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The Theory of the Spiritual Senses

Teorija duhovnih čutov

Abstract: The author of the article tries to systemize the approaches of Christian writers about spiritual senses. He presents theological bases of the theory of spiritual senses, concepts of their existence, quantity, a hierarchy of importance, nature and subject. The text is mainly based on the Holy Bible, the Fathers of the Church and the most important theologians dealing with this issue. The text shows, that in the Christian tradition spiritual senses refer to an integral experience of Christian mystery by a believer and even more by a mystic who experiences God in a total and integrating communion through Jesus Christ.

Keywords: spiritual senses, incarnation, Holy Spirit, spirituality, Fathers of the Church

Povzetek: Avtor prispevka poskuša sistematizirati pristope krščanskih avtorjev pri obravnavi duhovnih čutov. Predstavlja teološke temelje teorije o duhovnih čutih, koncepte njihovega obstoja, števila, hierarhije pomembnosti, narave in področja. Besedilo temelji zlasti na Svetem pismu, cerkvenih očetih in najpomembnejših teologih, ki so se z dano temo ukvarjali. Kaže, da se duhovni čuti v krščanskem izročilu nanašajo na sestavni del izkušnje krščanske skrivnosti – že pri verniku, še bolj pa pri mistiku, ki izkuša Boga v popolnem in celovitem občestvu po Jezusu Kristusu.

Ključne besede: duhovni čuti, učlovečenje, Sveti Duh, duhovnost, cerkveni očetje

1. Preface

The spiritual Christian experience has been analyzed over the centuries from the point of view of the description of the content. Nevertheless, throughout this time we can always find authors who have also considered the theological and anthropological conditions of this experience, creating theories of spiritual cognition. The most important basis of this has been the Holy Scripture. A particular

example of spiritual interpretation of the Bible in the tradition of the Church is the doctrine of five spiritual senses: »Christian authors of all ages have used sensory language to express human encounters with the divine.« (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 1) They have understood this in various ways. On the one hand, Anselm of Canterbury, in *Proslogion*, complained about the incomprehensibility of God in the human experience:

»Still You hide away, Lord, from my soul in Your light and blessedness, and so it still dwells in its darkness and misery. For it looks all about and does not see Your beauty. It listens and does not hear Your harmony. It smells and does not sense Your fragrance. It tastes and does not recognize Your savor. It feels, and does not sense Your softness.« (Anselm of Canterbury 1996, 97)

On the other hand, Augustine, in his *Confessions* describes this experience in a positive way: »Thou didst call and cry aloud, and didst force open my deafness. Thou didst gleam and shine, and didst chase away my blindness. Thou didst breathe fragrant odors and I drew in my breath; and now I pant for thee. I tasted, and now I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burned for thy peace.« (Augustine 1955, 38) The purpose of the following text is a reflection on the meaning of the above and similar texts which suggest a sensory experience of God.

2. Theological Foundations

The sources of theological foundations for reflection on spiritual senses are found in the Bible. Since Philo, the Book of Exodus has been allegorically interpreted as the soul's spiritual ascent to God, similarly to Moses climbing Mount Sinai. Philo inspired many patristic authors, who had to struggle with the problem of how the invisible God, whose theophany was potentially lethal to human beings (Ex 33,20), could be manifested in a visible form. The crucial epistemic clue for dealing with the problem has been found in the Johannine emphasis that the incarnate Word made the knowledge of the Father possible. At the same time Paul's words about the transformative, eschatological vision in 1 Cor 13,12 were the inspiration for reflection on the beatific vision. The Song of Songs, which has often been referred to, elicited meditation on the soul's spiritual union with Christ. Descriptions of embraces and kisses prompted a further elaboration of tactile, gustatory and olfactory imagery. In addition, the religious experiences of prophets and the gospel miracles of the healing of sight and hearing complete the concept of spiritual senses.

»Beginning with Origen, the authors attuned to our theme saw in the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25,1-13) a framework for talking about the five physical senses represented by the foolish virgins, and the five spiritual senses represented by the wise ones. The five yokes of oxen men-

tioned in the parable of the great dinner (Lk 14,15-24), as well as the five husbands of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4,16-18), prompted Augustine to ponder the self's attachment to the five physical senses. Even more suggestive were the post-resurrection recognition scenes, such as the *Noli me tangere* (20,17) or the opening of the disciple's eyes during the supper at Emmaus (Lk 24,30-31).« (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 11).

In the writings of Origen, the description of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb in Ex 12 includes many allusions to the senses, however, it should be noted that the Bible itself offers no doctrine of the spiritual senses.

The teaching of the Holy Scripture in connection with the Greek culture, especially Platonism, which treated embodiment as hindering the vision of the divine, needed a deeper reflection. The ‚baptism‘ of the Platonic version of the intellectual vision was bound to an ambivalent attitude towards the role of the body in the contemplation of God in the scriptures of Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius (7). However, an authentic Christian concept of anthropology claims that contact with the spiritual reality is made through man in his substantial unity, whose body together with the soul experiences God's grace.¹ That is why there is a participation of senses in the spiritual life which, according to the mystery of Incarnation, joins body and spirit (Borriello 2009, 16). Hence it is obvious that in the history of spirituality attempts to develop a theory of spiritual senses were based both on the truth of the Word incarnate and the role of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Word became incarnate making God ‚comprehensible‘ for the human senses, healing them through faith and making the belief of the spiritual realities, lost in the original sin, possible. This happens thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit (Platovnjak 2018, 1043–1054; Platovnjak and Svetelj 2019, 675–678). Sometimes authors present two points of view, focusing both on the contemplation of the Word incarnate and illumination by the Spirit. Origen in *Contra Celsus* VI, 77 assumes a certain evolution among apostles who at the beginning experienced Jesus in kenosis, so that only three of them could see Him transfigured whilst after the resurrection He was seen by those whose senses had been purified. Therefore, not all of those looking at the body could see the Word, because in order to do so faith is necessary (Canévet 1988, 608–610). Looking for a bond between the perception of the outer and inner senses, based on the mystery of Incarnation in the experience of mystics, especially women like Mechthild, reaches both back to the history of Adam and Eve, who were able to see God with their corporeal eyes (Roszak and Huzarek 2019), and to eschatology since the second Person of the Trinity does not lose the human nature even after the ascension (McGinn 2012, 203; 209).

Theological foundations for the theory of spiritual senses have not only a Trinitarian, pneumatological, Christological or eschatological dimension, but in the

¹ In Christian anthropology human being is a spiritual and a material being, as a ‚whole‘ he is a religious being. True religiosity is in expropriation, true religiosity is mystical, which means that »man ‚expropriates‘ himself, gives up all his expectations, including the expectations and ideas he has about God. Expropriation is in transcending oneself and one's belief, expropriation is in openness to God, to his call and love.« (Pevcec Rozman 2017, 298)

framework of a deepened Christology also a clearly ecclesiological one. Especially from early scholastic theological discourse the bond of spiritual senses and *visio beatifica*, as well as the Eucharist and particularly mystical body of Christ, can be seen (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 14). According to Alexander of Hales, incarnate Christ possessed the spiritual senses and communicates them to the members of his body. From Him as the head, the spiritual senses flow down into the members of the ecclesial body. He is the source of spiritual senses firstly for the Church as his body and secondly for individual members. This theory also has a sacramentological dimension, because in baptism the ability for spiritual senses is activated and the Eucharist feeds it. Similarly, the idea of Alexander that the contemplation of Christ's divinity restores the spiritual senses like the contemplation of his humanity the exterior ones and, in connection to this, that the incarnation of the Word would have been useful even if Christ had not suffered, has soteriological consequences, because it precedes later Franciscan teaching about God's intention to incarnate even in the absence of a fall (Coolman 2012a, 127; 129).

3. Existence of Spiritual Senses

The theological foundations mentioned above have found, in the history of Christian thought, different specific forms of application in the theory of spiritual senses. When mystics try, despite difficulties, to express the inexpressible, they inevitably start to use images drawn from sensual cognition. Describing in such a way the experience of God they speak about seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling spiritual realities. The main source of this language is, for them, the Holy Bible (Borriello 2009, 177). Numerous texts point to certain features of human cognition that make perception-like contact with God possible. However, the idea of special spiritual senses in theological-spiritual literature seems to be highly debatable (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 1–2).

A century ago, theologian Dunstan Dobbins claimed, that speaking about spiritual senses is reasonable only when the intensity of the experience of grace must be underlined. In his opinion 'spiritual senses' sounds like an oxymoron. Senses are concerned with receiving the corporeal world, but the spiritual reality cannot be experienced physically, so spiritual senses are a metaphor at best (LaNave 2012, 161). It has been observed that if a given author discusses only one perceptual mode, he probably uses the name of a sense figuratively, referring to ordinary mental acts. In such a way some words taken from sensual perception become metaphors describing forms of thinking. That is why, in the twentieth century, in discussions on the topic, the analogical and metaphorical functions of the language of spiritual perception were commonly distinguished. Analogy happens when the operation of the spiritual senses is described in terms similar to the operation of physical sensation. Metaphorical use can be assumed when no closer similarity with the functioning of a physical sensorium is intended. However, it must be taken into consideration, that not every correlation of the senses with

the intellect can be reduced to a metaphor depicting ordinary mental activity (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 6). When leading thinkers within Christianity rejected the concept of spiritual senses, they did so by suggesting it would be »an unnecessarily literal reading of poetic license, or an offensively elitist grading of human noetic capacity, or a redundant epistemological addendum to an already assumed theory of the intellect« (18).

Especially in the Middle Ages the gradual adoption of Aristotelian sense-psychology appears correlated with an eclipse of the traditional doctrine of the spiritual senses (Coolman 2012a, 136). The leading thinker of the age, Thomas Aquinas, seldom referred to spiritual senses, speaking about Christ as the Head of the Church. This is more concerned with metaphors relating to the acts of intellect (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 15). For him, the beatific vision is an act of intellectually cognitive power and the senses, as directed merely to material particulars, cannot be involved in it (Cross 2012, 182). Later scholastic thinkers would agree with Thomas that there is no need to posit spiritual senses. The development of Aristotelian principles in cognitive psychology and theories of will and emotions in mainline medieval philosophy eliminated the necessity to suppose the existence of spiritual senses (189).

The modern positive concept of spiritual senses, that does not deal with metaphors defined as the use of the language of five senses to express the spiritual perception of immaterial reality, is owed to Karl Rahner and his investigation of this issue in the writings of Origen (Rahner 1932, 114). The translation of a fragment of the Book of Proverbs: »Thou shalt find a divine sense« (2,5) was an occasion to develop the whole doctrine based on analogy and not metaphor, independently of the results of discussions between such authors as John Dillon, who sees this analogy only in the late writings of Origen, and Mark J. McInroy, who follows its evolution in the early biblical commentaries and in *De principiis* (McInroy 2012a, 21–24; Dillon 1986, 446–447). The results of analysis of the works of Origen show that throughout the period of his literary activity a mix of analogy and metaphors occurs while describing spiritual senses (McInroy 2012a, 26–35). It is important that Origen constructed his doctrine in discussion with Celsus who accused the Christians of preaching corporeal-sensual cognition of God. In this context, the author explains that it concerns senses which, with corporeal ones, only have a common name (Borriello 2009, 178).

In connection with the writings of Origen, the doctrine of spiritual senses in the Patristic Period was also developed by Gregory of Nyssa, which was an occasion for the modern further investigation of the topic by *Jean Daniélou* (1953, 224). It is impossible to omit the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite who is a great authority in spiritual theology. His reflection on the special, based on the grace of baptism, ability to see (θεωρία) cannot be reduced to a metaphor or identified with sensual seeing or cognition. Generally, the author considers that apart from physical sensuality and intellectual cognition, people are capable of a higher-order, non-discursive mental apprehension of reality. Sometimes Dionysius uses in this context his own original terminology, like ‚supercosmic eyes‘

(ὑπερκοσμίοι ὀφθαλμοί) (Gavrilyuk 2012, 96–97). In Medieval theology Anselm of Canterbury, Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure were influential continuators of the thought of Origen (Tedoldi 1999, 326). Also, in the later period, Origenist heritage had followers, which is illustrated by the attempt to join it with the Aristotelian psychology in the works of Nicholas of Cusa (Green 2012, 210). The existence of the spiritual senses was not only a topic for catholic authors, which can be seen in the cases of John Wesley and Robert Moberly in the XVIII and XIX centuries (Abraham 2012, 276). In the Catholic milieu, the question was widely discussed in theological treatises, especially about spiritual direction, by such authors as Giovanni Battista Scaramelli, Augustin-François Poulain, Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar (Fields 1996, 226). Poulain, particularly meritorious for the theory of mystical theology, maintained that the soul possesses spiritual senses similar to physical ones because it is analogically able to feel the presence of pure spirits above all, God (1921, 71).

4. Quantity and Hierarchy of Senses

Among Christian authors who accept the existence of spiritual senses, many say important things, although they do not constitute a kind of complete system and often deal with fewer than five instruments of spiritual perception. The most important specialists from the patristic period, like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor and Gregory the Great did not elaborate on a coherent doctrine. In the Middle Ages Alexander of Hales, Thomas Gallus and Bonaventure accentuated more a twofold division into senses connected with intellect and affectivity. Karl Rahner mentioned the case of Diadochus of Photike who emphatically spoke of a single spiritual modality. That is why when speaking about five spiritual senses I do not intend to discredit a unitary conception focusing on only one sense in the writings of some authors (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 3; 5). It seems to be the case for Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite who does not develop his lecture on the five senses because in his doctrine the mystical ascent, in which noetic vision plays the main role, is described as progressive unification and simplification, which seems to exclude a division of spiritual perception into the five distinct modalities (Gavrilyuk 2012, 99). The original concept was proposed by Alexander of Hales, underlining that there is greater unity in the acts of the intellect than in the physical senses. The plurality of spiritual senses is not a function of many objects or powers, but it is because of the mode of perceiving. Here to see is the same as to hear but taking into consideration the mode of perceiving it is not the same (Coolman 2012a, 131).

Most Christian authors are inclined to describe spiritual senses as analogues to physical ones. This analogy was sometimes extended to other parts of the body due to this it was said that a spiritual person has spiritual hands, feet and heart (Canévet 1988, 599–600). Origen even maintained that »every member of the external human being is also called the same thing in the inner human being«

(McInroy 2012a, 21). In the texts of Bonaventure, there is a clear division into five spiritual senses based on *intellectus* or *affectus*. The *intellectus* is connected more with sight and hearing, the *affectus* with smell, taste and touch. These senses also relate to theological virtues: sight and hearing to the faith, smell, taste and touch to the love.² So, the activity of the senses engages different aspects of the experienced object (Tedoldi 1999, 327). Obviously, it is possible, while investigating classical spiritual texts, to focus on singular senses, but the safest way seems to be to follow the path laid out by Karl Rahner, according to whom, one can reasonably speak about a doctrine of spiritual senses only when these partly figurative, partly literal expressions are found integrated into a complete system of the five instruments of the spiritual perception of suprasensible religious realities (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 3).

Acceptance of the concept of five spiritual senses raises the question concerning their hierarchy, although some authors underline more the domination of one sense over the others than their hierarchy (Canévet 1988, 601–602). There are also Christian writers who in the case of spiritual senses remain faithful to Aristotle whose fivefold division of senses was composed according to the importance in the following way: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. When for Christian authors sight is assumed to be the highest spiritual sense, it is connected with the concept of the eschatological culmination of the encounter with God expressed predominantly in terms of the beatific vision (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 8). For example, in the teaching of Augustine, happiness consists in ‚possessing God‘, which can be achieved by His vision. The fullness of human knowledge is the result of the perpetual vision of God by the »eyes in your heart« (*oculos cordis*) (O’Connell 2012, 205). In this context, the Doctor of the Church speaks clearly about spiritual sight. However, the same author left us the famous sentence which shows that the touch is the peak of perception: »Tactus enim tamquam finem facit notionis.« (Augustinus, *De Trinitate* 1.9.18)

Christian writers taking the Song of Songs as a point of departure freely rearranged the ranking of the senses established by Aristotle showing that in the mystical ascent spiritual hearing and sight were toppled by spiritual touch as the mode of perception implying closer contact with its subject. The operation of spiritual taste was often treated within the framework of Eucharistic practices. In the Latin sources, wisdom (*sapientia*) was connected with ‚tasted knowledge‘ because of the word ‚taste‘ (*sapor*). In patristic and later sources spiritual smell was sometimes associated with spiritual discernment, taken as a paradigm of the »senses that are trained to discern good and evil« (Heb 5,14) (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 9). Especially the doctrine by Bonaventure gives rhythm to the cognitive process according to which the subject (*cognitum-amatum*) is at first seen and kept in the memory of the heart by the senses of sight and hearing, then it is investigated as a presence of smell, tasted in its worth and finally reached by touch (*tactus*) in union (Tedoldi 1999, 327–328). Karl Rahner when writing about Bona-

² Regarding faith and love as a (direct) resonant relationship (with God), see Žalec 2020, 273; 275–276.

venture underlined the meaning of spiritual touch equated with ecstasy (McInroy 2012b, 259). The mystical touch as the most perfect union with God can also be found in the texts of many other authors, such as William of Saint-Thierry, Alexander of Hales, Thomas of Vercelli and Thomas Gallus. Such an approach in mystical theology has become classic (McGinn 2012, 193; Coolman 2012a, 133; 2012b, 157). The analysis above shows the extent to which Gordon Rudy is mistaken when he claims that the Christian tradition is dominated by a dualistic and intellectualistic tendency which reduces the importance of the bodiless because in spiritual senses the privileged place takes sight, being the most spiritual and the least corporeal sense (Rudy 2002, 35).

5. The Nature of Spiritual Senses

In the history of theology, one can identify many different concepts of the nature of spiritual senses and their relation to physical ones. Some aspects of medieval mysticism of such authors as Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry, Hadewijch of Antwerp, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Richard Rolle seem to undermine the very differentiation between experiences of physical and spiritual senses (Knauss 2013, 114). Especially the anthropology of Hans Urs von Balthasar forbids separation of the corporeal from the spiritual, as the corporeal senses perceive the material form and the spiritual senses behold the splendour and luminosity of being as it is revealed in the supersensory aspect of the form (McInroy 2012b, 272–273). Analysing the works of Origen, Mark McInroy proposed the idea that the physical senses themselves may undergo a transformation in developing intimacy with God (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 12). Likewise, in the writings of Gregory the Great, in his description of the experiences of prophets, one can find the suggestion that their senses are able to behold things spiritually (Demacopoulos 2012, 79). Especially based on the mystery of Incarnation and in connection with the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa, the theologians speculate about the possibility of the gradual transformation of physical senses into spiritual ones (Canévet 1988, 604–606). In contrast to this opinion, there is a theory that physical and spiritual senses are disjunctive faculties, in active competition with one another (Demacopoulos 2012, 82). Alexander of Hales and Thomas Gallus are cited as teaching that the spiritual senses are not transformed physical counterparts but totally different cognitive faculties (Coolman 2012a, 130; 2012b, 157).

Among the experts on spiritual senses, the majority underlines the biblical and integral vision of the human as a spiritual-corporeal union. However, for them, in the conception of *sensus spiritualis*, the accent on the spiritual dimension inspired by Bonaventure is very important. His respect for the empirical sphere is connected with the priority of God's grace, which constitutes the basis of 'the descending way' in the development of spiritual senses. For Bonaventure, the spiritual senses are not new faculties but *usus* of grace. In his opinion, thanks to theological virtues, human regains spiritual senses which are acts of intellect (sight

and hearing) and will (taste, smell and touch). They are a reference of inner grace to God making it possible to experience Him as present proportionally to the five senses (Tedoldi 1999, 326–330). The emphasis on the importance of grace and theological virtues identified as spiritual senses can also be found outside the catholic environment, as confirmed by John Wesley (Bartels 2004, 171).

The development of spiritual senses, thanks to which human becomes able to experience God, constitutes regaining the condition of paradise lost by original sin (Daniélou 1953, 222). The consequence of this assumption is the agreement with the thesis that the perfect harmony of spiritual and physical senses has an eschatological dimension and will occur only after the resurrection (Pereira 2012, 54; 60–61). However already in earthly life, according to Gregory the Great, the recovery of the spiritual senses is a consequence of God's grace and ascetic progress (Demacopoulos 2012, 71). Saint Francis of Assisi is an example that a proper subjugation of bodily senses does not result in their disappearance but transformation and perfect obedience to the spirit (LaNave 2012, 170).

It is possible to show the dynamism of the development of the spiritual senses as they mature, in which the language of spiritual senses constitutes a diachronic spectrum of possibilities in human responses to God (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 13). The starting point is the situation in which the use of corporeal senses has the advantage over the use of spiritual senses. For Bonaventure *incurvatio sensuum* has its root in the human heart, where adhering to sin defines a negative influence concerning the spirit and, in an inevitable way, also the body (Tedoldi 1999, 332). The fourth-century Fathers of the Church like Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and Ambrose of Milan had already connected the activation of the spiritual sense to baptismal initiation and participation in the sacramental life of the Church (Gavrilyuk and Coakley 2012, 13). Especially Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite introduced the concept of ‚divine birth‘ (θεογενεσία) to underline that baptism marks the beginning of the process of illumination and the activation of the spiritual senses. Thus, the spiritual perception becomes activated in baptism and purified through participation in the sacramental life of the Church (Gavrilyuk 2012, 92). Such authors as Maximus the Confessor or later Alexander of Hales underlined in this context the special meaning of the Eucharist. One can also not forget the importance of spiritual direction for the development of spiritual senses, which was very important for Gregory the Great. It is worth mentioning that Teresa of Avila in her *Interior Castle* describing seven mansions assumed the first three concern mostly asceticism and not until the fourth is connected with awakening of spiritual senses in the prayer of quiet (Rebidoux 2014, 216).

6. Object of Perception

The major object of perception of spiritual senses is God. Saint Augustine expressed it clearly in his *Confessions*:

»But what is it that I love in loving thee? Not physical beauty, nor the splendour of time, nor the radiance of the light - so pleasant to our eyes - nor the sweet melodies of the various kinds of songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices; not manna and honey, not the limbs embraced in physical love - it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet it is true that I love a certain kind of light and sound and fragrance and food and embrace in loving my God, who is the light and sound and fragrance and food and embracement of my inner man - where that light shines into my soul which no place can contain, where time does not snatch away the lovely sound, where no breeze disperses the sweet fragrance, where no eating diminishes the food there provided, and where there is an embrace that no satiety comes to sunder. This is what I love when I love my God.« (*Confessions* 10.6)

Saint Anselm explained, that as created, the physical world has sensible objects perceived by corporeal senses, in a similar way the spiritual soul has senses that perceive the uncreated divine nature. He assumed that despite the essential simplicity of the divine nature *in se*, it has diverse and distinguishable attributes, that the soul may encounter variously, through its own diversified spiritual sensorium. Later scholastics will consistently orient the spiritual senses toward two transcendental properties of God: the true (*prima veritas*) and the good (*summum bonum*) (Coolman 2012a, 123).

Gregory the Great developed a theory based on a spiritual sense of sight, thanks to which, through God's grace, it is possible to get participation in God's knowledge. Sometimes he wrote about the illumination by God's inspiration thanks to the Holy Bible (Demacopoulos 2012, 83–84). However, the senses were mostly associated with both truth and goodness. According to Alexander of Hales, the object of spiritual senses are divine *veritas* and *bonitas*. In this concept, every sense gets a subject distinguishable from other subjects, two of which are identical to transcendentals, namely, truth correlated with sight and goodness connected with the sense of touch. So, the human spirit has five senses in relation to God: two of them are related to the truth namely sight and hearing, three of them are related to goodness, namely smell, taste and touch. In the simplicity of God *veritas* and *bonitas* do not differ from each other, but they are perceived differently as distinguishable manifestations of God's nature (Coolman 2012a, 132).

The theological texts concerning spiritual senses in the strict Christian context take on a special meaning regarding the incarnation of the Word. Especially Bonaventure connected the uncreated Word with spiritual senses of sight and hearing, the inspired Word with the spiritual sense of smell and the incarnate Word with the spiritual senses of taste and touch. In *Breviloquium* Christ as Splendor »is seen by spiritual sight, as Word is heard by spiritual hearing, as Wisdom is apprehended by spiritual taste, as inspired Word is smelled by spiritual smell and as incarnate Word is embraced by spiritual touch.« In the teaching of Bonaventure, the corporeal senses experience their Passover in the humanity of Christ and the

spiritual senses in His divinity. Before they reach their fullness in this way, the senses interpreted in a Christocentric manner find their purification in the cross and fulfilment in the life of Resurrected (LaNave 2012, 167; Tedoldi 1999, 330).

The above introduces us to the eschatological dimension of the subject of spiritual senses. According to Augustine the human being endowed with both corporeal and spiritual senses finds true happiness after the resurrection in the use of spiritual senses completely directed to God. However, the life of resurrected will still engage both modes of perception. Bodily and spiritual perception in the resurrected body will not offer a fragmented and limited experience, but one of immediacy, clarity and fulfilment, in which God will be seen and known in the sense of spiritual comprehension by everything in Himself (Lootens 2012, 70). In a similar way, Alexander of Hales and William of Auxerre maintained that the present activity of spiritual senses will find its consummation in patria, where the eschatological perfection of *sensus Dei* began and *in via* takes place. The spiritual senses will exist in a more perfect form in the next life. There the highest Truth will be known as a vision and word, and the highest Goodness as smell, taste and touch. Spiritual senses will be perfected through the contemplation of Christ's divinity and the corporeal senses through the contemplation of His humanity (Coolman 2012a, 135).

7. Conclusion

This article presents the results of research into spiritual senses in Christian literature. These results show that contrary to the opinion of Jean Daniélou, it is difficult to speak about a doctrine understood as something systematic and consequent. Rather than about a doctrine, one can speak, in the case of given authors, about the experience of spiritual sense which enables the avoidance of a static reification of a dynamic experience, which is characteristic of a theory. For Bonaventure, it was the difference between theory and wisdom in which the aim of a doctrine is to be experienced and shown in a dynamic action (Daniélou 1953, 239–240). Maximus the Confessor in the context of relations to God differentiated propositional knowledge from knowledge by acquaintance being not only knowledge of something about somebody, but somebody, that leads to the deification (θεωρία) (Aquino 2012, 118). It proves that the topic of spiritual senses is at the very center of spiritual theology. The most common result of the analysis of such different approaches suggests that there are five spiritual senses that, thanks to God's grace, enable people to contact God and in the process of uniting with Him prepare for an eschatological dimension of integration lost by the original sin.

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