

New Therapies and Personal development from a spiritual and theological Catholic point of view

Summary: this article is meant to give an analysis and some guidelines for discernment to Catholic Leaders on the subject of the *New Therapies and the Personal Development* (NTPD) market.

First it presents the most recent trends of the NTPD, shedding some light and suggesting criteria for discernment like: 1- the need to acknowledge the existence - in the realm that the NTPD offers - of a “new spirituality” constituted out of the Church and of its spiritual Tradition and influence, and 2- the need to acknowledge the existence of a latent “belief system” linked to that “new spirituality” and its deep consequences, showing the vital importance of the “belief system” (the Creed).

Secondly, this article tries to compare and weigh the NTPD with the mainstream recognised entities as: Western Science (Physics, Psychology), Western Law, Eastern Religions with the Catholic Spiritual Tradition and the common Catholic Theological Criteria.

Thirdly, it addresses the general position of the Church and suggests all the efforts that could be done in this field in order to match the actual need.

I- Facts

A “new spirituality”

Some expressions

Neutral territory

II- Discernment

The existence of a “belief system”

“Belief system” and “Spiritual life”

What is needed

Are there any positive aspects to all this new “spirituality”?

III- The Church efforts in this field

The challenges for the Catholic Faith, Theology and Spiritual Theology

Important stable points in the Church

What is needed to be done in the long run

Conclusion

I- Facts

A “new spirituality”

Amongst many realities developing in the post Post-modern age¹ in which we live (90s and 2000s) we can now definitely notice the existence of a stream of a “new spirituality”². This stream is not unified by a unique leader or by the direction of a unique person/organisation. Its “system of belief” is rather a result of a recent development which we will try to unravel in the coming pages. Paradoxically, its composition is rather eclectic, often putting together heterogeneous elements³.

We can as well easily notice that this stream is strongly impregnating the minds and hearts of the actual world. It has in our daily life a diffuse growing presence, but nonetheless real and directive. It has not only coined some of our most robust new language used today but to a degree, as well, it is constituting a new spirit/mentality or even a “belief system”. This is what we will consider in the following pages.

If we try to understand the components of this “new spirituality”, if we look closer at what is offered today “in the market”, we can notice the existence of various “spiritual” realities and currents. We can name some of them that are rather “new” (note: “new”, means for the last 70 years, more or less): *“hard-core New age”, recognised Therapies, non-recognised Therapies, Self-help* (books and gurus), *Personal development, imported Buddhism, imported Hinduism, imported Sufism, Kabbalah*, independent systems of *Meditation*,.... Each of these realities can have: books, gurus, centres, institutes, certifications, movements, cults and so forth. The followers of these “spiritual” currents are millions. But the majority of society is influenced by it passively. Again: all these “spiritual” realities are existing together and are influencing our mentality and, unwillingly and unconsciously (they don’t have one leader or a board of leaders), pushing toward a “development”, an “evolution”, where a “system of belief” is smoothly emerging.

Some expressions

Let us first clarify some of the expressions used above.

¹ It is difficult to coin a name that would qualify this time or decades we live in. Many disciplines, techniques, technologies, efforts and attempts are continuing to flourish (think of Neuroscience, Personal Development, Nano-Technologies, Bio-Technologies,...). Many forces that are going in different direction are interacting. Many interests are at stake (a lot of greed, hasty artificial food production versus health issues, multinationals getting grater control in the market, banks controlling entire countries economies, selling new technologies, religious fights,...). For the time being, having se many things going into so many directions give the impression of a great confusion. The world is not really a “small village”; confusion seems to rule. It is too early to say what will happen. So as for this second decade of the twenty-first century, we may accept this double aspect: extreme flourishing/development + mental/spiritual confusion.

² “spiritual” here is used to mean: a non-material option. It doesn’t go further to qualify exactly the option.

³ The easy acceptance by today’s mentality of such eclectic and non unified vision says something of today’s mind sate, and the good hint of confusion that results.

Hard-core New Age: I do distinguish between “hard-core new age” (which is rare today) and different other realities that are part of our daily horizon, that have a more specific identity today: *new Therapies, Self-help, Personal development, imported Buddhism, imported Hinduism*. Hard-core New Age is rare today⁴, because time has encouraged development, deepening and some integration. Some adjustments have been made from the “new age” people, getting more grounded, and finding more roots in Scientific Research, more Traditional Religions and Philosophies, more grounded Therapies, and so forth. A more realistic, pragmatic and grounded attitude is emerging. The unfeasibility of a “dreamy life” catches up as well.

Even if the new Age era and movement is finished, its spirit, its “system of belief”, is not only very alive but is acting and shaping today’s mentality: the spirit and “set of belief” of the “new spirituality” is shaped indeed by it to a great extent. Understanding carefully the elements of the “belief system” of the New Age movement can help us better understand important issues that are still very vivid today (see further down: “belief system”). This is why the coming presentation is important and helpful.

*The New Age movement is a Western **spiritual movement** that developed in the second half of the 20th century. Its central precepts have been described as drawing on both Eastern and Western **spiritual and metaphysical traditions** and infusing them with influences from **self-help and motivational psychology**, holistic health, parapsychology, consciousness research and quantum physics. The movement aims to create **a spirituality without borders or confining dogmas that is inclusive and pluralistic**. It holds to a holistic worldview, emphasising that the mind, body, and spirit are interrelated and that there is **a form of monism and unity throughout the universe**. It attempts to create a worldview that includes both science and spirituality and embraces a number of forms of mainstream science as well as other forms of science that are considered fringe.*⁵

Recognised and non-recognised Therapies: in the beginning, the new Therapies positioned and defined themselves by comparison with hard-core western medicine as “alternative”. In the eyes of a scientific pragmatic view, many proved to have a positive effect on the human being (improving “quality of life” of the patient) and Scientific Research on these Therapies started to blossom in the West⁶. “Improving the quality of life” of the patient pushed western Medicine to integrate many of these therapies with orthodox medicine (drug/surgery based). This led to two changes: 1- the first one in the attitude: this “medicine” is not antagonistic anymore, it is now called “complementary-medicine”, and 2- a second change which occurred in Civil Legislation: the western Countries started to analyse, and classify different therapies, finding new criteria in order to recognise many of them by law and exclude a few as well for lack of fulfilling a minimum criteria. Therefore

⁴ “By the end of the 1980s, the New Age movement had lost its momentum. [...] By the mid-1990s, it was evident that the movement was dying, and New Agers in Europe began to speak of the move from “New Age to Next Stage.” The New Age movement proved to be one of the West’s most significant religious phenomena of the 20th century. [...] The continuing presence of New Age thought in the post-New Age era is evident in the number of New Age bookstores, periodicals, and organizations that continued to be found in nearly every urban centre.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, art. “New Age”)

⁵ This presentation is taken from the online Encyclopaedia Wikipedia, under *New Age*. Compared to other presentations (see Encyclopaedia Britannica’s one for instance), this one is quite accurate and identifies it better.

⁶ See Dr Herbert Benson research at Harvard on the *Relaxation Response*.

one has to acknowledge the extremely positive effect brought by: Scientific Research, Legislative effort, Pragmatic attitude of the western Medical system.

Note: The scientific theoretical effort continues as well, because many of these therapies (think of the so called “energy therapies”) convey a vision of the world and of the human being, that are different from the orthodox mainstream medicine: each one of them will have to prove their scientific validity or not. This will depend on research and theoretical study. It has huge Philosophical and Religious implications as well. This will certainly in the end push Western-Medicine, Philosophy and Religions toward some new developments. This is not the case of medicine practised in other Countries, for instance in China, where many of these “new aspects” have been integrated already for millennia.

“Self-help” and “Personal development”: these two areas, very close to each other, have been “in vogue” for a few decades now in the West.

“Self-help”, or self-improvement, is a self-guided improvement - economically, intellectually, or emotionally - often with a substantial psychological basis. Many different self-help groupings exist and each has its own focus, techniques, associated beliefs, proponents and in some cases, leaders. (cf. Wikipedia)

“Personal development” includes activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. The concept is not limited to “self-help” but includes formal and informal activities for developing others in roles such as teacher, guide, counsellor, manager, life coach or mentor. When “personal development” takes place in the context of institutions, it refers to the methods, programs, tools, techniques, and assessment systems that support human development at the individual level in organizations. (cf. Wikipedia)

“imported”: what does “imported” mean in *imported Buddhism, imported Hinduism, imported Sufism, Kabbalah (imported Jewish Mysticism)*? Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism are fully constituted religions, each having a system of belief, practices/rites, a moral code and a spirituality. Each religion has its attractiveness to the West. For many decades, many persons from the birth places of these religions or from the West saw that, and decided to import these partial aspects to the West in order to sell them. They removed what could be considered as a heavy burden by a western person, and kept what is attractive. It is often the spiritual mystical aspect that has been imported, especially the Meditation methods.

Let us take one classic example: Yoga. Yoga is part of the Hindu Religion and it belongs to its set of beliefs, its rites, and moral code and habits. Yoga itself covers a very wide span of types that address the different levels of growth and the different types of streams in Hinduism. What we often see in the west is an imported version of Yoga, that does not say anything about Hinduism. The same applies to other methods of Meditation, to the Chakra system, to the Meridians, the Tao,... These imported forms are either truncated or deeply impoverished forms of a Religion. They do not take into account the Whole system of belief. The behaviour of the importer consists in removing any set of belief and just offering the succulent part, while in fact they are intimately related like flesh and bone. Flesh with no bones cannot offer a long-lasting viable life. The same for this eclectic superficial commercial importation. We take what suits us and leave what does not. Apart from being an offence to these religions, it is a more romantic, dreamy way of approaching them.

Independent techniques of Meditation: faced with the huge thirst for meditation, many techniques of meditation are born. The majority of them have an influence from Hinduism or Buddhism, but they do not presuppose any of these systems of belief. They are not directly affiliated to Yoga or Zen. In these techniques we find relaxation techniques, that touch only on the body (breathing, positions,...). Some others involve either quieting the mind, or on the contrary focusing on some specific object, visualisation, or more simply on repeating a Mantra (short “sacred” formula). Some others will claim to offer more than just relaxation and peace. In a very stressed world, these methods of meditation spread a lot and have great success.

Neutral territory

The fact is that often these elements of “new spirituality” place themselves in a “neutral territory” niche, sprinkled with the claim of being “scientific”. They are not an official religion (so there is no Theology), they are not a proper school of Psychology (no University formation is involved). They are right in between - like a tiny baby holding the hands of a giant (Theology) and an adult (Psychology) - claiming that they can walk alone like an adult, neutrally and independently. Maybe one day we will have a Faculty of Self-development, but for today, I do not think there are enough scientific grounds and content to create a Faculty, and the principles on which they are based are eclectic and not rooted in something consistent enough to form a *teaching body*. At the most it can be a branch of specialisation inside of the Psychology Faculty. The “spiritual” haze which often surrounds them is not even clarified enough (see below).

When small Therapies (Reiki, EFT,...) are not combined with Medical training or proper Psychological or Theological/Spiritual training they lead nowhere. They might be very efficient in a very small area of application, but they cannot be used to give Psychological or Spiritual or Theological advice – it would be charlatanism. This is anyway forbidden in the West, according to the Law. To be a licensed counsellor today in the West has serious requirements: in the USA for instance most states require at least a Masters degree in Psychology, Counselling, or a related discipline. In many States, the Masters degree must contain several specific classes and be at least 48 semester hours in length. To be a psychologist, in most states, will require a doctoral degree, such as a Ph.D. in psychology.

It is understood that, unless the Therapist is trained properly in one or more of these disciplines he or she cannot give any professional and reliable advice. On the contrary, he can create more damage than help. The wisdom, balance and culture that come out of a proper University education and a proper training cannot be improvised.

Spiritual Accompaniment (Spiritual Direction, Spiritual Counselling) as practised in the Catholic Church requires serious training that often parish priests do not feel confident enough to offer. Learning more about Spiritual Life than what is received in the Licentiate in *Theology* (i.e. receiving a Masters Degree in *Spiritual Theology*) combined with receiving *Spiritual Accompaniment* oneself for various years, will help better prepare the Priest for such an

important mission in the Church. Of course, it goes without saying that Lay people can as well become *Spiritual Directors*, providing they have undergone adequate training. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2690.

II- Discernment

Let us try to understand what type of discernment we should use in order to evaluate all this “spiritual” activity in the post Post-modern world in a more balanced and mature way avoiding hasty radical positions (pro or against).

The existence of a “belief system”

The first point we may consider is the existence of a “belief system” in the “new spirituality”. We cannot always notice it because it is often implicit, but nonetheless present and active.

For instance, we often hear people who offer any of the above list of services saying: “you believe in what you want to”, “all beliefs are welcome and compatible with this technique” (“that teaching” or “that therapy”). Another claim is: “this is scientifically proven, and it has results”, “it works, and there is no harm to it”, “it has nothing to do with Faith, or Religion”. Note: These affirmations still embody quite well the New Age’s claims (please see the description of New Age given above) and system of belief.

At first sight this way of presenting things may seem convincing and therefore attractive. Moreover, people try it and often it works – but with a bit of discernment one can notice that “it works” only within the narrow limits of its field. It does not change the human being deeply. One can cure some aspects of the human being, and not all the human being (see Hypnosis, Reiki, Meditation, EFT,...). Plus, it is important to discern the difference between the area of action of the therapies, what is possible for them, and the area of action of the Grace of God (the same does apply for Psychology).

Often many of these therapies and/or techniques carry (or are carried by) a philosophical and/or spiritual vision and an understating of the world, the human being and God (God or the expressions used today to name Him: the Whole, Energy,...). I will call that “vision” a “belief system”. In other words: it is a “creed”, or a set of beliefs. Every human being has his or her own set of beliefs.

The “system of belief” is a vision and understanding of what the world is, who the human being is, who God is. The tenants of such therapies and techniques seem to misunderstand the existence and the value of a “system of belief” and by that same fact downgrade its value. They misunderstand it out of their unconscious or conscious rejection of dogma, religion and authority. They downgrade its value claiming to leave religious issues to the totally free and personal choice, where all religions are equal, valid and legitimate.

The real meaning of the Creed (Dogma), from where it comes (from the Revelation of God), what it means (it becomes in us a Spiritual Experience of the Risen Lord), how it is transmitted (by a special Grace of God that helps express accurately and securely this

Divine and Spiritual reality with human words) is totally ignored. The hard skin of the Dogma is rejected, without opening it to see the succulent Fruit in it (Divine Life).

If any position is taken by a Catholic believer in the realm of Faith and Creed (Dogma) it is seen as fanaticism, intolerance, dogmatism, authoritarianism, or even worse: totalitarianism, brainwashing, and so forth.

Some therapist or coach or “counsellor” may claim that the meditation technique or the “psychological therapy” they offer cannot or does not interfere with the private sphere of the personal belief of their client. What could we think about that claim?

A doctor or a masseur can claim that, and we can easily understand it and believe it. But if a Psychologist makes this claim, it becomes much more difficult. Why that? Both Psychology and Religion have as a main “object” the human soul (mind, will, freedom, feelings, imagination, human acts,...). The Psychologist is interested purely by the soul, while the Priest or the Spiritual counsellor is interested by the spirit (the highest part of the soul) as well. Some Psychoanalyst – like Dr C. G. Jung – did recognise the positive effect that Religion can have on people. This is not necessary the case of Freud or others.

For these reasons, it is very difficult not to get things mixed up. The “belief system” of either the Therapist or of the Therapy are conveyed in various ways during the therapy, the training and the coaching and would often influence the outcome. One can’t deny the unconscious interference of the “belief system” in the dynamic of the Transference and the Counter-Transference. There is no Therapy, healing, without Transference.

This is why, often people would seek a Christian Psychologist or a Priest Psychologist.

For our case: the Therapist, the Coach and the Counsellor have all as a centre of interest the human soul⁷. So the previous analysis and its conclusions may apply here.

When a human being follows many of these “spiritual” techniques that involve meditation, energy, and relaxation is it very difficult for him to remain impermeable to the “set of beliefs” of his teacher, master, trainer or of therapy. While theoretically, on paper, this could be possible, practically, it is quite a challenging task and requires a solid doctrinal and spiritual catholic formation in order to do that: integrate, assimilate without losing anything from the Christian faith all that could be assimilated, discerning what could not. This requires a very deep and well developed knowledge of Christian Spirituality, which remains, today, a very rare thing. It reminds us of the distinction made by Saint Paul between the “weak” believers and the strong ones⁸.

“Belief systems” are an unavoidable core reality within us. And it is like Life: it is transmittable by permeation, exposure, communication and so forth. Claiming not to have

⁷ Of course it depends what type of therapy, but it applies to many.

⁸ “However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to **the weak**. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol’s temple, might he not be encouraged, if **his conscience is weak**, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge **this weak man** is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and **wounding their conscience when it is weak**, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.” (1 Corinthians 8:7-13)

or not to use his or her own belief system is an illusion. On the contrary it is constantly used, and follows us like our shadow.

The majority of the “belief systems” carried by the “new spirituality” are not compatible with Christianity. They should be sifted, assimilated, purified and transformed (see below).

“Belief system” and “Spiritual life”

Each human being and, all the more reason, a therapist or a personal-development trainer carries a “belief system” in his personal spiritual life, teaching and attitude. Truths and belief systems are implicitly conveyed in the therapies and in the personal-development training. This is unavoidable.

Some of the most common “personal-development” books will have some quotes from the Bible, sprinkled here and there. The Christian reader might then feel safe, or might at least hang on to that verse, that truth.. hold onto it and continue reading. But many other truths are conveyed as well in that same book and some seriously conflict with the Christian Creed. The book contains a heteroclitite mixture of elements. One cannot say: it is all wrong. But one cannot either safely take all the rest of the implicit truths (admitting he or she can fish them out from the great magma of stories he or she reads).

I dare to say that some parts of the book or the teaching could be considered as an improved version/aspect of the Christian Faith: i.e. presented in a more convincing way, more useful/practical, more usable for daily experience, more attentive to help the person grow “spiritually”. Some other parts are simple imprecise rubbish, hocus-pocus. The first aspect seduces and convinces people. They think then that all the rest must be good and true. One is easily and naively (Saint Paul’s weak believers) caught in the net of this thought: this book/author tells the truth.

But if you had the author in front of you and you asked him a theological question he or she would not be able to reply. Strangely he or she dared to quote the Bible in his/her book or teaching.

For the majority of humans the “belief system” is not totally constituted. An immature person holds part of a “belief system” and often makes of this part the Whole of its own belief. Rushing into believing, especially if it is out of a “spiritual” experience, makes the person confuse the part with the whole. So the experienced part becomes the whole: since “it works”, or since the person “had an experience of it one day”.

Very rarely a human being will proceed from one light to the other, from one experience to the other, growing in the “belief system” they chose.

The very nature of the “spiritual” experience, or just the “experience” of some healing, or illumination or bliss, is to be reduced. It requires patience, in order to grow. And the temptation is to rush and push this small experience beyond its limits, transforming it into an entire “belief system”, adding here and there some eclectic elements.

The correct (orthodox) “belief system” has this huge virtue of helping the human being (while waiting for new experiences, for growth) to believe in the Whole System, the Whole Reality, even if it is not yet seen (experienced) in its entirety.

We have a long journey that extends from the existence of a set of realities (God, the world, the human being), i.e. a Creed, to the correct transmission of it. Here it is in the case of one single Grace (while as Christians we are called to receive “Grace on Grace” (John 1:16)):

- 1- One thing is to believe in all Graces.
- 2- Another is to receive a Grace from God.
- 3- Another is to experience it (in the soul and/or the body) and understand it.
- 4- Another is to discern in it and find the correct (orthodox) words to transmit it.

The Creed is like the hard skin of the Divine Fruit. It contains the Divine Fruit itself: God, the Trinity, Jesus, the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, Mary, the Church, the Sacraments, and so forth... Believing in what the Church believes allows us to go to this Divine Fruit and draw Divine Life from its Juicy Fruit. The Act of Faith in a specific Creed allows us to draw from the Divine Life contained in it.

This is why the Creed is of utmost importance. This is why the issue of knowing which "System of belief" I base my spiritual life on is of utmost importance, because it is like having recourse to a false fruit, that has no juices, or false juices. This is why we need to examine carefully the set of beliefs. From them we draw life. How deep and wise is this teaching: "There is an organic connection between our **spiritual life** and the **dogmas**. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 89)

What is needed

Often Catholics would behave in a self-sufficient way, "greater than thou", saying: since these therapies or training is not Christian (i.e. Christ is not present, the Grace of God is not acknowledged), then it is all wrong, we don't need it and we have all what we need. Well, it is important to say that we do not say this today about Psychology. The Church acknowledges the relative autonomy of sciences. Psychology as a Faculty didn't exist 70 years ago!

Only a person that has an extensive Theological and Spiritual formation + a formation in Sciences (physics and quantum physics), Psychology, some knowledge in Neuroscience and in Spiritual Theology, with an extensive knowledge of Hinduism and/or Buddhist spirituality, can make this type of discernment correctly and sift, discern, evaluate, take on board, improve or reject certain propositions. This work is still to be done in the Church.

When a theologian does not have all this formation, he/she tends to choose the easy way out of either accepting many things naively, or, fanatically, rejecting in its totality all these approaches.

In order to avoid confusion, we cannot repeat enough the importance of the following distinction: between the action of these therapies when they do not presuppose the action of the Grace of God and the specific intervention of the Grace of God. A therapy can heal certain aspects of the human being. No question about that. A doctor can cure, and a Psychologist can, a Psychiatrist can. The plane of this action is different from the action of the Redemptive Grace of God that comes from Christ, obtained by Him on the Cross. The changes involved here and there are different. They complement each other, they do not negate each other, but both are needed, and mostly the Grace of God.

What is sure is that only the Catholic Creed offers the full and main streams of the Grace of God. It is therefore very important to know "in what I believe" in order to get what I believe in. Preserving the purity of the Catholic Creed, understanding its practical spiritual

implications is of utmost importance. Mixing it with other “sets of beliefs” is misleading and diminishes the Stream of the Grace of God.

The danger cannot be avoided for the weak people who are exposed to such teachings and training because they are confronted by an implicit system of beliefs that is different from the Catholic Faith. It will influence them inevitably.

Are there any positive aspects to all this new “spirituality”?

Often the given catholic answer is: no. Worse, many claim that this is dangerous. Fair enough. Paradoxically, many Catholics still feel drawn by the “new spirituality”, and sometimes feel very guilty in doing so. They do not know what to do. Intuitively they feel two things: they feel that there are various aspects that are good, positive and constructive. In the same time, they feel that their own “system of belief” (their Catholic Faith) is challenged in various points, rightly or wrongly.

For the well trained theologian, there are obvious elements that one has to admit, accept and take on board. A certain “lack of fanaticism” in the “new spirituality” is good to be taken on board, but this doesn’t mean that one should be fooled by other aspects. Huge attention is given to the person, its needs, the thirst to reach God, to experience Him, His Love, to understand the body, illness, the Providence of God, his unconditional love for us. A certain pedagogical science is involved in the “new spirituality” and should be studied in Catholic Theology. Even all Catholic Theology should bear more attention to Catholic Spirituality, in order to understand all this “new spirituality”. Otherwise we are like a blind man condemning another blind man.

III- The Church efforts in this field

The challenges for the Catholic Faith, Theology and Spiritual Theology

As we just saw, the “new spirituality” carried by all these types of activities constitute a “sign of the times”, a great need from people who are thirsty for God, for a spiritual experience, for avoiding stress or healing after stress, who want to know themselves and develop, who want to be healed from their wounds.

There are in the “new spirituality” Seeds of the Light of Christ and they should be treated with great accurate discernment.

As Catholics, theologians and leaders, we need to learn some things from this “new spirituality”, and we should not be ashamed of it: improving the presentation of Christianity, knowing as well how to integrate with discernment psychology, new therapies and techniques and the pastoral care of “personal development” (Christian spiritual maturity). Instead of criticising only, we need to do better and show the utter incompetence of many of the leaders of the “new spirituality”, and come up with a better choice of the topics preached (more spiritual, more practical).

Important stable points in the Church

- 1- The Church respects Science (the recognised disciplines). The Church studies these sciences in order to be able to judge them.
- 2- The Church respects the relative autonomy of science. The word “relative” is important.
- 3- The Church reserves its right to judge all what in these sciences touches on matters of Faith, Liturgy (Sacraments), Morality and Spiritual Life.
- 4- The Church has the tendency to encourage all what is good and true, wherever it is, and to help it grow. The Church is capable of recognising anything that is true, even coming from outside its tradition (cf. the Doctrine of the *Semina Verbi*). Because all that is true belongs to Christ. And Christ (*Verbum Domini*) can sow seeds (*semina*) of his Truth sometimes outside of the recognised perimeter of the Church.
- 5- The Church has the duty of being vigilant over all the flock, the strong ones and the weak ones.
- 6- Imitating the Apostles doesn't put a heavy weight on the shoulders of people. The Church never judges a person (but of course can and has to judge a doctrine, a morality, and a spiritual doctrine and practice).
- 7- It is of course possible for a person coming from the “New Spirituality” to convert to Christianity, adhering to its: Faith – Celebration – Morality – Spiritual Life. How could we receive this person? What should we “impose” on this person? Important questions to be answered.

What is needed to be done in the long run

- 1- The “new spirituality” says something to the Church. It is a “sign of the times”. Why are people attracted by it? Accessing Faith by the Door of Spiritual Life is possible.
- 2- The “new spirituality” says something to Catholic Spiritual Theology and challenges it to do develop and be more pastoral.
- 3- The NTPD pushes the Church towards a “development” (Christian Development: see Newman) in the way it understands itself, its doctrine and its mission and pastoral care.
- 4- The Church has to develop a theology of the body, of health and of healing. There is a urgent need to give an account theologically to the word “energy” often used by the NT.
- 5- Understanding better, theologically, what is a healthy body, a healthy soul and a healthy spirit.
- 6- Understanding better, theologically, what is: healing of the body, of the soul (the Church knows better what is the healing of the spirit: see St John of the Cross).
- 7- We need to distinguish within the Therapies (body, soul and spirit) between what is purely the action of God, and what is the action of a human intervention (like in Psychology, Hypnosis,...).
- 8- The Personal Development as a discipline pushes theology to study better what is “maturity”, psychologically, morally, spiritually.
- 9- Develop various questions around discernment that are linked to Personal Development.
- 10- It is of the utmost importance to form and train persons in Spiritual Theology. And afterwards, to train them in various NTPD disciplines, so they can understand them theoretically and in a practical way in order to give a sound judgement on them.

Conclusion

We need to distinguish between a recognised and a non recognised Therapy, to understand its own specific and limited area. The distinction between practicing a Therapy, and the further different fact of giving Counselling.

Without academically recognised training, formation and certification, one can't practise: counselling, coaching or personal development.

We need to understand that a yet non-formed faith and doctrine interferes greatly in the teaching of a person, especially in matters like PD, Meditation and so on. The un-informed and un-formed belief of the lecturer or trainer is implicitly and explicitly conveyed. This is seriously harmful for weak persons and creates confusion **more than it helps**.

We need to invite people who are interested in the field of NTPD to continue to grow, get more accreditations and deepen their faith and spiritual life by studying academically Theology and after Spiritual Theology.

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