

It is the Spirit Who gives Life (John 6:63): Experience and the Formulation of Theology*

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This paper was presented at the international conference “Theology of the Holy Spirit: Personal Experience and Charismatic Movements in Contemporary Churches” held in Sibiu (2014). Although the role of the charismatic experience in the history of Christianity is a well-known fact it is still of particular interest for today due to the growth of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements worldwide. By turning to Hildegard of Bingen and to Martin Luther for a better understanding of the “faith of the heart”, this study aims to emphasize faith not just as a matter of understanding God but rather as experiencing the real presence of the Holy One. A particular focus is on clarifying terms and seeking the understanding of one another’s positions on the issue of the Holy Spirit.

Keywords: *spiritual experience, Holy Spirit, theology of the heart, Pentecostalism, dialogue*

My first presentation on the comparison of teaching on the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism and Eastern Orthodoxy was back in 2006 in the framework of the St. Andrew’s 11th annual readings on Contemporary Theological Issues. Since then, I have been working on the issue of spiritual experience in various Christian and Jewish traditions.¹ We do not create God by our theology. It is because we actually encounter God that we try to understand what has happened and attempt to explain it theologically. Nowadays the value of the charismatic experience in interpreting texts gets more and more recognition, as evidenced by the recent publications of the “Religious Experience

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¹ Olga Zaprometova, “Bitter and Sweet Tears: Exploring the Spirituality of the Eastern Church Fathers in the Light of Post-modern «enthusiastic Christianity» in Russia” in: Rolv Olsen (ed.), *Mission and Postmodernities*, Oxford 2011, REGNUM EDINBURGH 2010 Series, p. 191-203; O. Zaprometova, “The Conceptualization of Religious Experience: From Solovyov to Moltmann” in: Teresa Obolevitch, Tomas Homa et al. (eds.), *Russian Thought in Europe: Reception, Polemics, Development*, Serii Humanitas. Studia Kulturoznawcze. Krakow 2013, p. 257-275, and others.