

*The Third Spiritual Alphabet* authored by Francisco de Osuna wasn't a book that Teresa of Jesus only superficially read, instead, it was one of those books that she assimilated in an in-depth manner, and the only one she called her "master". The witnesses of her life, testifying in the process of beatification, recalled seeing her with the work of Osuna in her hand over many years.

The specific objective of the planned research is to determine the relation between *The Book of Life* by Saint Teresa of Jesus and *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* by Francisco de Osuna. The study will allow for verification of the hypothesis of the existence of intended intertextual relation between both texts. Identification of such relation will on its part constitute the starting point for further in-depth study on the teresian reception of the Franciscan mystical author in her famous autobiographical work as well as its consequences for the lector's understanding of thereof.

Although the researchers do not question the influence of Osuna and the theological tradition represented by him on Teresa, there is no similar agreement as to the nature, scope, and significance of this influence. So far, no comprehensive study has been conducted, that would aim to define them in a more systematic and structured way, allowing for the explanation of numerous discrepancies. Meanwhile contemporary developments in the fields of hermeneutics and literary theory–intertextuality being one of them–could bring greater clarity, fresh intuitions, or even resolution to at least some of the observed problems.

Since the doctrine taught by Osuna was highly practical in its nature, and at the same time its reception by Teresa was mediated by her personal experience, it would be indispensable to also constantly keep in mind this 'experiential modifier' and incorporate it into the original model of the intertextual analysis, which will be developed in the process of the planned study.

Are there sufficient premises for the undertaking of this kind of intertextual reading? What could be the benefits thereof for a better understanding of the works and life of Saint Teresa? What does the originality and independence of St. Teresa consist in? How did she deal with authority? What importance did she attach to the method and what to the individual creativity in spiritual life? The undertaken research will constitute an opportunity to seek the answers to those and similar questions, which–treated on general terms–are relevant even today.

As a part of the present study, it is also planned to examine the copy of *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* according to the oral tradition used by Saint Teresa, which has survived till now. Due to the many material signs of the frequent lecture visible on its pages in the form of numerous handwritten annotations placed on the text, it constitutes a unique testimony of her dialogue with *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* and–indirectly–with its author.

If the project planned in this way is successful, we will obtain a peculiar hermeneutic key, opening the prospect of a more appropriate, historically valid interpretation of both the life and the work of Teresa of Jesus. With its help, we could probably avoid to a greater degree misunderstandings and correct some misconceptions, thus weakening the meaning of the ideological attempts to interpret the legacy of the Saint. In addition, the study could contribute to the popularisation of the figure and work of Francisco de Osuna on the Polish ground.