

Marek Tatar

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

ORCID 0000-0002-7161-8196

Ecumenical Spirituality as a Basis for Christian Unity Introduction

Abstract: Spirituality is a space that, regardless of denomination, affects every Christian. As we can see, divisions among Christians are nothing new. In fact, we have been dealing with them since its beginnings. As we can see, the scandalous division of Christianity was and is an anti-testimony that is not conducive to the sanctification of believers nor to the work of evangelization. Neither denominational exclusivism nor indifferentism and relativism are acceptable. The study concerns the possibility of meeting the followers of Christ and His Gospel on the basis of spirituality. Ecumenical spirituality, which is a lens that focuses dogmatic and practical ecumenism. By its nature, the pursuit of unity with God includes love for both Him and for every neighbor. Therefore, a denomination that rejects striving for this unity is not fully Christian.

Keywords: Christian spirituality, ecumenical spirituality, ecclesial spirituality, spiritual development, ecumenical dialogue

Divisions have accompanied Christians throughout their history. Yet Jesus Christ has indicated the importance and nature of unity both in the lives of the Apostles and in the lives of those to whom he sends them. Certain divisions began arising even in the apostolic and post-apostolic times. Without question, the dramatic events of 1054, 1517 and 1530 are also to be included. Against this backdrop, initiatives were undertaken by Nikolaus Zinzendorf, and also the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference (1910), leading to a quest for unity. This takes on a special significance in light of emerging challenges facing Christianity. Study of the ecumenical movement shows the significant role of spirituality; it takes on the form of specific ecumenical spirituality. To demonstrate the importance of this, it will be worthwhile to precisely show the nature

of unity, based on an analysis of biblical foundations and theological approaches, and then outline the synthetic semantic and substantive content of this type of spirituality. And in order to avoid merely speculative deviations, it will also be necessary to outline its importance in the Christian's life, as well as ways of implementing it.

1, The Christian Vocation to Sanctifying Unity

Unity appertains to one of the fundamental characteristics of the Church and Christian life. We can find it in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (325; 381). It should be emphasized that this is a mark that has special significance for ecumenical spirituality. An essential preliminary issue is to clarify what unity is in its essence. From the very outset, unity in terms of sameness is to be excluded. Uniformity, according to Bernard Leeming, is a denial of the charismatic character of the Church, since it imposes a path of unification (cf. Leeming 1963, 68–69).

The ambiguity of the term makes it possible to speak of unity in the sense of: a) mathematically as “one,” “singularity” (*unicitas, singularis*); b) in terms of indivisibility (*individualis*), which implies the impossibility of dividing; we can speak of unity as wholeness and coherence (*totalitas, unitas essentialis*). The most common use is the term *unitas*. Also noteworthy is the occurrence of the term unity in the sense of organic unity and a depth of subjectivity which defies description (cf. Bartnik 2003, 2:243). This leads to another distinction that is very important for terminological and content analysis, namely, it is important to note the occurrence of unity in terms of internal categories which are invisible, as well as external ones referring to the exterior features that constitute unity. In the case of this last definition, we can say that at this point we are moving more towards understanding unity as similarity or sameness. We can also speak of static unity, which is a kind of state, a permanent construct that is not subject to transformation; and of dynamic unity, a process that is constantly going on, coming into being, and striving for perfection (cf. Bartnik 2003, 2:243).

Against this background, it should be stated that the fundamental vocation of the Christians is holiness, the nature of which is unity.

The universality of this vocation is emphasized by Jesus Christ in the words: “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (John 17:20–21). It can be said that this is His “testament of unity,” which is at the same time both a calling and a task for all who belong to Him. Thus, as we can see, there is a feedback loop between the call to holiness and unity. In this regard, holiness must be understood and interpreted dynamically as the bringing about of the unifying commandment to love God (ἀγαπήσεις Κύριον τὸν θεόν) and neighbor (ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον) (cf. Matt 22:37–40; Luke 10:27). As we can see, Christ does not exclude anyone from this obligation, and He clarifies who our neighbor is (cf. Luke 10:29–37). In the theological literature we encounter two terms that are used synonymously, i.e., holiness and perfection (cf. Słomkowski 2000, 83–86).¹ We can also distinguish: a. ontic perfection, and b. perfection resulting from action (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 4). These two dimensions of holiness have special significance in relation to ecumenical spirituality. They allow us to undertake an analysis at the level of unity resulting from creation and moral unity – which refers to and is based upon supernatural revelation – and also the pursuit of *communio*, that is, union with God based on grace and with the use the proper means.

To discover the mystery of the nature of unity and unification ἕνωσις (*henōsis*) requires reference first of all to the prototype outlined by Jesus Christ in His “High Priestly Prayer” (esp. John 17:21). It can be said that unity is also the reason for sending the Holy Spirit, because: “when the Spirit of truth comes He will lead you to the complete truth” (John 16:13) and “[...] He will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). Thus, as we can see, ecumenical spirituality has its deepest roots in the truth of Trinitarian unity, the essence of which is love. The unity of the persons of the Holy Trinity and what theology calls

¹ “The Semitic term *qodes*, ‘holy thing,’ ‘holiness,’ deriving most likely from a stem that means ‘to cut,’ ‘to separate,’ suggests the idea of separation from what is called *profane*” (Jules de Vaulx 1982, 972; cf. Witek 1986, 8–10).

the interpenetration of περιχώρησις (*perichōrēsis*) constitutes the prototype for the unity of man with God, and at the same time the unity of man with man. The eternal truth, unfathomable by the human mind, of the full and perfect community of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is a communal “abiding,” (cf. John 10:38; 14:9), identity (cf. John 10:30), mission (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7), and a co-equality of glory (John 16:14–15). All of these aspects find a common denominator in love, because, as St. John states, “God is love [...]” (1 John 4:16) (cf. Hryniewicz 1997b, 753; 2011, 43–50).²

Another foundation of the spirituality of unity is Jesus Christ. The paradox that emerges from the history of Christianity concerns precisely accepting, reading, and understanding Him, as well as the revelation left by Him. It should be stated that it is not Christ who has divided us, but our opinions about Him. Christ, who “is the refulgence (ἀπαύγασμα) of God’s glory and the very imprint of His substance (ὑποστάσεως)” (Heb 1:3), the prospective “reconciliation of all things” (ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα – *apokatallaxai ta panta*) (Col 1:20), has simultaneously become a “dividing stone.” Christianity itself is only legitimate if its foundation is Christ (cf. Jaskóła 2005, 161; Tyson 1999, 19–28). Ecumenists emphasize above all the importance of the hypostatic union. The union of the divine and human natures in the mystery of the Incarnation has a universal character; that is to say, it touches every person and every era (cf. John 11:52; 1 John 4:9). In addition to the Incarnation, the totality of His teaching, which includes words, gestures, works, and miracles, must be taken into account. The watershed moment highlighted by theologians is the mystery of the Redemption (cf. *UR* 2; Napiórkowski 2011, 130–32).³ A key assertion here is that of K. Barth, who holds that

² J.R. Tyson referring to Karl Rahner, cites the following words of his: “This experience in which Jesus becomes for a particular person the event of the unique and qualitatively unsurpassable and irreversible approach of God, is always affected by the totality of its elements as a single entity even if not each of the elements is necessarily immediately present and explicitly and clearly in conscious awareness” (Tyson 1999, 1).

³ “After being lifted up on the cross and glorified, the Lord Jesus poured forth His Spirit as He had promised, and through the Spirit He has called and gathered together the people of the New Covenant, who are the Church” (*UR* 2).

despite our believing “otherwise” within the individual denominations, ultimately it is not in “Another” (Nossol 1997, 56).

In addition to the trinitarian, Christocentric foundations, equally important – if not most important for human sanctification as well as for the development of ecumenical spirituality – are the pneumatological foundations (cf. Tyson 1999, 28–31; Jaskóła 2005, 162–163; Tatar 2013, 507). This is why Pentecost is such an important ecumenical event (cf. Acts 2:1–13). It is the proclamation of the one Church, and at the same time the charismatic equipping of the Church for the proper fulfillment of its mission. The same Holy Spirit, the Counselor (Παράκλητος), dwells and works in all believers, being the author of sanctifying unity based on the charism of truth (Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) (cf. John 14:16–18). His activity enables every believer to reach unitive sanctification. Thus it can be said that His action touches three spheres: 1. every baptized person; 2. every Church; 3. and He initiates the efforts of Christians and Churches towards unity, because ecumenical work is His work.

We can see that both Christocentric and Christo-formational spirituality, as well as pneumatological spirituality, find their culmination in ecclesial spirituality. Christ, who is at the beginning of the Church, is the Head of this Mystical Body, the reason for its existence among all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). We can therefore define the Church as a symbiosis of what is divine and supernatural and what is human (cf. *LG* 4, 7, 8; *UR* 2; Napiórkowski 2011, 132–135; Surowiec 2023, 118–20).

In his approach referring to the act of creation, John R. Tyson states that this is a fundamental aspect of ecumenical spirituality. He points out that the truth of God the Creator is very vividly present in the path to holiness of St. Augustine (354–430) and St. Francis (1181–1226), as well in as the teachings of John Calvin (1509–1564) (cf. Tyson 1999, 30–40).⁴ The truth of *creation* reveals at the same time the *imago Dei* (image of God). As he points out, there have

⁴ Calvin, in his work *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, wrote: “it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge [of himself] unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descended from contemplating Him to scrutinizing himself” (Tyson 1999, 6).

been divisions among Christians in this area in the past. The second element is man's openness to the actions of God (cf. Tyson 1999, 7). This thought finds its continuation in the view of David Carter, a Methodist preacher and member of the Association and the Catholic–Methodist Commission. He referred to the encyclical letter of John Paul II in regard to *imago Dei*. He states that the essential element here is dialogue. Human nature is created in the image of God and reflects Him in a specific way. This act of creation is God's declaration to man, the entry into a constant dialogue with him (cf. Carter 2000, 3).⁵ In his view, dialogue is the essence of ecumenical spirituality, based on three principles: a. looking at everything that does not allow for dialogue and which introduces differences and biases within each Church, so consequently this is an introspective look; b. identifying what makes us similar and what divides us (clarity and non-ambiguity); c. acting progressively where possible in the light of a re-read of Tradition, on the basis of common sources, with particular attention to the Holy Scriptures and the works of the early Christians (cf. Carter 2000, 4–5).

On the other hand, a British Protestant theologian, Alister McGrath, in an attempt to define unity on the grounds of ecumenical spirituality, refers primarily to the concept of spirituality. He makes a distinction of “spirituality as such,” that is, concerning the experience of God. Within its scope this also includes the spirituality of other religions. A second category is spirituality in terms of Christianity itself (cf. McGrath 1999, 13–14). His study highlights the essential features that describe the nature of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox spirituality (cf. McGrath 1999, 16–19).

In an encyclopedic study, Emmanuel Sullivan, a Catholic Franciscan Friar, takes a comprehensive look at the phenomenon of ecumenical spirituality and refers to baptism as uniting the believer with the Person of Jesus Christ. This is how a communion allowing

⁵ The author, referring to the teaching of John Paul II as contained in the encyclical *Ut unum sint*, concludes as follows: “One might interpret this in terms of both humble willingness to receive, and to have one's ideas and ways adjusted as a result of the witness of others, and in terms of a willingness to give contribution to others. Though the Pope does not make specific link, one can also argue that dialogue is intimately related to our nature as created in the ‘image’ of God” (Carter 2000, 3).

a person to identify with the Church is created. It is a spirituality that is deeply pneumatological, Christological, biblical, liturgical; focused on individual and collective conversion within the Church or denomination, as well as on openness to others, thus deeply relational; focused on a hope that comes from the grace of faith and charity (cf. Sullivan 1983, 126–27).

2. The Essence and Nature of Ecumenical Spirituality

The issue of ecumenism and the spirituality associated with it is not new. However, it remains constantly relevant, because by its very nature ecumenism must be open to the work of the Holy Spirit, as well as to the diversity of Christian-ecclesial initiatives resulting from His action. The lack of unity among Christians is a continual challenge that calls for intellectual work, spiritual development, and practical coexistence between Christians of different denominations. The essential basis, however, is the “paradigm of truth,” as Cardinal J. Ratzinger put it when responding to contemporary tendencies of a diplomatic-pragmatic nature: “Consensus is not the basis of truth, but truth the basis of consensus” (Ratzinger 2005, 235; 2013, 8.2:686–90).

The Catholic Church, in its document *Unitatis redintegratio*, which was a milestone in ecumenical development, states that for this purpose it is necessary to “first, [make] every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, ‘dialogue’ between competent experts from different Churches and Communities” (*UR* 4; cf. Dulles 1999, 207). These two conditions are mutually complementary in light of belonging to Jesus Christ while at the same time professing diverging beliefs and living a diversity of forms (cf. Ratzinger 2005, 233). At the very beginning St. Paul asks a question that is essential for the whole history of Christianity: “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor 1:13). Division goes against His will, and for this reason conversion is an essential character of man’s inner life (cf. John 17:1–26) (cf. Leeming 1963, 22–24; Carter 2000, 4). There is no spirituality without conversion and transformation (cf. Tatar

2006, 57–77) and therefore “ecumenical spirituality” is the “soul of the whole ecumenical movement” (*UR* 8).

Meeting God and meeting with God creates the space in which the encounter with another who confesses Him is to take place, despite the diversity of Christian ways of life. This space is first and foremost the interior of the human person. Spiritual experience consequently leads to apostolic work for unity that takes into account the richness of diversity. This is extremely important because the very interior of man is the space of brokenness that is the fruit of sin (cf. John Paul II 1995, 34).⁶ Differences of a doctrinal, ritual, organizational, or emotional nature find their location precisely in the soul of man. Therefore, it is necessary to reach out to this space, because it is there that ecumenical healing takes place, through conversion and transformation of life, which then find their reflection in external expressions (cf. Nagy 1985, 228).

As can be seen, our analyses so far reveal the diversity of terms for properly capturing the relationship of spirituality and ecumenism (cf. Tatar 2013, 483–92). First is the term “spiritual ecumenism” (*UR* 8). Deeper semantic and content analysis, however, leaves some ambiguity as it suggests a certain ecumenical nature. It remains fully consistent with the already outlined division into theological, spiritual, and practical. Referring to the structure of man as a certain image, it should be said that spirituality does not occur in some isolated space, but encompasses all spheres of human life. The same is true for understanding the term “spiritual ecumenism,” since it is the soul that animates the whole of this organism.

In contemporary theological literature and in our present analysis, we also encounter the term “spirituality of ecumenism.” This indicates the secondary nature of spirituality and points to the primary nature of ecumenism. In this case, the development of spirituality is carried out against the backdrop of ecumenism. We are therefore

⁶ The Pope states unequivocally: “Christian unity is possible, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion. Not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social sins, which is to say the sinful “structures” themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of division” (John Paul II 1995, 34).

faced with a contradiction, because, as the study of ecumenism from the historical perspective shows, it was precisely the spiritual experience, the desire for unity, that came at the beginning (cf. Tatar 2013, 483–84).

The third term is “ecumenical spirituality.” It has a very rich biblical and theological basis. The Old Testament points elements close to *oikumene* as a confrontation with other religions and emphasizes Israel’s uniqueness:

- a. chosen by God (cf. Deut 7:7; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; Isa 41:8; 43:15; 48:12; Hos 11:1);
- b. having a covenant (cf. Exod 24:8; Deut 29:12; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; Ezek 11:20);
- c. Israel becoming Yahweh’s property (cf. Exod 19:5; Jer 2:3; 2:2; Deut 7:6; 14:2; Ps 80:2; 94:7; Isa 5:1; Hos 2:4; Ezek 16:8);
- d. as a witness and mediator between other nations and God (cf. Gen 12:3; Isa 44:8; 45:14, 23; Jer 4:2);
- e. the elements that create Israel’s internal cohesion are: a community based on race and a concern for purity (cf. Ezra 9:2; Isa 41:8; 51:2; Jer 33:26; Ps 105:6), a community of the Law (cf. Neh 8), a community of destiny and hope that stimulates all desires in spite of rifts and political and social divisions (cf. 1 Macc 2:51; 2 Macc 8:18; Isa 63–64), a community of worship (cf. Exod 29:38–46; 31:12–17; Lev 1–24);
- f. the perspective of a new people (cf. Ezra 36:26; Isa 10:20–21; Zeph 3:13; Jer 31:31; Hos 2:21), which will become universal through actions uniting other nations (cf. Isa 2:2; Jer 4:2) and which will draw other nations to God (cf. Zech 14:16; Ps 96:10; Isa 2:2; 42:1, 4), a new form of worship will arise as an expression of serving the one God (cf. Ezek 40–48; Isa 25:6; 56:6–8; 66:20–21; Zech 14:16) (cf. Grelot 1982, 426–32; Funali 2002, 8–17; Tyson 1999, 11–19).

The *novum* of the New Testament changes the paradigm of unity by focusing it on the Person of Jesus Christ. His mystery of Incarnation, Life, Passion, Death, and Resurrection introduces a new quality into world relations. He defines His own mission, while opening the perspective for man in the words: “For this is how God loved the world: He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in

Him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). Other key texts include the aforementioned High Priestly prayer (John 17:20–23); the mission of the disciples (Matt 28:19–20); the definition of belonging to Him (Luke 8:21); the universality of Redemption (John 11:51–52); the ordering of man’s life in relation to his neighbor and the world around him (cf. Matt 7:21; 20:25; 23:8; Mark 1:15; 10:42; Luke 22:32; John 21:15–19); the call for the permanent conversion of all (cf. Matt 8:8, 10; Mark 1:15; 10:17–22, 46–52; Luke 7:47–50; 15:7, 10, 18–19; 19:1–10; 22:32); identification with each person (Matt 25:35–46) and His presence among them (Matt 18:20). In this context, we must look at the beginnings of the Church and the apostolic activity of the “College of the Twelve.”

According to Paul Couturier, the “father of ecumenical spirituality” (cf. Allchin 1960, 5–16; Burke 2003, 2), action in this field is based on a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, constant dialogue and action on the substantive-theological level is necessary. On the other hand, he talks about the necessity of ecumenical spirituality. These two directions are complementary to each other and are inseparable (cf. Tavard 1960, 153; Carter 2000, 5). In an article entitled: *For Christian unity; the psychology of the January 18–25th Octave of Prayer*, he noted that prayer for Christian unity is done without common participation. It is done separately, which does not constitute a proper unifying accent (cf. Allchin 1960, 5–16; Tatar 2000, 748–56). For this very reason, the French pioneer is a forerunner of ecumenical thought in the Catholic context (cf. Skowronek 1997, 32–37).

Diane Kessler and Michael Kinnamon, taking up the issue of the relationship between ecumenism and spirituality, point out that ecumenism faces the task of healing relationships between Churches for the sake of the world (cf. Kessler and Kinnamon 2000, 63). However, lingering at this level, one can speak of the usual psychology of relationships and the building of certain bridges and bonds that allow denominations and religions to coexist peacefully. It is also worth emphasizing that the goal is not the world as such. Therefore, according to the authors, lack of ecumenism on the spiritual level disrupts the order resulting from the nature of creation. Part of the challenge of ecumenical spirituality is not so much the path

of rationally proving arguments that confirm an exclusive possession of truth, but recognizing and responding to the signs of God's presence. This fact should open everyone to the gift of the Holy Spirit, which leads to forgiveness and reconciliation. This, according to the authors, is the central point of ecumenical spirituality (cf. Kessler and Kinnamon 2000, 63).⁷

Emmanuel Sullivan adopts this term. According to him, “[...] it expresses the common life shared by Christians despite the separation of their Churches” (Sullivan 1983, 125–26).⁸ It must be admitted that this definition is of a very pragmatic tone. It is difficult to agree to a certain minimalization to “the practice of living together.” Moreover, in further argument, the author confirms this direction, stating: “Ecumenical spirituality focuses on the life of prayer and worship, especially prayer for unity” (Sullivan 1983, 126). In conclusion, he defines this spirituality in a descriptive way, drawing attention to the unity resulting from sacramental baptism: “Ecumenical spirituality is expressed in the common life shared by Christians despite the separation of their Churches. It is the recognition of the call to membership in the Church through the nature of their baptismal commitment to Christ” (Sullivan 1983, 125–26).

Régis Ladous bases his definition on the words of Jesus Christ praying for unity (cf. John 17:21). According to him, the correct term is “ecumenical spirituality”, and its essence includes: “identification with Jesus and prayer for the action of His Spirit in rising up together with others reconciled with the Church for the possibility of proclaiming the Gospel” (Ladous 1991, 948).

Similarly, John R. Tyson adopts the term “ecumenical spirituality.” His research area concerns the anthological justification of ecumenical spirituality, and is based on a definition of spirituality that, according to him, has a universalistic and therefore ecumenical character: “Christian Spirituality describes the relationship, union,

⁷ “Through ecumenism and spirituality, we recognize that all too often relationships with others, indeed with the whole created order and thus with God, are broken and in need of mending. A loving God beckons us to the Godhead and to our neighbours” (Kessler and Kinnamon 2000, 63).

⁸ “Ecumenical spirituality expresses the common life shared by Christians in spite of the separation of their churches” (Sullivan 1983, 125–26).

and conformity with God that a Christian experiences through his own reception of the grace of God, and a corresponding willingness to turn from sin ‘to walk according to the Spirit’ (Tyson 1999, 1).

Even the very attempts to agree on terminology reveal certain elements constituting this spirituality. It should be said that the relationship, having a dynamic character, between ecumenism and spirituality is defined most fully by the term “ecumenical spirituality” (cf. Tatar 2009a, 55–57). Both on strictly theological and on practical grounds, we have many ways of seeking out its true essence. Gwen Cashmore and Joan Puls, in developing a spirituality relative to the ecumenical movement, state that the proper definition must above all take into account the answer to two questions. The first of these concerns a certain premise and the traits that would characterize a Church united throughout the world, while the second addresses the problem of the quality of life of those who would put the idea into practice. Based on these issues, they conclude that “Spirituality has come to be seen as a more integrated and integrative dimension of the life of faith as a result of various influences.” (Ladous 1991, 948).

It must be admitted that this attempt broadens the spectrum of spirituality to a large extent, taking into account not so much a confrontational character, but rather the integration of a universalist nature in terms of the faith and culture, broadly understood, of the believer. The authors take into account both the individual-personalistic aspect as well as the impact in the form of testimony. Waclaw Hryniewicz notes that at this moment we are dealing with efforts at a new style of being Christian. According to him, “Ecumenism broadens horizons and liberates one from narrow confessionalism.” At the same time, he points out that it is in this experience that we are dealing with a fuller universalism that creates a synthesis of aspirations such as the search for truth and fullness with purity of faith (cf. Hryniewicz 1997a, 746). Ecumenical spirituality excludes triumphalism and exclusivism. On the positive side, the spiritual development of a Christian somehow forces an ecumenical attitude of conversion resulting from the drama of any divisions. Therefore, spirituality cannot be insensitive to the sin of loss of unity (cf. Hryniewicz 1997a, 746). In conclusion, it should be said that

ecumenical spirituality is a state of living in unity with God and one's neighbor which takes into account the richness of the diversity of gifts.

3. Spiritual Development of a Christian in the Spirit of Ecumenism

The image of the unity of the Holy Trinity, as well as his vocation to union with the Trinity, directly confronts man – as an ecumenical being – with the question of his own internal unity. The action of God, who calls man to perfect and sanctifying unity in love, demands man's entering into dialogue with Him. The truth of the necessity of turning to God as the ultimate goal of existence, regardless of one's way of professing faith, directs attention to the interior experience of *οικουμένη* (*oikoumenē*) in each individual person. Thus, as we can see, the Christian pursuit of holiness, inherent in the nature of God's call, has an ecumenical character. John Paul II very clearly emphasizes the importance of the "common martyrology" of Christians, who are a clear testimony of a sanctifying life. The Pope states: "These Saints come from all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities which gave them entrance into the communion of salvation [...] This universal presence of the Saints is in fact a proof of the transcendent power of the Spirit. It is the sign and proof of God's victory over the forces of evil which divide humanity. As the liturgies sing: 'You are glorified in your Saints, for their glory is the crowning of your gifts'" (John Paul II 1995, 84).

Therefore, it is impossible to talk about ecumenical spirituality without taking into account the personal conversion of the Christian, resulting from the words of the Apostle "If we say, 'We have never sinned,' we make Him a liar, and His word has no place in us" (1 John 1:10) (Leeming 1963, 61–62). Without a doubt, the Christian's attitude of spiritual development must lead to the exclusion of sin. It is a fundamental obstacle to the path of sanctification. In this context, the sin of lack of unity must be taken into account. We can also state that the breaking apart of Christianity, as a clear opposition to the Gospel revealing the words, attitudes, and gestures

of Jesus Christ, is a sin that does not touch only the problem of evangelization and witnessing. This sin touches the deepest inner spheres of every person who identifies with the Gospel. This is how fundamental division is born, which is confirmed by historical-religious-denominational events. The sin of not having an ecumenical attitude points to deep layers of individualistic treatment of the life of faith (cf. Hryniewicz 1997b, 754; Congar 1970, 78–104). It is a sin of human pride leading to “intransigent condemnation of others,” contempt and also self-assuredness (John Paul II 1995, 15).

For this reason, an examination of conscience which allows us to recognize sin and at the same time acknowledge it is necessary. This is a fundamental condition that makes the spiritual development of the Christian become a “dialogue of conscience” (John Paul II 1995, 34–35). Observation and analysis of the history of Christianity very clearly indicates not only the scandalous and anti-sanctifying nature of the loss of unity, but also structures that have arisen, and unfortunately are still emerging, based on rejection of the pursuit of unity. Attempts to question the validity of ecumenism in general, and consequently the search for paths to unity, are examples of this. Such behavior and attitudes stemming from contempt and intransigent certainty are fruits of a failure to understand the fundamental call of Jesus Christ to every believer and to the Church (cf. John 17:2–26). It was in this spirit which the father of spiritual ecumenism, Paul Couturier, undertook his work (cf. Nagy 1985, 231). It should be emphasized that an attitude of sorrow and contrition on the path to holiness is rather an essential element in the formation of humility, and this, as we have already stated, is a necessary condition on the path of spiritual ecumenical development. P. Couturier put this aspect in the following words: “Since all Christians are to a greater or lesser extent responsible for the current state of a divided Christianity, collective reparation is essential in the face of a publicly offended God and in the face of people who have been legitimately scandalized” (cf. Nagy 1985, 232). The path to common reparation leads through individual conversion.

The personified Word of God as the fullness of revelation is one of the most adequate sources, as well as the means for developing ecumenical spirituality for Christians of any denomination. It is

a matter of constantly embracing life on the path of evangelical radicalism and remaining faithful to the command of Jesus Christ. In this context, John Paul II lists the following areas:

- a. openness to the Holy Spirit and His action in the Catholic Church and in other Churches and Christian Communities;
- b. appreciation of the way of sanctification in other faiths, which is expressed in the examples of the saints;
- c. the truth of the communion of saints;
- d. openness and discovery of new areas for development (cf. John Paul II 1995, 15; Chlebowski 2006, 87–107; Tatar 2009b, 214–17).

In addition to conversion, it is also necessary to outline those means which lead to the development of the Christian's holiness. The source, and at the same time the instrument, is Sacred Scripture, which certainly has a universalistic character. The discovery of revealed truth leads the Christian to the knowledge of doctrine. But this must not stop at the intellectual level, locking itself into a dangerous rationalism. Knowing the truth of faith, especially at the level of spiritual formation, gives rise to a profession of faith, which is present in each denomination and constitutes its foundation (cf. *UR* 6; John Paul II 1995, 18).⁹

Conversion and spiritual development take place with the development of prayer. This is an essential condition for the spiritual development of man (cf. John Paul II 1995, 26).¹⁰ Taking as a basis the expression – which originated before the division of Christianity

⁹ The Pope John Paul II points out: “Because by its nature the content of faith is meant for all humanity, it must be translated into all cultures. Indeed, the element which determines communion in truth is *the meaning of truth*. The expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning” (John Paul II 1995, 18).

¹⁰ The Pope states: “Prayer, the community at prayer, enables us always to discover anew the evangelical truth of the words: ‘You have one Father’ (Matt 23:9), the Father – *Abba* – a invoked by Christ Himself, the Only-begotten and Consubstantial Son. And again: ‘You have one teacher, and you are all brethren’ (Matt 23:8) [...] The change of heart which is the essential condition for every authentic search for unity flows from prayer and its realization is guided by prayer” (John Paul II 1995, 26).

– that prayer “is an elevation of the soul to God” and “a request made to Him for the proper things” (cf. Słomkowski 2000, 199; cf. Urbański 1999, 26), it should be stated that in its very essence it has a communal-creative character. This communion of life is always possible, because through baptism we have become one with Christ (cf. CCC 2565). For this reason, its most appropriate time, place, and opportunity is to meet together before the One whom we confess. In this way, a specific ecumenical prayer has developed, its roots reaching back to the beginning of the ecumenical movement (cf. Matt 18:20). Extremely relevant are the words of Paul Couturier: “[...] doctrinal confusion is avoided, because prayer rises up without obscuring the barriers –making prayer rest in the heart of Christ – whether in their various places of worship, in the full independence of the beliefs, their rites, their spiritual traditions – families of Christians, separated from one another – will send up together from the heart a single appeal” (Burke 2003, 5). Following the development of ecumenism, we notice that a huge number of meetings, as well as documents, focus on this. In the personal or individual dimension, it reveals the sensitivity of the Christian to a serious lack of unity.

The nature of spirituality is influenced by grace and the sacraments that result from them. The Latin term *sacramentum* means sanctification, sanctifying means, and comes from the Greek μυστήριον (*mysterion* – *mysterium*) (cf. Eph 3:9; Col 1:26–27). The sacramental life, like the Sacred Scripture, is among the sources and also means of man’s spiritual development. St. Thomas Aquinas defines it as *signum rei sacra, in quantum est sacrificans hominem* (STh III, q. 60, a. 2). It is important to emphasize the significance of relating the understanding of the sacrament to Christ as the Primary Sacrament. In this way, the perspective of sacramental spirituality is revealed to us, which creates an internal *communion* with God, and thus builds an internal unity within man himself and in his relationship to the surrounding world (cf. Jagodziński 2002, 2008). Of course, it should be taken into account that in this area there is a most far-reaching divergence, particularly focused on the center, that is the Eucharist. It should also be noted that there is a significant difference in the reception, understanding, and experience

of the sacraments in the Catholic Church, Eastern Churches, and Protestant Churches (cf. *UR* 8).¹¹

Equally important is the testimony of Christian holiness of life (cf. *LG* 40). It follows from its nature that there can be no spiritual development if there is no dynamic of love of God and neighbor. Hence, the development of spirituality implies an ecumenical attitude. As mentioned, this is evident in the martyrology, as well as of the saints venerated by various Churches. This is a common heritage, because holiness does not include any division. John Paul II emphasizes that it is precisely the testimony and contribution of martyrdom (*μάρτυρία* – *martyria*) that is at the foundation of the hope of unity in Christ (John Paul II 1995, 84; 1994, 37).¹² The Pope expresses this thesis unequivocally: “The *communio sanctorum* speaks louder than the things which divide us” (John Paul II 1994, 37). When confronted with the challenges of each era, it becomes a clear sign, a testimony, and means of sanctifying others. For this very reason, every Christian, regardless of denomination, is to become a clear witness of Jesus Christ. This challenge is all the more significant and important due to the development of post-modern culture, the guiding principles of which are chaos and relativism (cf. Bokwa 2010, 114–38). Sanctifying testimony is not just an outward manifestation or a kind of declarative attitude of a Christian. Holiness makes present the One with Whom the Christian lives in unity and thus confirms the truth of the Gospel to the world. It is realized in a threefold way, i.e.:

- a. as pre-existing in God – His plan and will for man, called into existence out of love;
- b. development in earthly life;
- c. the ultimate seeing “face to face” (cf. 1 John 3:2) – the eschatological character. For this reason, Eastern theology speaks of the anticipation of this ultimate dimension of holiness

¹¹ “Yet worship in common (*communicatio in sacris*) is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of Christian unity” (*UR* 8).

¹² “The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, and Protestants, as Pope Paul VI pointed out in his Homily for the Canonization of the Ugandan Martyrs” (John Paul II 1994, 37; cf. Chlebowski 2006, 114).

already in earthly life (cf. Meyendorff 1984, 279; Evdokimov 1964, 265).¹³ W. Hryniewicz argues that the expression of a Christian's maturity and spiritual development with regard to ecumenism and witness is "the virtue of active respect for others" (Hryniewicz 2011, 21).

The approach presented by Luigi Sartori can be seen as an attempt to systematize and organize the issue of ecumenical spirituality in relation to the individual experience of the Christian. He emphasizes three spiritual foundations for it to actually be realized. He believes that, first of all, it is necessary to be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit while recognizing the inadequacy of man's natural spiritual powers. It must not be forgotten that God Himself is the Initiator and the One who leads to unity with Himself the people involved in professing the faith in the diversity of Churches. On this point, the author emphasizes three elements that shape this path, i.e. the spirit of communion (κοινωνία – *koinōnia*); testimony (μαρτυρία – *martyria*); and taking specific actions through service (διακονία – *diakonia*) (cf. Vertali 2004, 137). The second element is to give priority to charity in its authentic and universal dimension as a charism of the Holy Spirit that reveals itself regardless of confession and time. It should be emphasized that it is love, as the source but also as the point of arrival in human development towards God, that is the essence (cf. Vertali 2004, 137). The third basis is the direction of spiritual development, which should strive to ascend to ever higher levels of *communio*. In relation to ecumenical spirituality, therefore, it is not a matter of seeking the minimum by abandoning contradictory elements in the faiths that are professed. The author puts forward a bold thesis here: "So it is not a dialectic of the type: either diversity to the detriment of unity, or unity to the detriment of diversity, but paradoxically: diversity that strengthens and enriches unity, and unity that stimulates and enlivens diversity, rather than merely tolerating it with difficulty" (Vertali 2004, 137; cf. Kessler and Kinnamon 2000, 67).

¹³ This is the so-called anamnestic eschatologism, which is reflected in the Eucharistic celebration (cf. Meyendorff 1984, 279).

Summary

The spiritual development of the Christian is his fundamental vocation and leads to perfect and full eschatological unity. Therefore, it is worth noting that each of the Christian denominations has this goal. As we can see, the scandalous division of Christianity was and is an anti-testimony that is not conducive to the sanctification of believers nor to the work of evangelization. Neither denominational exclusivism nor indifferentism and relativism are acceptable. The space for the meeting of the followers of Christ and His gospel is ecumenical spirituality, which is the lens that focuses dogmatic and practical ecumenism. By its nature, the pursuit of unity with God includes love for both Him and for every neighbor. Therefore, a denomination that rejects the pursuit of this unity is not fully Christian. The way to this goal is through conversion, fidelity to Sacred Scripture, sacramental life, preservation of Tradition, and building civilization based on the words of Christ. For this reason, ecumenical spirituality includes unity along with all the richness of diversity. In this way, there can be an exchange of spiritual goods through which the world truly becomes the Kingdom of God.

Duchowość ekumeniczna jako fundament jedności chrześcijańskiej

Abstrakt: Duchowość jest przestrzenią, która niezależnie od denominacji dotyka każdego chrześcijanina. Jak możemy zauważyć, podziały wśród chrześcijan nie są niczym nowym. Właściwie mamy z nimi do czynienia od samych początków istnienia chrześcijaństwa. Skandaliczny podział chrześcijaństwa był i jest antyświadcstwem, które nie sprzyja uświęceniu wierzących ani dziełu ewangelizacji. Ani ekskluzywizm wyznaniowy, ani indyferentyzm i relatywizm nie są akceptowalne. Opracowanie dotyczy możliwości spotkania wyznawców Chrystusa i Jego ewangelii na gruncie duchowości. W takim ujęciu duchowość ekumeniczna jest soczewką skupiającą dogmatyczny i praktyczny ekumenizm. Z natury rzeczy dążenie do jedności z Bogiem obejmuje miłość zarówno do Niego, jak i do każdego bliźniego. Dlatego wyznanie, które odrzuca dążenie do tej jedności, nie jest w pełni chrześcijańskie.

Słowa kluczowe: duchowość chrześcijańska, duchowość ekumeniczna, duchowość eklezjalna, rozwój duchowy, dialog ekumeniczny

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