experience." Although there is no final consensus on what "experience" means or on how it can best be studied, these scholars do agree that the experience studied in the field of Christian spirituality is not limited to extraordinary moments of ecstasy or insight, or to explicitly devotional experiences such as prayer and meditation. Certainly the experience to which the discipline of Christian spirituality attends is not "spiritual" as opposed to "material" or "embodied"; these scholars are very much aware that in Pauline terminology "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) means "under the influence of the Holy Spirit" and is contrasted not with the realm of the "body" (*soma*) but with that of the "flesh" (*sarx*) and its selfish desires. Thus these scholars want to avoid all suggestions of dualism and to insist that spirituality properly includes the whole of life: politics, economics, art, sexuality, and science, as well as whatever is explicitly religious. A difficulty, of course, is that many (perhaps most!) Christian "spiritual" writers and practitioners of previous eras have not shared

this wholehearted aversion to dualism, so that these contemporary scholars must frankly acknowledge that their own convictions and interests are often at odds with the tendencies of the material they seek to study.

Finally, the contributors to this *Companion* agree that the study of Christian spirituality is inherently interdisciplinary. Although their own academic training came in a wide range of academic disciplines (including biblical studies, history, theology, sociology, psychology, physics, and biology), I believe that all of them would now identify themselves, at least on a part-time basis, as scholars of Christian spirituality – not in distinction from their original disciplinary identities, but as an enhancement or focusing of those identities. For some of them, Christian spirituality has become their primary academic discipline; others continue to see another discipline as the home base from which they venture forth into Christian spirituality from time to time; still others probably see themselves as having a foot in both camps, without feeling a particular need to distinguish when they are operating within one or the other. But surely none of them would claim that his or her approach to the subject is exhaustive or self-sufficient. Indeed, I believe that readers of this volume will be able to discern that all of these scholars, despite their disparate disciplinary locations, are engaged in a common conversation about a topic (Christian spirituality) that holds fascination for them in its expansive totality, not just in relation to their particular subfields of expertise.

Even with all these significant agreements, the contributors to this volume hold various points of view in relation to some critical questions of definition that engage all scholars in the field of Christian spirituality today. Perhaps foremost among these is a question about which element in the term "Christian spirituality" ought to be taken as primary. Some scholars, often but not always those who come from the disciplinary perspectives of biblical studies, history, or theology, begin (not always explicitly) with Christianity as a concrete historical phenomenon, and then go on to ask: "What is it within Christianity that we can identify specifically as 'spirituality,' as distinct from ethics or doctrine or institutional structures, or perhaps as a conjoining of those features of the Christian phenomenon?" Here the academic discipline of Christian spirituality is in effect a specialization within the broader field of Christian studies, or within a more narrowly defined field such as biblical studies, church history, or systematic theology. Other scholars (often but not always those who approach their work from the standpoint of the social or natural sciences, or who want to engage in conversation with scholars in those disciplines) seek to begin with spirituality as a universal human phenomenon (for example, "the capacity for self-transcendence"), and then go on to ask how Christians specify and thematize this common human experience in ways that are distinctive to their particular traditions.

Closely related to the question about which element ("Christian" or "spirituality") comes first is the often-heated debate about the relationship between spirituality and theology. Is the study of Christian spirituality inherently and irreducibly theological, simply because we cannot hope to understand any aspect of Christianity without reference to God and human discourse about God? Or is the academic discipline of Christian spirituality better seen as a form of religious studies, to which theology makes its distinctive contribution but only as one auxiliary discipline among many? There are, of course, many variations and subtle shadings of both views, often dependent upon

how the protagonists are defining "theology." Is it equivalent to "doctrine," in which case spirituality scholars must take care to avoid letting intellectually or ecclesially preconceived conceptions of what Christians "ought" to feel and believe distract them from what those Christians actually experience in life? Or is "theology" rather to be understood as "faith seeking understanding" or simply as "knowing God," in which case it might again become (as it has always been in the Christian East) a virtual synonym for spirituality?

The debate around these and other such questions is conditioned by previous developments in the history of Western theology since the twelfth century, the time most often identified as marking a "split" between theology and spirituality, or between the reasoned expression of faith and its lived experience. The ascendancy of critical reason, the devotion to scientific methods, and the Enlightenment ideal of "objective" scholarship all come into play on both sides of the equation, along with the postmodern critiques of them that have emerged in the academy in recent years. Much of the current debate finds expression in arguments about the proper institutional location of Christian spirituality as an academic discipline. If it is a subdiscipline of theology, or an inherently theological enterprise, then perhaps it can only be carried out in the context of a believing community such as that found in a denominational seminary or a church-related college. (This view is more frequently encountered in the United States than in Britain or Canada, where theology is more easily afforded a place in the curriculum of secular universities.) But if Christian spirituality is really a descriptive discipline rather than a normative one, then (perhaps somewhat paradoxically) it is probably best pursued in an environment in which research and reflection are conducted apart from any authoritative shared faith commitment.

Obviously related to the question of the proper environment for research in Christian spirituality are the issues of practice and participation. If scholars of Christian spirituality seek to reflect on religious experience, is it appropriate for them at the same time to foster and shape the experiences of other people by serving as their spiritual guides? To what extent, and by what means, is it appropriate for those scholars to reflect upon their own experience? Is Christian spirituality best understood as a "theoretical" discipline like mathematics, or an "applied" discipline like engineering? Is growth in faith and holiness the true and proper aim of study in this field, or merely a happy but inessential byproduct? Can the study of Christian spirituality be undertaken by those of other religious traditions, or none? If so, are they doing the same thing as Christian scholars in the field, or is their study necessarily something different because they study as outsiders rather than as insiders? Is it ever truly possible for an insider to a particular spiritual tradition to adopt the posture of an outsider, and vice versa? If possible, is it desirable? Only a few of the essays here tackle these questions directly, but all of them provide at least implicit answers indicated by the author's choice of tone, style, and perspective. The reader who wants to identify each contributor's distinctive approach should pay close attention to the use of the first person (both singular and plural). Contemporary scholarship in the field of Christian spirituality moves along a spectrum from confessional autobiography to the presentation of an apparently "authorless" text. None of the essays in this volume goes to the extreme in either direction, but the contributions do represent a considerable range of points in between.

A final question that fascinates (and often puzzles) scholars of Christian spirituality has to do with the relationship between spirituality and religion. There are those who would argue that the two terms are synonymous, or at least that the distinctions commonly made between them inevitably end up reducing "spirituality" to something that is ahistorical, individualistic, disembodied, and utterly privatized – in short, not at all the sort of thing that interests scholars like the contributors to this volume, and hardly deserving of the name "Christian." Others might want to argue that spirituality is the individual's appropriation of a received religious tradition. (But how then can we speak meaningfully of the spirituality of the Baptists or the Armenian Orthodox, as though such groups had a distinctive corporate spirituality, and not merely a common religion?) Some suggest that spirituality is the universal human experience of transcendence that becomes particularized, and inevitably reified, in the forms and structures of any specific religion – thereby transferring to spirituality Schleiermacher's famous definition of religion as "the feeling of absolute dependence." For several of the authors whose work appears here, the contemporary tendency to set "spirituality" in opposition to "religion" (as in the phrase "spiritual but not religious") is a phenomenon deserving scholarly attention in itself, regardless of whether or not this oppositional definition is "correct." In other words, we need to listen carefully to what people are trying to say when they contrast the two terms with one another. We may not learn much about "spirituality" or "religion" as abstract concepts, but we will learn a great deal about the experience of the people who use the words in this way.

As previously stated, the working definition that I offered the contributors to this *Companion* was of Christian spirituality as "the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship." None of the authors appears to have rejected this definition outright or found it especially problematic, although several say that it needs to be given further specificity or put in relation to the spirituality of people outside the bounds of Christianity. It is worth noting that the words "faith" and "discipleship" are unambiguously Christian terms, full of scriptural and theological resonance. It is hard to think of any serious Christian author across the centuries who did not use those words or their cognates with some regularity, or any Christian group that has not invoked them in both teaching and worship. So this working definition is clearly more emic to Christianity (that is, expressed in terms intrinsic to its self-understanding) than etic (expressed in terms derived from outside the phenomenon under analysis). Like any definition of a scholarly subject, this one has its advantages as well as its limitations. Ultimately, the value of any such definition must be judged by its heuristic quality: does it stimulate research, foster insight, and raise interesting questions to be debated and explored? By that important measure, and on the evidence of the essays in this volume, my working definition of Christian spirituality seems to have done its job.

An Introduction to the Essays

The structure of this *Companion to Christian Spirituality* is neither haphazard nor original to me. As my colleagues at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley will quickly recognize, the six component parts of the volume correspond closely to the

protocol of our doctoral program in Christian spirituality, and to the syllabus of the introductory area seminar in which I have been privileged to participate on several occasions. (A prime motivation for editing this volume was the knowledge that now we will at last have a suitable textbook for this graduate-level course.) Thus we move from questions of definition and method to the foundations of Christian spirituality in Scripture and history, and then to engagement with theological perspectives; thus far, we are dealing with materials and questions that must be considered and (at least at a general level) mastered by all scholars in the field, regardless of the nature of their research projects. Then we come to consider a selection of interdisciplinary dialogue partners, any one or more of which a scholar might want to engage in relation to a particular research topic; and, finally, to some examples of topics in contemporary Christian spirituality that seem to be of special interest to many of those working in the field today. I gratefully acknowledge the help and inspiration provided over the years by students and faculty at the Graduate Theological Union, who have served as my mentors and guides in this exciting and ever-changing discipline.

Part I (*What is Christian Spirituality?*) contains a single essay by Sandra M. Schneiders, who has been perhaps the most articulate and prolific English-speaking scholar writing on the definitions and methodologies appropriate to this relatively new academic discipline. Here she explicates and refines her well-known definition of spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives" before going on to describe three approaches (historical, theological, and anthropological) to the study of Christian spirituality, with generous appreciation of the promise of each approach and insightful cautions about each approach's potential pitfalls. Finally, Schneiders offers her own nuanced perspective on the controversial issues of practice and participation in the study of Christian spirituality.

Both of the essays in Part II (*Scripture and Christian Spirituality*) combine historical research with issues of contemporary application, but the first essay deals primarily with the spiritualities that the Bible has helped produce, while the second essay concentrates more on the ancient spiritualities that produced the Bible. To a certain extent, these differing approaches reflect the most obvious difference between the Old Testament and the New (namely, that the latter was written by Christians but the former by Jews); however, they also represent two different approaches to "biblical spirituality." In the first essay, Barbara Green traces the history of Christian exegesis of the Book of Jonah in order to show how the Old Testament has been both formative and transformative for Christians; in conclusion, she identifies five perennial issues in the Christian appropriation of Old Testament texts. The second essay, by Bonnie Thurston, reminds us that the New Testament reflects a plurality of spiritualities, each of which arose from the religious experience of disciples in community, and all of which need to be studied in recognition that the first-century world was not the same as ours, even though Christians then and now claim experience of the same risen Christ.

The six essays in Part III (*Christian Spirituality in History*) provide an overview of some of the most significant themes, movements, and developments. Without attempting to be encyclopedic or exhaustive, each essay introduces the reader to selected persons, institutions, practices, and events that serve as illustrative cases. The approach

here differs somewhat from many previous treatments of the history of Christian spirituality in that the authors have tried to present more synthetic accounts that avoid treating various "schools" of spirituality in isolation from one another. As a result, the reader may hope to gain some sense of the unity of Christianity, as well as its unquestionable diversity. In the first historical essay, Columba Stewart characterizes Christianity during the Roman empire (100–600) as searching for unity and forming a spiritual culture through practices of liturgy, devotion, and public witness (most notably, martyrdom, asceticism, and monasticism). John A. McGuckin carries the story in the Eastern church forward to 1700 by concentrating on some of the most remarkable Byzantine and Syrian writers in a variety of genres, including hymnody, doctrinal treatises, spiritual guidance, hagiography, and polemic. In the medieval West to the eve of the Reformation, Ulrike Wiethaus sees the emergence of a multicultural synthesis that has bequeathed legacies both positive (expanded roles for women, mystical literature, ideals of radical poverty, heroic acceptance of suffering) and negative (religious intolerance, fear of diversity, and an over-reliance on texts). Jill Raitt analyses European reformations of all sorts (Protestant, Catholic, Anglican, Anabaptist, Quaker) in the tumultuous period 1450–1700 as diverse ways in which spiritual practice left the cloister in order to reach out to lay people in their shops and homes. Co-authors Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart-Sicking picture Christian spirituality in modern North America and Europe since 1700 as a changing mosaic of spiritual options exercised by creative individuals both within and beyond the churches in the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the breakdown of institutional authority. Especially welcome in this volume because it covers ground that will be unfamiliar to many readers is the essay by Richard Fox Young, who employs literature along with more conventional sources to examine spirituality in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania from the perspective of a new historiography that shifts the emphasis from Western transmission of the gospel to non-Western appropriation, and from the missionaries to the converts.

In Part IV (*Theology and Christian Spirituality*), we turn to theology's constructive engagement with lived Christian experience. Mark A. McIntosh draws on theologians as diverse as Maximus the Confessor, Aquinas, Traherne, and John of the Cross to root Christian spirituality in the divine generosity of self-giving at the heart of the Trinity. Suggesting that Christology's role in spirituality is analogous to the role of theological reason in the life of faith, William Thompson-Uberuaga argues that both fideist and rationalist Christologies lead to diminished spiritualities, while combinative forms offer better prospects in the face of both globalization and postmodern thought. Taking up the question of the Holy Spirit (often strangely neglected in talk of spirituality), Robert Davis Hughes III explores the Spirit's trinitarian mission as the source of a threefold pattern of conversion, transfiguration, and perfection in the spiritual life. Challenging Sandra Schneiders's view of the discipline of theology as being too restrictive, Philip Endean advocates a mystagogical theology that at its best and most imaginative is very close to what is today called "spirituality"; he then goes on to identify three contributions that the study of the doctrinal tradition regarding the human person (which is by no means the whole of what he means by "theology") can make to spirituality: articulation of context, concern with truth, and extension of sympathy. In his essay on the church as context for spirituality, David Lonsdale describes the church as a school of

the affections and desires that forms disciples in discernment primarily through liturgy, which is its proper and distinctive activity. Liturgy naturally figures also in an essay on sacramentality by Ann Loades, but she points us not in the first instance to services of worship in churches but to the worldly sacraments of nature, creativity, procreation and parenting, work, music and dance, stillness and silence, and finally to Christ incarnate in our midst. Part IV concludes with William C. Spohn's rendering (based in virtue ethics) of spiritual practices such as fidelity in marriage, hymn singing, and liturgical prayer as the primary means by which the affections of Christian believers are shaped for moral character and action.

The essays in Part V (*Interdisciplinary Dialogue Partners for the Study of Christian Spirituality*) explore both the promises and the challenges for Christian spirituality in entering into dialogue with various academic disciplines, all of which have already been in prior conversation with other forms of theological and religious studies. In the first essay, John A. Coleman surveys recent sociological literature dealing with the vast array of spiritualities and religious movements in the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century, noting that while the categories "spiritual" and "religious" are often defined in opposition to one another, many people identify themselves as both (good news for churches that emphasize spiritual growth). Next, Janet K. Ruffing provides an overview of some major schools of psychology (psychoanalytic, cognitive, analytic, transpersonal) that are particularly relevant to spirituality studies, even though, as Ruffing cautions, their understanding of spirituality is often independent of religious communities, privatized, and inattentive to societal issues of justice and compassion that are critical in Christian spirituality. The possibilities for dialogue with the natural sciences (especially physics and biology) are explored by Robert John Russell, who directs our attention to the spiritual implications of scientific discussions about things as old as the Big Bang and as new as artificial intelligence, as small as a DNA molecule and as vast as the stars. Alejandro García-Rivera traces the historical development of aesthetics from Plato and Aristotle through the early church and the Middle Ages to Kant, Hegel, and von Balthasar, suggesting that the human ability to appreciate and create beauty is an intrinsic aspect of our experience of the divine. Amy Hollywood's essay shows that feminist readings of medieval spirituality, as carried out by Caroline Walker Bynum and other recent scholars, have revealed previously hidden aspects of that historical period, while raising complex methodological and theoretical issues that are pertinent to the study of Christian spirituality in any context. Susan J. White's essay on the dialogue with ritual studies incorporates concepts and investigative tools from anthropology, ethnography, and performance studies that will be useful to many spirituality scholars, especially in light of the current interest in religious practices, and liturgical practices in particular (as noted above with reference to several of the theological essays in Part IV). And if Christian spirituality is a form of *religious* experience, then we can hardly talk about it without some consideration of the other great world religions. In the final essay of Part V, Michael Barnes presents what he calls a "theology of dialogue" that seeks to go beyond the "history of religions" or "religious studies" models of understanding the religious "other."

If space had permitted, the final part, Part VI (*Special Topics in Contemporary Christian Spirituality*), could have been expanded to include many more topics. But the seven

topics chosen represent some of those that have garnered the most scholarly attention in recent years, and promise to do so for some time to come. David Hay's essay on religious or spiritual experience provides both philosophical reflection and empirical data concerning this fundamental aspect of Christian spirituality, which has often been challenged as illusion or neurosis but continues to stimulate research by biologists, psychologists, sociologists, and many others. Defining mysticism as "[t]he experience of *oneness or intimacy with some absolute divine reality*," David B. Perrin investigates the relationship of mysticism to "ordinary" religious experience, to language and text, to body and soul, and to the prophetic and charismatic dimensions of Christian faith. In an essay that can fruitfully be read in conjunction with the historical essays in Part III – indeed, in relation to all efforts at finding meaning in the "classical texts" (written and otherwise) of Christian spirituality – Philip F. Sheldrake considers the task of interpretation: how can communities of Christian readers find wisdom in what they read? A fine example of just this sort of interpretation is provided by Douglas Burton-Christie in an essay reflecting on contemporary writing on the spiritual significance of nature, and especially the experience of loss on both personal and cosmic scales, in what has been described as an "age of extinction." Returning to the notion of "practice" and its role in the study of Christian spirituality, Elizabeth Liebert appeals to parallels with the field of pastoral theology and insights from educational theory to advocate practice in the classroom as an aid to scholarship, as well as a means of spiritual growth. Michael Battle asks what a Christian spirituality of liberation might look like if based on relationality and inclusion instead of identity politics, with Desmond Tutu as a contemporary example of a theologian and activist who represents both confirmation and critique of the perspectives of liberation theology. Finally, Kwok Pui-Lan brings the volume to a close with an essay in which she engages the increasingly pressing issues of interfaith worship and multiple religious identity, at the same time reminding us that interfaith encounter (with its attendant charges of "syncreticism") is as old as Christianity itself.

The Present, Past, and Future of a Discipline

This *Companion* can with justification claim to represent the current "state of the art" in the academic discipline of Christian spirituality. It should be noted that a number of important topics that do not appear in the table of contents are nevertheless dealt with in some of the essays collected here. For example, there are substantial treatments of "culture" as a category for Christian spirituality in the essays of Young, White, and Sheldrake. Readers who regret the omission of literary studies from the list of interdisciplinary dialogue partners are invited to look at the essays of Young, Hollywood, and Burton-Christie to find excellent examples of fruitful engagement with literature and literary theory. And the complex and contested relationship between spirituality and religion is explored from various angles by Bass and Stewart-Sicking, Coleman, Hay, Burton-Christie, and Kwok, while gender issues are treated not only in Hollywood's essay on feminist studies, but also in the essays of Wiethaus, Loades, and Kwok.

Although this volume focuses on the present state of the discipline, there is ample material here for readers who wish to get a sense of its past. Schneiders and Endean, as well as Hughes, Perrin, and Sheldrake, discuss aspects of earlier scholarly approaches to the subject, and the bibliographies they provide will guide readers toward other helpful sources. But perhaps the most effective testimony to the progress that has been made in the development of Christian spirituality as an academic discipline is simply the cohesiveness (which is not to say uniformity or unanimity) of the essays in this *Companion*. Notice how often contributors coming from very different perspectives and writing on quite disparate topics cite many of the same sources, including one another. Judith Klein has written: "The term *discipline* signifies the tools, methods, procedures, exempla, concepts, and theories that account coherently for a set of objects or subjects. Over time they are shaped and reshaped by external contingencies and internal intellectual demands. In this manner a discipline comes to organize and concentrate experience into a particular 'world view' " (1990: 104). If this is the case, then there is abundant evidence here that Christian spirituality is no longer merely "emerging" as a discipline, but has clearly arrived.

Klein's primary interest, however, is not in the establishment of disciplines but in the creative interstitial work of interdisciplinarity that goes on between and among disciplines. Thus she makes us aware that any discipline inevitably loses sight of whatever it chooses not to notice, and is unable to study whatever does not respond to its tools and methods. Scholars of Christian spirituality hope to minimize such disciplinary losses when they claim that theirs is an inherently interdisciplinary field. Will this "interdiscipline" or "field-encompassing field" be able to maintain its characteristic energy, its expansive vision, and its eclectic yet ordered approach to research? I believe that it will – that we as spirituality scholars and practitioners will do so – as long as we keep our focus on the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship.

Much of the appeal of Christian spirituality as an academic discipline lies in what is often referred to as its peculiarly "self-implicating" character. Many students of spirituality have a profound stake in their studies because they are themselves pursuing the same "life in the Spirit" as the historical and contemporary Christians whose experience they seek to understand. For others, the study of Christian spirituality is perhaps not the study of a faith they call their own, but it is nonetheless self-implicating for them in the way that every great human intellectual endeavor invites – even compels – us to engage questions of authenticity and meaning, of purpose and commitment. But all of this does not mean that the study of Christian spirituality is necessarily "serious" (in the sense of being somber or grave). Readers of this book can expect to discover afresh the truth of Simone Weil's insight that in academic study it is desire, not willpower, that produces the best and most enduring work:

> The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire, there must be pleasure and joy in the work. The intelligence only grows and bears fruit in joy . . . It is the part played by joy in our studies that makes of them a preparation for spiritual life, for desire directed toward God is the only power capable of raising the soul. Or rather, it is God alone who comes down and possesses the soul, but desire alone draws God down. (1951: 110–11)

A good deal of pleasure, joy, and desire has gone into the contributors' writing of these essays and my editing of them. We hope that our readers will find their own desire for truth, beauty, goodness, and love kindled by what they read in this *Companion to Christian Spirituality*.

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PART I

What is Christian Spirituality?

CHAPTER 1

Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality

Sandra M. Schneiders

Spirituality as an *academic field* is the study of spirituality as an *existential phenomenon* (the material object) under a formality (the formal object) which distinguishes it from theology, on the one hand, and religious studies, on the other. This requires, if not a definition, at least an identification of the phenomenon being studied and a description of the specific formality under which it is being studied. This task will be briefly addressed in the first part of this essay.

The second part will deal with the major topic of this essay: basic contemporary approaches to the academic study of spirituality. By approaches, I mean orienting frameworks within which specific methodologies are developed for the study of particular phenomena within the field of spirituality. Approaches reflect primarily the types of knowledge (or skills) the student seeks to attain which reflect the aspects of spirituality that she or he finds most interesting or important. Methodologies are articulated complexes of procedures (methods) which are developed to investigate what is of interest. Methods do not, or at least should not, dictate either what can be studied or how it should be studied. Rather, methods are systematic attempts to ensure the validity and fruitfulness of the research. Our concern in this essay is with approaches rather than with methodologies or specific methods.

The third part of the essay will address a specific issue in the academic field of spirituality, namely, how the self-implicating character of the study of the human search for God influences work in the field.

The reader should bear 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. In this respect, spirituality is analogous to some other humanistic fields of study, such as psychology. A freshman in college may study psychology primarily to gain some understanding of her or himself or to determine whether this field might become her or his major. A master's student may wish to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to become a secondary school counselor. A physician may be doing a clinical specialization to become a psychiatrist. Or a PhD

student may be primarily interested in theoretical research in the field. Any or all of these objectives might be simultaneously operative and mutually influencing in the work of any particular student. Analogously, some students of spirituality, especially those in formation programs and students taking their first courses in religion, are often primarily concerned with their own spiritual development. Some, especially those in seminary-type programs, are primarily concerned with learning how to mediate the riches of Christian spirituality to others and how to discern and deal with the spiritual concerns of those in their pastoral care. Others, particularly those in doctoral-level programs in spirituality, are primarily concerned with the qualitative and quantitative expansion of knowledge in the field and becoming equipped to contribute to the field by their own research and teaching in the future. However, while it is important to distinguish these objectives and attend to the differences they introduce into the approaches to the study of spirituality, it would be artificial to pretend that researchers have no interest in their own spiritual lives or in assisting others in theirs or that pastors have no need of theoretical knowledge of the spiritual life. In short, although the *field* of spirituality is a broad terrain in which personal, practical, and theoretical projects are pursued and interact, the *academic discipline* of spirituality is primarily the research discipline whose specific objective is the expansion of our knowledge and understanding of the God–human relationship.

Finally, while spirituality as such is not necessarily religious, denominational, or confessional, this volume is concerned with Christian spirituality. Therefore, unless otherwise specified, spirituality in this essay means Christian spirituality.

Spirituality as a Field of Study

The material object: spirituality as existential phenomenon

Christian spirituality as an academic discipline studies the lived experience of Christian faith, the subjective appropriation of faith and living of discipleship in their individual and corporate actualization(s). Because this definition is so general as to be open to misinterpretation, I would prefer to situate Christian spirituality as existential phenomenon within a more nuanced definition of spirituality in general and then specify it as Christian. Spirituality is the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence and will be defined for the purposes of this essay as the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives. Each element of the definition helps to specify what we are discussing.

First, spirituality is not simply spontaneous experience, however elevating or illuminating, but a conscious and deliberate way of living. It is an ongoing project, not merely a collection of experiences or episodes. Thus, lived spirituality is often referred to as one's "spiritual life," a term I will use occasionally in what follows. Second, the project is not self-enclosed but orients the subject beyond purely private satisfaction toward the ultimate good, the highest value, that the person recognizes, which may be God but might also be something other than God, for example, the full personhood of all

humans, world peace, enlightenment, or the good of the cosmos. Third, the ultimate value functions as a horizon luring the person toward growth. Hence, the spiritual life is intrinsically dynamic. Finally, this definition allows us to disqualify as spirituality negative life-organizations such as addictions (no matter how all-consuming they might be), exploitative or aggressive projects that seek the good of the individual at the expense of others or the rest of creation (no matter how energizing such a project might be), or venal concerns with money, power, or pleasure.

Christian spirituality as Christian specifies the horizon of ultimate value as the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit making her or him a child of God. This new life, which Paul calls "life in the Spirit" (cf. Rom. 7: 6; 8: 2, 6, 10–11; Gal. 6: 8) is celebrated sacramentally within the believing community of the church and lived in the world as mission in and to the coming reign of God. This life of faith and discipleship constitutes the existential phenomenon that Christian spirituality as a discipline studies.

The contemporary discipline of spirituality, aware that the human subject and its context are immensely more complex than was once thought, attends to topics that, in the past, were considered peripheral or irrelevant to the spiritual life. Today we recognize that the subject of Christian spirituality is the human being as a whole: spirit, mind, and body; individual and social; culturally conditioned and ecologically intertwined with all of creation; economically and politically responsible. The Christian's spirituality, although individually unique and intensely personal, is not a private or purely "interior" affair concerned exclusively with prayer and the practice of virtue. It is, as Peter Van Ness (1996: 5) described spirituality in general, the relation of the whole of oneself to reality as a whole. In the field of Christian spirituality, both "self" and "reality" are defined by Christian faith.

The formal object: spirituality as religious experience

All Christian theology studies Christian faith: God, Christ, Scripture, sacraments, church, morality, and so on. And the locus in which these realities appear is, ultimately, the experience of the church in its members throughout its history. In other words, all theology is an investigation of experientially rooted *faith*. The distinguishing characteristic, or formal object, of spirituality as a field of study is its specific focus on Christian faith as the *experience* of the concrete believing subject(s). In other words, spirituality studies not simply Christian faith but the lived experience of Christian faith.

Experience, religious or otherwise, is notoriously difficult to define. We might begin by saying that to experience is to be "subjectively aware" and that experience is always "experience of." First, experience is by definition subjective and, as such, incommunicable. My pain cannot be felt by you even though, because you have experienced pain, you can empathize, by entering analogically into my experience, and thus understand it. Experience, including spirituality as existential phenomenon, can only be communicated by articulation in "texts": verbal, literary, artistic, behavioral, and so on (cf.

Ricoeur 1976: 16, 30–1). Second, since experience is always "experience of," there is an object, "something" to articulate and to be understood. Thus, even in the case of mystical experience, which is the most ineffable of religious experiences, the subject can and does say something intended to allow the reader/listener access to "something." This articulated "something," precisely as experience, is the object of spirituality as a field of study, what the researcher wants to understand.

Since religious experience as experience can only be accessed in its articulations, the student of spirituality is always dealing with "texts." Again, the analogy with psychology is illuminating. The psychologist is not studying anxiety as such or in general but the particular experience of anxiety of this individual or group. Verbalization, texts, drawings, dreams, behaviors, and other such articulations of the anxiety are the psychologist's access to the particular experience of anxiety. In attempting to understand this particular experience, the psychologist draws on the large body of theoretical knowledge about anxiety as well as on his or her own direct or vicarious experiences of anxiety or related states. But neither the general theory nor the therapist's experience is the focus of study in this case. The material object of the therapist's attention is anxiety, but the formal object is anxiety as lived experience.

Similarly, the student of spirituality is not studying prayer as such but, for example, the prayer of Teresa of Avila as it is articulated in *The Interior Castle* and is manifest in her life which, itself, is mediated by her autobiography. The researcher presumably has considerable theoretical knowledge of prayer both through theological and psychological study and through personal and/or vicarious experience. But the focus of study is neither the theology of prayer nor the researcher's experience of prayer, but specifically the prayer of Teresa of Avila.

Spirituality, in other words, is an instance of what Paul Ricoeur (1976: 78–9) calls "the science of the individual." Studies in spirituality do not aim to develop a second-order theoretical language about the spiritual life which can be verified in all authentic Christian spirituality, but to investigate the spiritual life as it is and has been concretely lived. Spirituality is related to theology as the study of Hamlet, or even the Shakespearean corpus, is to the study of literary theory. The "individuals" that spirituality studies may be specific persons like Teresa, or specific movements like Benedictine monasticism, or themes like "the world," or practices like centering prayer, spiritual direction, or religious pacifism. Although there is constant interplay between the knowledge of the particular individual(s) which enriches theoretical knowledge of the spiritual life and the theoretical knowledge which helps illuminate the interpretation of the individual, the focus/object of spirituality as a field of study is the experience of the spiritual life *as* experience. Consequently, unlike theology, whose analyses and conclusions intend applicability to all instances in the class in question (for example, an adequate theology of grace should be applicable to all the baptized), spirituality studies unique experiences of the living of Christian faith which, in their very uniqueness, can encourage, challenge, warn, illuminate, confirm, expand, subvert, or otherwise interact with both general theological theory, on the one hand, and other specific experiences of faith, on the other. Dorothy Day's pacifist spirituality, for example, ran counter to the official theology of the US Catholic bishops during World War II and could not be fully appropriated by her (presumably very holy) contemporary, Thomas Merton.

Day's pacifism can be theologically related to, but not fully contained within, the Catholic just-war theory and studied within the context of moral theology. But the discipline of spirituality studies Day's pacifism as the existential encounter with the Beatitudes that shaped the unique faith experience and lived discipleship of this particular woman and both challenged and expanded our understanding of Christian faith and life (Krupa 1997).

Although three different approaches to the study of spirituality will be discussed below, it is important to realize that they interact continuously in most real research projects and that all three, influenced by the postmodernity that has emerged in the academy since the mid-twentieth century, are marked by the linguistic-hermeneutical turn that has undermined the scientistic positivism of the modern period.

Three Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality

The three approaches to spirituality as an academic discipline that will be discussed in this section – the historical, the theological, and the anthropological – are derived from reading, discussions, and observations in the field over the past thirty to forty years. In other words, this is not a *de jure* prescriptive classification but a *de facto* heuristic taxonomy.

The historical approach

The least controversial approach to the study of spirituality is the historical approach. This is due largely to the fact that history as a modern academic discipline has always admitted subject matter specializations, such as the history of Western Europe, the Enlightenment, the papacy, Baroque music, women's dress, or medieval penal methods. As long as something happened or existed, it is legitimate within the discipline of history to study it historically. Consequently, an interest in studying religious experience or some aspect of it as an historical reality does not need any particular justification, even if "locating" and identifying the object is problematic.

Many scholars approaching spirituality historically, both in the past and today, are actually primarily historians *of* spirituality rather than scholars of spirituality whose approach is primarily historical. The former are scholars who approach the phenomena of spirituality as trained historians, differing from their religious studies colleagues in religious or church history, not in terms of their understanding of historiography, historical methods, or the desired outcomes of research in terms of historical analyses or interpretations, but in regard to what they are interested in studying, namely, Christian religious experience. Many secular historians have done excellent work on Christian religious life, figures, literature, and movements (for example, Bynum 1987; Brown 1988; Ranft 1996). What seems to differentiate the historian of spirituality (for example, McGinn 1991–8) from the religious studies historian of religion is an interest in interpreting what is being studied as Christian faith experience within the context of Christian theology.

Historical spirituality scholars, on the other hand, are scholars of spirituality (not of history) who find the historical approach particularly useful for their projects (for example, Bynum 1982; Short 1999; McGinn 2001). Thus a researcher interested in the tradition of "nuptial spirituality" (mystical experience understood and expressed through the metaphor of "marriage to Christ") may decide to study its expression in the spirituality of the thirteenth-century beguines (Murk-Jansen 1998) or through the commentaries on the biblical Song of Songs in the works of Origen, Bernard of Clairvaux, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Edward Taylor in the historical context of their respective lives and practice. The historical approach and its methodology are in the service of understanding nuptial spirituality rather than the construction of a history of nuptial spirituality or of interpretation of the Song of Songs as a text that nourished mystical experience in different periods. As the authors referenced above exemplify, the same scholar may function at different times, or even in the same work, as an historian of spirituality primarily interested in the development of some facet of spirituality and at other times as a spirituality scholar primarily interested in some aspect of spirituality studied within its historical context.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, historians of spirituality shared with other historians, including most biblical scholars, a modernist understanding of history itself and of its methods and results. The modern historian was preoccupied with "what really happened" as that could be determined by the use of historical critical methods. And what "mattered" historically was the activity of major figures (almost always hegemonic Western males) and major movements (almost always those of the historical winners). Economic, political, military, and religious events dominated the concerns of modernist historians, biblical, social, cultural, and religious. Historiography was largely the attempt to construct uni-directional, periodized, cause-and-effect metanarratives that explained how and why things came to be and to be a certain way. Furthermore, historians tended to see this diachronic analysis of "the past" as genetic and the genetic as sufficient explanation, at least on the human level, of whatever took place in space and time. This is the context in which the modern study of the history of spirituality began in centers such as Paris and Rome, and the histories of spirituality that emerged (for example, Pourrat 1953–5; Cognet 1959; Leclercq et al. 1968) bore the imprint of this type of historical work. Until relatively recently, historians of spirituality tended to equate spirituality as a discipline with the history of spirituality, wondering aloud what else there might be to study except what has actually occurred as mediated through historical "texts," broadly understood. Today, they, as well as scholars of spirituality who take an historical approach to their subject matter, are aware that history is one access, among others, to phenomena that are indeed historical but have other equally interesting dimensions (for example, Norris 1996; Lane 2002).

In the final quarter of the twentieth century, all historical study began to feel the effects of the emergence of postmodernism in scholarship. Historians themselves began to question the basic assumptions of the historical critical method: that something objective "really happened" and had a kind of free-standing existence "in the past" that was accessible by proper methods; that the "real story" could be unearthed and told by the objective scholar who had no personal (and therefore distorting) role in that story;

that something like the "whole story" could be told; that causes could be determined which could only have produced what in fact happened, and so on. Revisionist history, history written from the underside and the margins, the stories of the historical losers and victims, the aspects and dimensions of the past that once seemed unimportant or uninteresting, began to emerge into the concerns of historians who increasingly acknowledged that they were not studying or writing "history" pure and simple but offering one of many possible constructions of the admittedly partial available data whose authority as evidence was, in the last analysis, conferred by the historian rather than discovered as objective and self-evident (Sheldrake 1992).

All of these currents are still very much in their developmental phases, but they are influencing all historical work (Burnett 2000), including the history of spirituality. Historians of spirituality are still concerned with establishing reliable texts, accessing the available data of past Christian experience, discerning connections, patterns, and influences (causal and otherwise), but they are also interested in analyses and criticisms that are not exclusively concerned with the uncovering or establishment of "the facts" but with the interpretation of whatever can be known. And they are very aware that interpretation is a function of the identity, social location, and presuppositions of the interpreter and the power arrangements that affect and are affected by interpretation. In other words, postmodernism in general, and the linguistic-hermeneutical turn in particular, are profoundly affecting historical work.

The historical approach to the study of spirituality is still primarily the work of professional historians whose interest centers on the lived experience of the faith which they share either actually or empathetically with their subjects, but whose methods tend to be those of the increasingly hermeneutical historical disciplines augmented by theological expertise. Increasingly, the methodologies of history are also being used by spirituality scholars who are not professional historians but find historical approaches most useful for their work. The results of historical studies in spirituality are not only valuable in themselves as investigations of Christian religious experience throughout the ages, but also are essential to any valid study in the field of spirituality because they supply the context for and/or constitute the positive data upon which other approaches exercise their inquiries. Spirituality as lived experience takes place only in time and space, within particular cultural contexts, in interaction with the other persons and forces operative in the same context, and influenced by what and who has preceded it. In this sense, all study in the field of spirituality is historical whether the purpose is to provide a history of a given phenomenon (history of spirituality) or to understand the phenomenon itself by means of historical approaches to the subject matter (historical spirituality).

The challenge for those approaching spirituality historically is to avoid either reducing spirituality to an account of "what happened" or accounting for "what happened" in purely genetic terms as what can be discerned by historical methods, and to recognize that even phenomena of the past can and must be studied by a variety of methods if the experience is to be understood as experience. Theology, psychology, gender, art, rhetoric, science, and so on must complement history to give access to religious experience in its uniqueness.

The theological approach

The contemporary theological approach to the study of spirituality has a complex history which must be taken into account in attempting to understand what scholars who take this approach today are doing. The Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, and Catholic developments have been quite diverse. While the Orthodox have attempted to maintain the synthesis of theology and spirituality that characterized the pre-medieval common tradition, the split between theology and spirituality that occurred in the High Middle Ages has been variously handled by the other three branches. In the wake of the Reformation, Protestant orthodoxy was suspicious of "mysticism," insofar as the term suggested elitism or paranormal experience that was not rooted in Scripture and open to all believers, and of "spirituality" which suggested a works-righteousness approach to the life of faith. Protestants preferred to speak of "piety," a daily discipline of Scripture reading and prayer, both personal and familial, which was promoted by both theoretical and exhortatory literature from figures such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Jeremy Taylor, and others.

Anglicans preferred the term "devotion" to that of piety, but also spoke of the "inner life" and the "life of perfection" which had affinities with Catholic approaches. Anglican spirituality was deeply rooted in the *Book of Common Prayer* and thus had a distinctively liturgical shape and content. Out of this tradition, the Anglicans, especially the English, also developed a voluminous literature on the spiritual life that was both practical (for example, Law 1978) and theoretical (for example, Underhill 1942) and which continues to bear the stamp of this sensibility (for example, Jones et al. 1986). Distinctive to the Catholic tradition was the incorporation of the study of spirituality into the university curriculum as a subdiscipline within theology. It is this Catholic academic development that is particularly significant for understanding the current development of spirituality as a discipline within the academy.

From the time of Dionysius (probably sixth century) through the Middle Ages (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II: 2.45.2) and into modern times in the writings of authors such as John of the Cross, "mystical theology" referred not to an object of study or a body of speculative or practical knowledge attained by the theologian but to an experiential knowledge of God infused into the soul by God in/as contemplation. John of the Cross says: "The sweet and living knowledge that she [the soul] says he [God] taught her is mystical theology, the secret knowledge of God that spiritual persons call contemplation" (*The Spiritual Canticle* 27: 5). Once theology came to be understood not so much as rumination on Scripture but primarily as a philosophically elaborated academic specialization in the university curriculum (thirteenth century and beyond), spiritual theology gradually came to be thought of not as the noetic effect of spiritual experience but as a subdiscipline of theology (dogmatic and moral) which could be studied and mastered as other subjects were. The question then became not how to dispose the spirit through reading and meditation for the free inflow of God's wisdom in contemplation, but what subject matter was to be studied and how, in order to understand the content and dynamics of the spiritual life. Spiritual theology emerged in the academy as a distinct subject in the seventeenth century as theologians and spiritual

guides tried to systematize the available knowledge of the spiritual life in terms of the reigning scholastic theologies (for example, Scaramelli 1917; Tanquerey 1932; Garrigou-Lagrange 1950; Aumann 1980).

From the seventeenth century into the mid-twentieth century spiritual theology was understood (in Catholic academic circles which is where it was elaborated and pursued) as the theoretical study of "the life of perfection," meaning the interior life of persons (usually monks, nuns, and mystics) who attempted to live their Christian calling more intensely than so-called "ordinary Christians" whose spiritual life was characterized by vocal prayer, moral rectitude, and the faithful observance of the duties of their state in life (Saudreau 1926). This "science of perfection" drew its principles from theology, of which it remained a subdiscipline, and was eminently practical in intent, namely, to equip the spiritual director of those "seeking perfection" to guide these special souls in their three-stage journey through purification (the way of beginners) and illumination (the way of proficients) to mystical union (the way of perfection). Spiritual theology was divided into two parts: ascetical theology, which studied the "active life" (the stages of the spiritual life in which the activity of the subject in vocal and mental prayer, the practice of virtue, asceticism, and so on, was possible and effective), and mystical theology or the "passive life" (the stage of the spiritual life in which the activity of the Holy Spirit replaces that of the human subject who cannot effect the mystical union with God which is characteristic of this final stage). Note the change in meaning of the term "mystical theology" from the experiential knowledge of God directly produced in the soul by infused contemplation to the study of mystical experience as an object. Spiritual theology, then, was the field of study whose object was the whole spiritual life, and mystical theology was one of the two subdivisions of that field.

By the mid-twentieth century this classical theological subdiscipline had, for various reasons, come under serious question not only from Protestants but from within Catholicism itself. The three-stage understanding of the spiritual life, which can be traced back into the patristic period, seemed to have been systematized beyond recognition. The biblical basis of this rigid and somewhat artificial systematization was highly doubtful. But the major theological objections were that the approach was elitist, divisive, and seemed to deny the universal call of the baptized to the fullness of the spiritual life since not all, according to this schema, were called to the third stage (mystical union) in this life; it subverted the unity of the spiritual life in which, as the great spiritual guides of the past had always recognized, purification, illumination, and union are simultaneous and overlapping even when one or the other predominates at a particular stage of spiritual development; it seriously restricted the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life by assigning the full operation of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit (which, according to traditional theology, are received in the sacraments of initiation) to the final stage of the spiritual life to which relatively few are called. These texts tended to over-emphasize paranormal experience – something which all the great mystics greatly relativized and even cautioned contemplatives against – as a distinguishing feature of the final stage of the spiritual life.

The primary practical objections to the classical spiritual theology paradigm were that it over-systematized and therefore fragmented the spiritual life which is much more organic and developmental; it was too restrictively concerned with the "interior life"

(meaning prayer and the practice of virtue), whereas advances in psychology were making people much more aware of the complexity of the human subject and the involvement of all dimensions of the person in the spiritual life; it was highly prescriptive (even mechanistic), taking too little account of personal individuality; it paid little attention to the "ordinary Christian" who was, presumably, not "seeking perfection" even though experience suggested that there were many real saints among these non-cloistered God-seekers "in the world."

By the time of the Second Vatican Council, which reaffirmed the universality of the call to one and the same holiness (*Lumen gentium* 5), classical modern "spiritual theology" was giving way to what many modern believers found much more interesting, namely, "spirituality." This term gained currency throughout the second half of the twentieth century, gradually being adopted by Jews and Muslims as well as Christians across the denominational spectrum, Buddhists, Hindus, primal peoples, and adherents of other non-Christian traditions, and even by non-religious seekers such as some feminists, ecologists, New Agers, and eclectic practitioners who denied any interest in religion (Van Ness 1996). Paulist Press, in its influential series "Classics of Western Spirituality," included non-Christian spiritual texts (for example, Jewish and Islamic). The Crossroad *Encyclopedia of World Spiritualities* gave a non-restrictive description of spirituality as the existence and the dynamics of "the spirit" understood as the "deepest center of the person" (Cousins 1985: xiii) and devoted only three of its projected twenty-five volumes to Christian spirituality.

This very rapid extension of the referent of "spirituality" beyond its original Christian meaning (cf. Schneiders 1989, for a history of the term) raised the question, for scholars in the field of Christian spirituality, about the distinctiveness of their discipline. Clearly, the distinguishing mark of Christian spirituality as Christian is its rootedness in the Christian religious tradition which, for Protestants, Anglicans, Catholics, and Orthodox, has tended to be expressed and systematized in the theological tradition (dogmatic and moral, biblical, liturgical, and historical). In other words, Christian spirituality is Christian because of its relationship to the creed, code, and cult of the church's tradition. Those scholars, often working in confessional academic contexts such as seminaries and formation programs, who are less interested in interaction with non-Christian spiritualities than with Christian spirituality as such, tend therefore to focus on the theological identity of the latter (for example, Leech 1985; Senn 1986; Hanson 2000). While recognizing the importance of the history of spirituality and acknowledging the breadth of interest in the field outside the Christian sphere, these scholars choose to focus on spirituality from a specifically Christian, therefore theological, perspective.

I would suggest, in order to distinguish what these contemporary scholars in the field are doing from the classical "spiritual theology" described above, that it would be better to refer to the former as "theological spirituality" rather than "spiritual theology." The *focus* of these scholars is not on theology as such but on spirituality. It is their *approach* that is theological in that they work primarily within the framework established by Scripture, theology, and sacramental practice. They are not primarily interested in establishing a theory of the spiritual life (theology as second-order discourse such as classical spiritual theology attempted) applicable to all Christians or prescribing the