AOSIS

The characterisation of the Spiritual Christian: In conversation with God according to 1 Corinthians 2

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Irrespective of the short academic history of Christian spirituality, a vast number of academic and popular publications ensued and is still dynamically growing. Many definitions have been proposed to define (Christian) spirituality. Spirituality is also no longer connected only to religion, although in this research the focus will fall on Christian spirituality. This research intends to partake in the continuing academic dialogue to define Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality is interpreted from the perspective of the divine-human conversation. This research consists of three sections. In the first section, a working definition of Christian spirituality is formulated. In the second section, various aspects that constitute spiritualities are distinguished and discussed. In the last section, the constituents of Christian spirituality are pointed out and are reviewed from a conversational perspective. The focus will be on 'the experience of the divine' when living a life that resonates with the Christian life.

Introduction

The emergence of Postmodernism, with its consciousness of 'relativism, subjectivism, seeing language as imprecise and ambiguous' (Kysar 2007:158), constituted a religious paradigm shift in Western culture. This brought a vast interest in spirituality with significant implications for religion (cf. Peck 2016:1; also McGrath 1999:3). One of the good things that emerged from postmodernity is that it prepared the way for this interest, particularly in Christian spirituality.[1] In addition to this, Houdmann (2013:1) says that 'Post-modern Christianity falls into line with basic post-modernist thinking. It is about experience over reason, subjectivity over objectivity, spirituality over religion, images over words, outward over inward'.

This massive interest in Christian spirituality does not mean that Christian spirituality did not exist prior to this contemporary dynamic interest at all. It did exist in all churches, but was limited in its acknowledgment as a topic of research and discussion by especially certain Christian churches and denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, and at a later stage in history the Pentecostals. Spirituality has now become a buzz word that defines our era.

This essay is the result of a paper which I presented in 2016 at a *Faith seeking conversation Symposium* at Tabor College of Higher Education in Adelaide, Australia. The title of the paper was, 'What is Christian Spirituality?'.[2] In this essay, however, the focus is on the spiritual person as discussed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2. After a holistic overview on the definitions of Christian spirituality, various modes of 'lived experiences' are discussed. Both these two aspects (definitions and modes) constitute the environment within which the characterisation of the spiritual person is outlined according to 1 Corinthians 2:6–16. This research regards and presents Christian spirituality as a dialogue between God and the spiritual person, combining two ways in which it is usually discussed: Firstly, when the phenomenon of Christian spirituality is discussed, there are only brief references to 1 Corinthians 2:6–16; and secondly, when the text of 1 Corinthians 2:6–16 is analysed, there are only brief references to Christian spirituality.

Towards interpreting Christian spirituality

In many publications on spirituality over the past few decades, as it became an academic discipline, this phenomenon has been studied and interpreted from various angles. Spilka (1993:n.p.) is of the opinion that the phenomenon of spirituality should be interpreted to be

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1.See Kourie (2006:20) and Collins (2000:9–10) for more reasons on the new interest in spirituality.

2.I was asked to read a paper on 'What is Christian Spirituality?'

multidimensional. According to him, the most contemporary perception of spirituality can be classified into the following three categories: a *God-oriented spirituality* where theory and praxis revolve around theology, a *world-oriented spirituality* which stresses a person's relationship with nature and ecology, and a *human (people) oriented spirituality* which stresses human achievement and potential. McClendon (2012:212–224) divides spirituality into the following three categories: general spirituality, Christian spirituality and biblical spirituality. Holder (2005:2) concurs with Spilka and McClendon by stating that 'the phenomenology of Christian Spirituality can only be understood and appreciated when it is approached from a variety of perspectives'. According to these references, consensus occurs that spirituality is multidimensional. The first dimension referred to by Spilka (God-oriented spirituality) and the second and third dimensions referred to by McClendon (Christian and biblical spirituality) is applicable for this research.

The first category of Spilka, *the God-oriented spirituality*, can further be divided into the spiritualities of world religions: Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, etc. Within Christian spirituality we can distinguish between Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Pentecostal and Reformed spiritualities. We can even narrow it down further to biblical spirituality: Old and New Testament (early Christian)[3] spiritualities. According to this picture, spirituality can be regarded as a compound concept that is understood differently from different perspectives.

This elucidates the idea that Christian spirituality is not merely busy with a generalist view of the discipline but rather that it is founded on and distinguished by the Christian faith rooted in Christian religious traditions in relation to Scripture, creeds and doctrine (Schneiders 2002:24). Holder (2005:1), moreover, argues that the rootedness and basis of Christian spirituality lies in Scripture.

Moving towards a working definition of Christian spirituality

Many attempts exist to define Spirituality.[4] The need, however, for an efficient working definition for *Christian* spirituality is needed for its use in this article. Within the ambit of academia, Christian spirituality is studied as the 'lived experience' of the Christian faith. To define a working definition of the concept, 'Christian spirituality', necessitates the consultation of the definitions of other scholars in this discipline. Sandra Schneiders (2000:254) describes spirituality as 'the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life, in terms not of isolation and self-absorption, but of self-transcendence towards the ultimate value one perceives'. Kees Waaijman (2002:312) also offers a general definition of spirituality. For him, it concerns 'the divine-human relational

process of transformation'. Thus, spirituality refers to a 'divine-human relationship' and consists of a 'process of transformation'. For Waaijman, spirituality deals with the centre of human existence (see Van der Merwe 2015b:3). Philip Sheldrake (2000:40) describes [*Christian*] spirituality more specifically as 'a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and in the context of the community of believers'.[5]

For the rationale, then, of this investigation, 'spirituality' can be defined as 'living a life of transformation and self-transcendence' that 'resonates with the lived experience of the divine' (cf. Van der Merwe 2014a:1). These two demarcated facets that are constantly interactive can be interpreted as the experience of a continuous conversation taking place between the believer and the divine. Christian spirituality then exposes 'the experience of God in the life of the believer with the emphasis on *the experience of God*' (Van der Merwe 2016:1) and the impact of it in the believer's life.

Different modes of divine experience in Christian spirituality

This research will be approached from the believer's 'experience of the divine': intrinsic experiences of God, extrinsic experiences of God: through oneself and through others.

Intrinsic 'lived experiences' of God

The intrinsic 'lived experiences' occur in three modes, through: *Lectio Divina, imaginative exegesis of biblical texts* and *mystical experiences.*[6]

Lectio Divina[7]

The Latin phrase *lectio divina* can be translated as 'Divine Reading'. The foundation of practicing *lectio divina* in the early church was set by the desert fathers (beginning of the 5th century) (Nelson 2002:37). Their spiritualities comprised largely the prayerful meditation on texts from Scripture (Lawlor 2009:1; Nelson 2002:37–39; Schneiders 2002:139). Lawlor (2009:1) adds that it was practised during the Middle Ages in different religious orders. According to Schultz (2009:1), *lectio divina* is rooted in old Hebrew principles. This ancient transformative engagement with Scripture currently enjoys a renaissance (Howard 2012:56; Lawlor 2009:1). *Lectio divina* consists of a four-step process (Nelson 2002:37–46; Schneiders 2002:140) that comprises the slow, relaxed and focused *reading* (*lectio*) of a biblical text. The focus of *lectio divina* does not comprise a theological and highly exegetical analysis of biblical passages. During the reading process, the

3. In this line of distinction, we can also add the 'apocryphal' (OT & NT) spiritualities.

4. See the publications of Zizioulas (1985:23–43), Dunn (1990:174–2312), Fee (1994:24–26), Ferguson (2010:15) and Scorgie (2011:27–33). See also the publications of Johnson (1998:1–4, 39–68), Hurtado (2000:183–205), Thurston (2000:2–6) and Berger (2003:1–25) on religious or spiritual experience.

5. Also, McGrath (1999:2): 'Christian spirituality concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith' and for some Working Definitions of Spirituality; (pp. 3–4).

6. Although Schneiders (2002) refers briefly to the intrinsic experiences of the divine in her discussion of 'Biblical Spirituality', it is necessary to refer to it again for the sake of getting a holistic picture of what the researcher endeavors to achieve.

7. For more on *lectio divina*, consult Howard (2012:56–77), Nelson (2002:35–48), Polan (2003:198–206) and Lawlor (2009:1–3).

texts are connected with Jesus Christ to be the hermeneutical tool to the meaning, understanding and later application of the text. Often, the reader is devoted to memorise the text in the practice. Then, the reader moves to the next step of *meditation* (*meditatio*) on the meaning of the text (Schneiders 2002:140). The purpose of *meditatio* is to increase the understanding and contextual application of the meaning of the text in the reader's personal life and experience. This kind of meditation of the text results in *prayer* (*oratio*) or response to God, who communicates with the reader in and through the text. Different kinds or aspects of prayer (adoration, praise, thanksgiving, sorrow, repentance, resolve, petition, etc.) are prompted as response to Scripture. In the last phase, some kind of union with the divine is reached. The masters of the spiritual life in the early church have entitled it *contemplation* (*contemplatio*). Although a variety of meanings have been applied to contemplation throughout church history, in the context of *lectio divina*, it denotes the blossoming of prayer 'in imageless and wordless union with God in the Spirit' (Schneiders 2002:140).

The silence surrounding the *lectio divina* is crucially important for a 'lived experience', although the mode of *lectio divina* should also be applied to the entire Christian life and discourse. The reference to 'text' should no longer only refer to the biblical text. The meaning of 'text' within the environment of Christian spirituality should be extended to refer to 'life' in full. Then, the believer could apply these four steps in *lectio divina* (*lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio*) to everyday life.

Spirituality embedded in biblical texts

Waaijman (2002:742) discusses in his book *Spirituality: forms, foundations, methods* how readers contour the presentation of sacred texts in their imagination. The purpose for doing so is to participate in the content of the texts. For Iser (1978:131), '[t]his involvement, or entanglement, is what places us in the "presentness" of the text and what makes the text into a presence for us'. This interaction between reader and text infers that the reader is drawn into the text's world, and the text is drawn into the reader's world (Van der Merwe 2014:2–3).[8]

This interaction with the text or involvement in texts denotes that serious scrutinising of biblical texts (especially in the original languages)[9] produces varieties of spiritualities, of both the divine and the text. These spiritualities depend on the text content regarding the divine and also on the character and knowledge of the reader. In the above-mentioned book, Waaijman (2002:744; see also Van der Merwe 2014:3) provides a few aspects through which the spiritualities embedded in texts can be exposed: (1) the dynamic interaction between text and reader in the reading process, (2) the imaginative composition of images and (3) the dialectic of pretension and retention. Iser (1978:127) provides two more aspects: (4) the entanglement of readers in texts by their own projections, which they produce and in which they are entangled, and

(5) the creation of spaces which the reader has to fill (1978:206). These effects facilitate readers to make sense of sacred texts and consequently evoke lived experiences.

The Holy Spirit enables only those who are spiritual for the correct discernment of the biblical text (1 Cor 2:14). Such discernment is enabled through both inductive impressions and deductive activities of imaginative exegesis. Lombaard (2008:139–153; cf. also Schneiders 2002:137ff.) uses this phrase, 'imaginative exegesis', in an explanatory way for what should happen when exegesis is applied to a text. The involvement of the Holy Spirit to open up appropriate meanings of texts is mediated through historic-cultural, textual and theological exegesis. The Spirit then facilitates the interpretation and assessment of the Scriptures for the reader, as well as both the perceiving and the embodiment of the message (Kaiser 1981:319; cf. also Schneiders 2002; Van der Merwe 2015b:6).

The initial readers or hearers of sacred texts already would have experienced a transformative existential encounter when they read the text or heard the message. Even today the Holy Spirit continues communicating God's wisdom to spiritual people through imaginative exegesis (cf. 1 Cor 2). The spiritual readers studying the same Scripture text today will also experience 'lived experiences' of transformative existential encounters (cf. Kaiser 1981:305; Schneiders 2005:21).

Mysticism and contemplative prayer

Mystical experiences can be viewed as part of spirituality. It can be regarded as the most intense 'lived experience' of the divine. Wigner (2007:332) explains that it 'differs in kind from the everyday sensory experiences in the natural world' and later (2007:334) agrees with McGinn (1994:x–xi) that it is more accurate to view mysticism 'as a process or way of life'.

Many nuances and permutations are present within the interpretation and understanding of mysticism. The following three features are striking. Firstly, mysticism is dynamic because of the searching character of mysticism. Secondly, mysticism consists of an activity that involves the entire person (Underhill 2004:81).[10] A third feature of mysticism lies in the effects of mysticism. True mysticism affects the person on both the level of ecstatic experience or visions, as well as the very 'consciousness of the recipient'. Both then transform the entire life of the person (McGinn 1998:27, referred to by Wigner 2007:335). For McGinn (1991):

> the mystical element in Christianity is that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God. (p. xvii)

Contemplative prayer can be regarded as the appliance of having a mystical experience with God. The goal of contemplative prayer is to transcend 'thought and image'.

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8. McClendon (2012:221–224) refers to 'Biblical Spirituality… as the basis for shaping one's understanding of and experience with God'.

9. Languages are not idiomatically related.

10. 'Mysticism does not require learning or intellectual belief because the underlying necessity for the experience is an all-encompassing personal knowledge and personal understanding' (Underhill 1964:9–10 referred to by Wigner 2007:335).

According to Keating (2002:45), it is deep prayer that is 'the laying aside of thoughts'. Those who pray then open their 'mind and heart, body and feelings', their whole being, to God. The goal is to experience awareness accomplished by a thoughtless sense of being with God (Groothuis & Geis 2015:14).

For a good comprehension of Christian mysticism, a few aspects have to be considered. The first aspect: mysticism within Christianity is diverse. A variety of mystical experiences occur to emphasise different aspects of encountering God. The second aspect: mysticism is very experiential. The third aspect: mysticism should be regarded as *a component* within Christianity and not as a sovereign system of belief.

Kieckhefer (2004:203) compares mysticism with a marriage – mysticism is, in particular, a 'relationship and consciousness'. It cannot be reduced to a 'specific experience or form of experience'. The three motifs with the highest frequency of recurrence in the study of mysticism are the following: an emphasis on disciplined attention to the divine (contemplation), a romantic relatedness or love affair with the divine (bridal spirituality) and potential relatedness of the soul to God (2004:206). Although these three motifs can exist separately, they have shown in the history of Christian spirituality to become linked with one another.[11] These three themes represent different approaches to the mystic quest (Kieckhefer 2004:205). Kieckhefer (2004:206) also distinguishes a fourth motif, namely visionary experience. According to him, the visionary experience has been important to Christianity since the first century and to those involved in this classification as mystics.

Extrinsic experiences of God: Through the self

This subsection focusses briefly on those external experiences in the spiritual person's life that could stimulate spiritualities. Authentic Christian spirituality also occurs in the mundane things in life, more than in the supernatural, ecstatic or even mystical things. When things are in partnership with the Spirit, it is spiritual (Hardin 2015:134). For Fee (1994:24–26), the noun 'spirituality' implies both the inner vitality of believers and their partnership with the divine.

Burke (1977:39)[12] refers to both Rahner and Dunne who made a critical statement that 'the Mystery of the transcendent God is found not just beyond daily existence but also within the human person'. Both reason that believers' understanding of themselves, their personal experiences of life, can constitute an acceptance of God's ongoing revelation. Rahner asserts that all people, with or without any knowledge of Jesus Christ, have received implicitly what he calls 'the gracious revelation of God' (Burke 1977:39). Because of God's supernatural grace each person consists (Burke 1977:39), according to Rahner, of a 'supernatural existential'. Rahner interprets this divine life

itself as God's self-communication. The phrase 'supernatural existential' signifies in this essay those 'experiences and capabilities of life which are not inherent to human nature' (Burke 1977:40).

For Rahner, this supernatural existential results in both warm experiences and also in extraordinary human capabilities, for example, the 'human capability for self-giving love, for absolute honesty, for unconditional loyalty, respect for duty, and unselfish commitment for the good of others' (Burke 1977:40). These actions should be regarded to exceed the natural human abilities. Rahner regarded these capabilities as consequences of God giving himself to human existence (Burke 1977:40). We can also add here the fruit of the Spirit (Gl 5), the gifts of the Spirit (Rm 12; 1 Cor 12–14; Eph 4) and the renewal of the mind (Rm 12:2).

What Rahner, Burke and Dunne forgot to add and to express is that a specific mindset of faith, expectation and trust alert the experience of God in everyday living. With the lack of such a mindset, the believer will miss all the amazing spiritualities embedded in the person's capabilities and everyday living. Both Rahner and Dunne then experience God to be present in a person's experience of the self. God's revelation needs not to be the extraordinary or the miraculous that many people are curiously looking for (Burke 1977:43).

Extrinsic experiences of the divine: Through the self

Throughout its history, the church emphasised the revelation of God through the living Word. This was taught in theological education and at church services. Slater (2007:1) refers to dialectical theologians (like Brunner, Gogarten, Tillich and probably also Barth) who connected the hearing of God's Word in particular with canonical texts.

During the postmodern era, this perception changed. The assumption occurred that the Bible could and should only be regarded metaphorically. Metaphysics and theology were questioned critically. Concreteness was appreciated over abstraction. The noun 'dialectics' became the buzz word in the dynamics of dialogue and historicity (cf. Slater 2007:1).

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian humanist and Marxist from the previous century (1895–1975), participated in this dialectic debate. In his reasoning about meaning and truth, he managed to develop his own set of answers to questions raised. His notes about God facilitate our understanding of how language can be exploited in Christian contexts and to create different spiritualities.[13] The importance of Bakhtin lies in the principles he formulated about linguistics in connection with the revelation of God, which certainly has implications for Christian spirituality. It was especially his 'dialogism' that advises how to 'attend to different voices in single utterances or sets of words' that could embrace hearing the voice of God in and through everyday dialogues (Slater 2007:2). For clarity

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11. See Kieckhefer (2004:207–219) for a comprehensive and thorough discussion of these three motifs.

12. For the teachings of Rahner and Dunne on the experience of God in daily living, the author relies in particular on the work of Burke (1977) who studied them thoroughly.

13. For the contribution of Bakhtin for a better perception of Christian Spirituality, the author relies on the excellent work of Slater (2007:1–25) who thoroughly studied the works of Bakhtin.

on this dialogism, we will investigate the following two aspects: *asymmetry in discourse* and *the occurrence of liberating wisdom in the texts of modern novels*.

Asymmetry in discourse

In reality, much overlapping occurs in texts, stories and sayings, as is also evident from the Bible. For Bakhtin it is all linear 'developed theoretical abstractions, whether scientific or religious, to be "monological"'. Real discourse, for him, is 'concrete, polyphonically complex and dialogical' (Slater 2007:2).

Dialogue is not only a way to generate information from other people involved in a debate or negotiation. Dialogue reduces gaps that may appear between contemplation and reality. This then accentuates that everyday language is initially public. The conscious encounters are the sources of meaning and not private reflections. Our communication in existential situations proves that our languages are our philosophies (Slater 2007:3).

All 'lived experiences' in the world, including all subjective narratives of those experiences, can only be accurately communicated via dialogue because all the dimensions of these experiences are part of the world (Slater 2007:3). The universe evolves continuously, is loaded with new possibilities and consists of a network of interacting events that are on the verge of happening.

According to Bakhtin, theists hear the voice of God through Scripture in the words of the world. For believers, their connections with one another signal a realm coordinated by one God (Slater 2007:4). All personal boundaries are penetrable (Slater 2007:4). What enables believers to cross boundaries is them responding to one another and addressing one another in particular contexts resulting in countless ramifications (Slater 2007:5). Thus, through everyday discourse, God's voice is also being heard and experienced.

The occurrence of liberating wisdom in literary texts of modern novels

During the Renaissance, a shift of dialogical truth occurred from oral to textual communication. 'Socially critical novelists and journalists had replaced religious leaders as keepers of the public conscience' (Slater 2007:5). Their noted voices reverberate in both their own time as well as contemporary time. For Bakhtin in his time, authors such as Shakespeare, Goethe, Dickens and CS Lewis were able to 'present the characters in their writings idiosyncratically different, critical voices. They were not theologians, but**,** emancipated by the classical poetic language' of their time, their 'polyphonic prose' fuels readers to counter any form of community iniquities. Through their texts, they communicated daily wisdom via familiar 'novelising' discourse. This included mythologies for those seeking righteousness and freedom (Slater 2007:5).

Bakhtin states that the semantics of discourses can never be fully analysed. Conclusions in discourses therefore suggest new possibilities. These authors do not mean *today* exactly what they meant *then* to their contemporaries. According to Bakhtin, these authors (and poets) were in the best position to adjudicate the dissonances and iniquities of the world then and today (Slater 2007:7).

For Bakhtin, the Word of God was truthfully communicated in the words of the biblical authors and today in the interpretations of theologians. Archaic idioms do not prevent a different contemporary hearing and experiencing of God's voice through these idioms. More than one way of description exists because all new cross-boundary communications generate fresh ways to share differently descriptions of being-events (Slater 2007:8; also Ricoeur[14] 1973:97–111, 1976). In fact, this kind of creative literature to create images facilitated new spiritualities both then and now.

In *conclusion*, this subsection has reviewed different modes of divine experiences in (Christian) spirituality. It was pointed out that the divine can be experienced in all areas of our daily life (discourse, literature). It is important that it requires a particular mindset. The believer must live with the expectation to see, hear and experience the divine everywhere at any time.

Constituent parts of Christian spirituality according to 1 Corinthians 2

Thinking about early Christian spirituality, the following question arises whether early Christian spirituality was formed in terms of experience or imitation. Is Christian spirituality in particular mounted on or outlined in terms of an experience (see Hurtado and Johnson) with the risen Jesus Christ (or God) through his Spirit or from the imitation of Jesus' life (see 1 Cor 11:1; cf. Phlp 2:5; 1 Thess 1:6; 1 Jn 2:6)?[15]

Paul the Apostle is used here to be an archetype of Christian spirituality. Dunn (1975:137) is of the opinion that the essence of Paul's spirituality revolves around his experience of the resurrected Jesus Christ that changed his life completely. Johnson (1998:185) adds to this view that Christianity came into existence when certain people were convinced that they had experienced the transforming power of God through the resurrected Jesus.[16]

For Johnson (1998:69ff.), early Christian spirituality was not purely based on experience alone. It was experiences which generated new forms of life (in rituals and practices) and consequently these new forms of life confirm the experiences. Hardin (2015:133) points out that, according to some texts (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phlp 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thess 1:6; 2; 3:7), it seems that

14.See Ricoeur on polysemy (1973) and surplus of meaning (1976).

15.Confer also Paul's call to imitate his own conduct (I Cor 4:16; I I:1f.; Phlp 3:1 7 ; 4:8f; II Thess 3:6ff.).

16.Johnson (1998:9–10) points out that the New Testament writings did not evoke the imagery of the spiritual-filled world of early Christianity. The authors and readers of early Christianity already lived in such a spirit-filled world. See also Hurtado (2000:183–205).

in the life of Paul the scale probably tips to the side of imitation. My conviction is that Paul definitely experienced throughout his ministry the involvement of the divine in his life, which resulted in him imitating Jesus Christ. Contrariwise, also in imitating Jesus Christ, he experienced God through the Spirit and resurrected Jesus Christ. *Christian spirituality lies embedded in both experiences and imitation of Christ.*

Paul engaged in regular spiritual practices throughout his life in following Jesus. That steered him to experience the Spirit of the resurrected Christ (Hardin 2015:133). Paul repeatedly emphasised the concrete nature of life in the Spirit.[17] *Spiritual practices* in Paul's life were: prayer, proclamation of the gospel, devotion to Scripture, corporate worship, disciple-making, character transformation, striving towards holiness, exercising spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit, pastoral care or shepherding, enduring and suffering (cf. Hardin 2015:137–144). This verifies Paul's expression in Philippians 1:21, 'For to me, living is Christ …'.

The *root* of spirituality lies, according to 1 Corinthians 2, in Paul's use of the Greek adverb πνευματικῶς [when referring to spiritually], the adjective πνευματικοῖς [masculine, when referring to spiritual people] and the adjective πνευματικά [neuter, when referring to spiritual things]. See also the Greek nouns πνεῦμα [Spirit] and πνεύματος [spirit] that occur in 1 Corinthians 2. The *origin* of the word 'spirituality' lies in the Latin word *spiritualitas'* which relates to two other Latin words - *spiritus* and *spiritualis* - to translate the above-mentioned Greek words (cf. Kourie 2006:155; Sheldrake 2007:2–3). Scholars (such as Sheldrake, Kourie, Schneiders and McClendon) who referred to the origin of the word 'spirituality' and correctly relate it to the apostle Paul's use of this adverb and adjectives did not discuss the connotative or denotative meanings of these words within their theological and literary contexts. In fact, words only have meaning in contexts (see Robbins 1996; 2008 regarding his discussion of the various textures of texts).

What follows is an investigation of these words in their various (literary, socio-historical, theological) contexts for a better understanding of what Christian spirituality encompasses. The discourse analysis of these verses (1 Cor 2:10–16; cf. also 3:1–4) facilitates the discovery of Paul's rhetoric in these verses and helps to point out the semantic networks present in the text (see Figure 1).[18]

The following five semantic networks occur in the discourse analysis

- Network a: S(s)pirit (πνεύματος / πνεῦμα)
- Network b: to know (οἶδα, γινώσκω, νοῦς)
- Network c: depths of God or mind of Christ (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ, νοῦν Χριστοῦ, see also τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ [2:1], θεοῦ σοφίαν [2:7])

FIGURE 1: Discourse analysis.

- Network d: discernment (ἀνακρίνω)
- Network e: spiritual (πνευματικῶς, πνευματικοῖς, πνευματικά)

The repetition and spreading of the indicated keywords form semantic networks to point out the coherence and relatedness between these words. From this analysis, these five networks (S(s)pirit, to know, mysteries or wisdom of God, discernment and spiritual) form the quintessential constituents for a 'Christian spirituality' or in other words 'a Christian lived experience' of the divine and the Christian life.

For these constituents to make sense they have to be understood from the perspective of the dialogical relationship that exists between God and the believer. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are numerous references where God communicated with those who stood in a relationship with him, for example, in: Genesis 12:1; Exodus 4:13; Deuteronomy 28:1; Joshua 1:1–9; Isaiah 8:1; Jeremiah 7:1; Ezekiel 1:3; Jn 5:30; Acts 11:12; Acts 16:6; Hebrews 12:22, 24, 25; Revelation 1:10 (Virkler 1986:3). The Old Testament reflects on God's involvement in the lives of the Israelites. These involvements were saturated with positive and negative spiritualities (see, in particular, the Psalms and Prophets).

In Hebrews 1:1–2, we read about a change in the conversation of God with humans:

> Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,[2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, … (NRSV)

In this act of God, his communication with his 'children' becomes embodied. God spoke to us through his deeds. His love is shown in the mission of his Son (Jesus Christ) (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9, 10, 14). God is involved in the lives of the believers with faithful responses from them by living in the Spirit. This understanding of spirituality as a life in the Spirit is expressed in the *corpus Paulinum* (see 1 Cor 2; cf. Hardin 2015:132–146). Such a way of life can produce the transformation and transcendence of the believers. Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation of how these constituents relate and cohere.

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17. Pretorius (2006:255–260), influenced by Neill and Wright (1988) who contended that 'Paul's doctrine of the Spirit is far more central and characteristic than his doctrine of justification by faith', went so far as to write a concise *Pauline theology of the Spirit.*

18. (See Van der Merwe 2012; 2013a for a more comprehensive analysis.) All these semantic networks are integrated and contribute to the understanding of what Paul meant with the adverb πνευματικῶς and the two adjectives πνευματικοῖς [masculine] and πνευματικά [neuter].
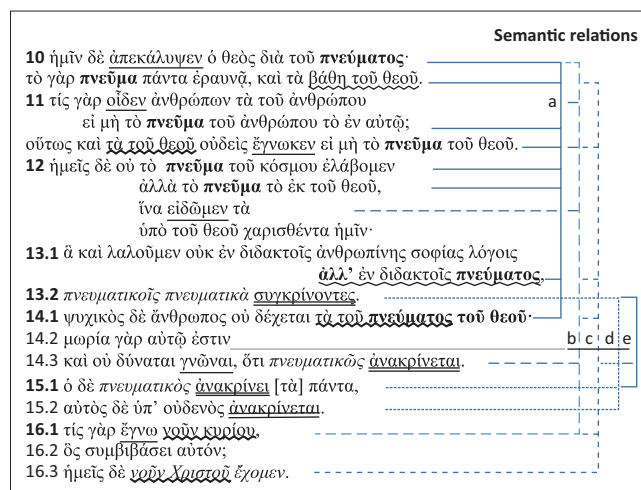
Within a mode of conversation between the divine and human

BELIEVER
Spiritual
person

MESSAGE
Spiritual things

transformation

DIVINE BEING
Spirit God
(the Father)
(the Son)

"Lived experiences
of the divine"
(discernment)

Continuous
revelation
and involvement
(spiritual things)

Mysteries of God

"Lived experiences
of the divine"
(discernment)

Life of
transformation
and self-transcendence
(know/mind of Christ)

Wisdom of God

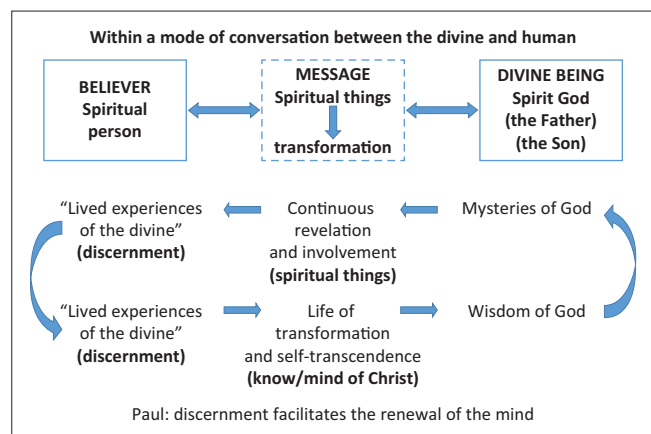Paul: discernment facilitates the renewal of the mind

FIGURE 2: Diagrammatic presentation: The understanding of Christian Spirituality (1 Corinthians 2).

All the constituents from 1 Corinthians 2:10–16, as pointed out in the discourse analysis, are incorporated in this diagram. Spirituality constitutes the essence of the divine-human relationship and dialogue. The one who is continuously transformed in God's Spirit (1 Cor 2:12, through understanding – οἶδα) pulsates with the very mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). It is not something additional. It must become a way of life. God communicates (part of his continuous revelation) spiritual things (mysteries or wisdom of God) through the Spirit of God and is therefore directly involved in the life of the spiritual person. Only the spiritual person with the mindset of faith, expectation and trust can explore, apply and convert the resultant spirituality of what constitutes such a relationship into 'lived experiences' of the divine. Only the spiritual person can respond to these 'lived experiences' of the divine with a life of self-transcendence and transformation so as to take on the mind of Christ. Even the discernment and response become 'lived experiences'. Discernment is needed in both activities (when God communicates and when the spiritual person replies or responds). The excitement embedded in this continuous daily dialogue is fostered by the continuous, critical and dynamic renewal of the mind.

Before attending to these constituent parts, a brief orientation about the socio-historical background is necessary to contextualise the text.

Background (socio-historical)

One of the reasons for Paul's writing of the first Corinthian letter was to address certain problems in this community. Factions developed regarding the authority that certain leading personae in the community granted themselves (cf. Garland 2003:14; Pogoloff 1992:237ff.; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1987:397–398; Witherington 1995:74). According to Fee (1987:6), internal strife could also have been an issue in the Corinthian church; therefore, he adds another perspective. He argues that the actual problem could have been that a division existed about some issues between Paul and some influential teachers. These teachers were guiding the Corinthians into anti-Pauline directions. Paul then experienced this as a predicament

regarding his apostolic authority and the truth of his message (cf. Snyman 2009:131–132).

To address this problem, Paul focused the community's attention on the reality of the schism and consequently tried to convince them to encounter it (Cousar 1990:169). He addresses this situation in making them conscious that they all share in the position of being in Jesus Christ (Thiselton 2000:107). Paul further decodes their problem of division as a symptom of a serious and bigger problem; the Corinthians are attracted to worldly wisdom (Cousar 1990:16; cf. also Snyman 2009:131–132). For Paul, there were members in the community who regarded themselves to be wise, and inspired Spirit-filled persons (1 Cor 3:1). This caused them to abandon Paul's account of the gospel (see 1 Cor 2:1–5; Van der Merwe 2013a).

Paul addresses these parallel matters of *faction* and *wisdom* in 1 Corinthians 2 with the verdict that the Spirit brings together. Where the Spirit of God operates, domestic conflicts cannot occur, especially with regard to wisdom. For Paul, the Spirit of God discloses divine wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul encourages the Corinthians to accept his explanation of God's revelation of the gospel (2:1–2). He is convinced that a person who has the mind of Jesus Christ will be able to comprehend the wisdom of God (cf. Snyman 2008:130–132) and consequently be a spiritual person (πνευματικός, 1 Cor 2:10–12). The main issue for Paul in chapter 2 is: what does it comprise to be a πνευματικός [spiritual person]? (Van der Merwe 2013a:111f., 2013b).

Spiritual people and spiritual things

In this analysed text (1 Cor 2:10–16), the noun 'S(s)pirit' (πνεῦμα/πνεύματος), the adjective 'spiritual' (πνευματικοί/πνευματικά) and the adverb πνευματικῶς [spiritually] stand not in a dialectic tension to the Greek noun σῶμα ('body of a human being or animal, *body*', Arndt, Danker & Bauer 2000:983), that is, the 'physical' or 'material', but to the Greek noun σάρξ [flesh] and the adjective σαρκίνοις / σάρκινος (fleshly, Arndt et al. 2000:914) which Paul uses a few times in 1 Corinthians 3:1–4 where he draws this comparison. This actual dialectic occurs in the sense of everything opposite to the Spirit of God (Sheldrake 2007; also Holder 2005:2). For Paul, then, 'spiritual' means 'life in the Spirit' (see 1 Cor 2:10–16).

This dialectic is further strengthened by Paul's references to the difference of reasoning between these two groups. Van der Merwe (2013b:209) points out how 1 Corinthians 2 is flooded with the following semantic related verbs: 'καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, οἶδα [3x], κρίνειν, συγκρίνειν, ἀνακρίνειν [3x], γνῶναι, ἔγνειν, γινώσκειν [3x]'. Also, the noun νοῦν refers to the reasoning and mind of the believer. For Paul, the renewal of the mind is decisively important, especially for the discerning of God's wisdom. To strengthen this point, Paul also emphasises the mind of the spiritual person (πνευματικὸς) with the mind of the natural person (ψυχικὸς) who refers to a person in whom God's Spirit does not abide (1 Cor 2:12).

In 1 Corinthians 2:14–16, 'Paul focuses on the two most diverse cognitive responses to the divine revelation mediated through the Spirit of God' (Van der Merwe 2013b:210). There were those (ὁι ψυχικοί) who did not accept this revelation in contrast to those (πνευματικοί) who accepted it. Paul is primarily concerned about the correct discernment of the wisdom of God. This causes him to focus more in detail on the assessment of the spiritual person than those who were unable to discern this wisdom. Paul's comparison between these two persons focuses on the cognitive level – foolishness, understanding, discerning, interpreting, scrutiny and mind. The thought sequence is progressive:

> those who are natural have the spirit of the world: *Because they do not have the Spirit that is from God → they do not receive the gifts of this Spirit → it is foolishness to them → therefore they cannot understand them*. The mature (1 Cor 2:6), those who are spiritual: *receive the Spirit in order to understand divine gifts → are taught by the Spirit → discern all things → are subject to no one else's scrutiny → have the mind of Christ*. (Van der Merwe 2013b:210–214)

From the above analysis, it is clear that the 'natural person' (ψυχικὸς, 2:14) is the opposite of the 'spiritual person' (πνευματικὸς). The adjective 'spiritual' (πνευματικὸς) depicts the mature believer (Toussaint 1968:142), referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:6: 'Yet among the mature (τελείοις) we do speak wisdom, …' The spiritual person as a believer has:

- **Received the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:12):** Paul refers to spiritual believers as those in whom the Spirit of God dwells to become the fundamental power in that person's life (cf. Gal. 6:1). Gaffin (1995:114) elaborates on Paul's view. Spiritual people are 'indwelt, renewed, enlightened, directed by the Holy Spirit'. They are contrary to those guided by the spirit of the world (1 Cor 2:12; cf. Eph 2:2).
- **Is teaching by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:13):** '… but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual' (NRSV). The verb διδακτοῖς (taught) refers to 'that which is imparted by the Spirit to someone' (Arndt et al. 2000:241). This text articulates that the Holy Spirit communicates spiritual truths (πνευματικά) through spiritual expression to spiritual people (πνευματικὸς) (Van der Merwe 2013b).

To emphasise this reasoning that the believer is taught spiritual things by the Spirit, Paul compares it by referring to the unbelievers who cannot comprehend the wisdom of God (indicated here as spiritual things). Those without the Spirit of God are only unable to accept and comprehend spiritual things coming from God. Paul emphasises that to them, the gospel message appears to be foolishness. It is not apprehendable because the pedagogy of the Spirit is incomprehensible to them (1 Cor 2:11). Paul states it categorical that only those under Spiritual guidance can perceive spiritual things (πνευματικά) (Pratt 2000:37f.). The unbelievers cannot apprehend the Christian message. Those without the Spirit are unable to comprehend and accept the guidance of the Spirit for their life orientation is so different from how the Spirit directs (Pratt 2000:38). The teachings of the Spirit do not make any sense to them. They cannot comprehend it for the teachings of the Spirit are spiritually discerned (Van der Merwe 2013a:117).

- **Discerns all things (2:15):** Kistemaker and Hendriksen (2001:93) interpret the phrase, *all things* (τὰ πάντα), in this context, as referring to the broad spectrum of human existence. What Paul has in mind here is that spiritual people are capable to value 'all things' (in their daily lives) spiritually (see Rahner & Bakhtin). According to Pratt (2000:38), 'all things' refers to 'that insight afforded by the Spirit of God to equip spiritual people with wisdom in all the areas of life'.

This is important for understanding Christian spirituality. Spiritual Christians are capable of making proper judgements (1 Cor 2:15, ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνω [τὰ] πάντα) with regard to the spirituality they experience in their lives, because they are influenced by the Spirit of God. They are capable to understand the mysteries (secret and hidden) of the depths of God which the Spirit reveals to them. The discernment (ἀνακρίνειν)[19] obtained from the Spirit of God provides spiritual people (πνευματικοί) with spiritual things (πνευματικά) and wisdom (σοφίαν) in all areas of life (Pratt 2000:38; Van der Merwe 2013a:117).

This divine Spirit exposes God's presence, God's involvement in the believer's life and God's wisdom (Theissen 1987:385; Van der Merwe 2013a:124). This wisdom referred to in 1 Corinthians denotes a deeper understanding of realities which 'emancipate [*them*]…from the compulsive standards of this world' (Thiselton 2000:263). To express the assessment and comprehension of this divine wisdom, Paul uses two semantically related verbs, συγκρίνειν and ἀνακρίνειν. Both verbs consist of the same lemma, κρίνειν, meaning 'judge' (Büchsel 1979:921–954). The Greek verb συγκρίνω occurs twice and means 'to compare' or 'to examine'. In this context (1 Cor 2:10-16), Paul takes up a word that is used by his opponents in Corinthians. He redefines it with a new Christian content (Ellingworth & Hatton 1995:60). In this new context, Paul also incorporates the verb ἀνακρίνειν in his reasoning referring to the process of examination and investigation that leads up to a verdict (Ellingworth & Hatton 1995:62) to bring forth a new spirituality (Van der Merwe 2013a:117):

- **Is not subjected to the scrutiny of anyone:** This remark of Paul relates to the Corinthian factionalism, based on judging the authority of certain figures. Leaders in the church are compared to and some regarded more superior than the others (Fee 1987:118). Paul is of the opinion that only true spiritual people are able to judge properly about the spiritual matters in the Corinthian church. Those without the Spirit of God cannot really perceive spiritual things. Therefore, Paul's statement implies that spiritual people are in no way subject to human scrutiny. In this pericope, Paul clearly asserts that the world cannot understand spiritual Christians. This runs parallel with the impossibility of the world, to understand God and his Word (cf. Ellingworth & Hatton 1995:63; Fee 1987:118).

19.Louw and Nida (2002:27) define ἀνακρίνειν 'to evaluate carefully' and Zodiates (2000:349), to discern, to judge, to examine accurately or carefully'.

- **Has the mind of Christ:** Paul continues characterising spiritual people as 'having the mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16). This enables believers to discern God's wisdom (things) and to comprehend it when the Spirit reveals it. The 'mind of Christ' functions as a 'framework for understanding life and knowing how to live according to God's wisdom' (Sweatman 2015:238) within the community. Willis (1989:118) interprets *the mind of Christ* as referring 'to believers having their outlook shaped by an awareness of Christ'. For Willis (1989:119; also Sweatman 2015:239) offers Philippians 2:5 as the key for understanding the 'mind of Christ'. In the context of the tension in the community, the 'mind of Christ' denotes wisdom applied to community life. Paul's intentional reference to the 'mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16) was to associate his argument of cognitive change (2:14–16) with his discussion of community living (1 Cor 3:1–4; see also Phlp 5:7–8) (Van der Merwe 2013b:214).

Conclusion

This research began with the formulation of a definition of Christian spirituality that provided the stepping stone in the search for understanding what is meant by 'Christian spirituality'. The chosen definition illustrates how Christian spirituality refers to 'living a life of transformation and self-transcendence in a community that resonates with the lived experiences of the divine in that person's life' (Van der Merwe 2014:1). This research confirmed the intrinsic and extrinsic modes of a divine-human relationship. The spiritual person can intrinsically seek divine experiences through *lectio divina*, *imaginative exegesis of Scriptures* and *mystic experiences.* Extrinsically, the experience of divine presence and involvement in God's continuous revelation daily can be constituted through spiritual growth as well as extraordinary human capabilities, and also through the encountering of everyday literature and discourse. This, however, requires a particular mindset to become aware of the divine so as to experience the divine both intrinsically and extrinsically. The person without such a mindset will certainly miss out on such experiences.

This essay tried to point out that Christian spirituality is the essence of a dynamic divine-human dialogue – between the divine and the spiritual person. The spiritual person responds in resonance to 'lived experiences' of the divine through a life of transformation and self-transcendence. This response is emphasised by Paul in his dialectic comparison of the spiritual person with an unspiritual person. The Pauline contribution summarises the rhythm of such a communication by focussing on the Spirit of God, the Communicator of spiritual things (πνευματικά, 2:13) to spiritual people (πνευματικοῖς), thus enabling them to understand the gifts bestowed on them by God (τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:12). The continuous renewal of the mind which facilitates transformation and self-transcendence is, for Paul, both fundamental and critically important for the discernment of spiritual things (God's wisdom) in order to

live as one who will continuously have 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16) and continuously experience the divine at new places and in new ways.

Acknowledgements

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