THE JOURNEY OF THE WOUNDED HEALER: INSIGHTS FOR SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP ELICITED FROM MOSES

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Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Spiritual Companionship

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May 2023

Abstract

This dissertation is aimed at studying the vulnerability of spiritual companions in their service towards others. This is a phenomenon that is also observed in the secular sphere in helping professionals such as psychotherapists, counsellors, and social workers.

The objective is to study “Wounded Healing” aspects from the Pentateuchal character of Moses, particularly because Moses did not lack fragilities in his journey of service. Nevertheless, despite vulnerabilities in the mind, body, and soul, Moses was ever faithful to God in accompanying his people in their journey towards the Promised Land.

Dedication

I owe a dept of gratitude to my wife Lenice, whom I have had the blessing of marrying during the process of this dissertation. I dedicate this dissertation to her, for her relentless love has been instrumental to me, not only during the process of this dissertation, but also in my unceasing discovery of vulnerability and Wounded Healing aspects within me.

I also dedicate this work to God, my ultimate spiritual companion, who generously fathers me through thick and thin, and provides me with relationships and opportunities through which I cannot unsee his constant gaze of mercy.

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Acknowledgments

The process of writing this dissertation would have been more challenging without the presence of the following individuals who were of indispensable support throughout this journey. I would first like to thank Dr Joseph Ciappara for his supervision. His constructive feedback was crucial in all periods of the dissertation, particularly in its early stages in which I was provided with a better sense of direction towards which I could focus my study.

Expression of gratitude goes to Fr Clive Seychell whom I am privileged to identify as my spiritual companion, who has been generously following me through times of struggle during my spiritual journey. He has lent me his ears in times of uncertainty and blesses me with his own exemplary living. In his silence and considered self-disclosure, I have found hope and healing.

Heartfelt thanks goes to my wife and parents who continue to bless me with their love all throughout my life. Special thanks also goes to all friends with whom I was surrounded through these times of studying, particularly colleagues from Youth in Focus (FSWS), the Malta Catholic Youth Network, and all students within the Spiritual Companionship course. No words can fully express my sense of appreciation towards all of these generous persons in my life.

My last gratitude goes to Moses, in whose vulnerable living I have found refuge and hope. I empathise with his stumbling, sense of lack of worth, and spiritual disappointments, and I humbly pray that I draw closer to his faithfulness to God.

Introduction

The Church, from its inception, has endeavoured to be a companioning presence to those in need and to society at large. Pope Francis, in his catechesis on the book of Acts, refers to the early Church as "a field hospital that welcomes the weakest… the infirm."[1] The very first disciples taking care of such vulnerable humanity, remarkably, had not been immune to vulnerability themselves; yet the Lord, in his generosity, formed them into a loving church which accompanied humanity with "signs and wonders" (Acts 5:12) and with the '*persona Christi*': a representative presence that accompanies and holds humanity in suffering.[2]

The 21st century has witnessed constant Papal calls for Christian communities "to rediscover the great tradition of personal spiritual guidance"[3] because such guidance has the potential to bear much fruit. Nevertheless, this help-oriented activity is a ministry carried out by humanity itself. Given that everyone within all the hierarchies of humanity is a pilgrim and hence susceptible to all kinds of vulnerability throughout the whole process, the concept of wounded healing also applies to spiritual companions. Consequently, this research delves deeper into the negotiation of personal struggles of the ones engaged in spiritual accompaniment as they are of service to other fellow pilgrims.

The secular psychosocial field, in which I was personally immersed through ordinary work in the early phases of this dissertation, has been studying this same concept of wounded healing. Research has in fact shown that a considerable percentage (73.9%)[4] of helping

1. Francis, *Homily during the General Audience Mass*, Rome 28 August, 2019.

2. Ibid.

3. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (March 15, 1992).

4. Alison Barr, "Wounded Healer Counsellor & Psychotherapist Research," *The Green Rooms* (19 February 2014), https://www.thegreenrooms.net/wounded-healer/ (Accessed in April 2023).

professionals are attracted to helping careers because they themselves have gone through personal traumas.[5] While the concept of Wounded Healing has been considered for centuries, even in Ancient Greek mythology as observed in writings in the Iliad,[6] along the years this has also been applied to the Christian Faith. Numerous authors from both secular[7] and spiritual streams[8] shed light on the person of Jesus, whose wounds are believed to bring about ultimate healing. The letter to the Hebrews from Scripture (Heb 9:14) states that through Jesus' suffering, humanity could benefit from "a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance." The letter (Heb 10:11) further reveals that the daily sacrifices of priests could not take away sins; however, Jesus' self-sacrifice "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings" (Heb 10:22).

One can acquire knowledge on how to be a proficient therapist or minister, in the sense that through learning and apprenticeship, helping techniques can be attained. However, in order to attain the archetype of a Wounded Healer there is no other learning process than to go through painful life experiences and to embrace these wounds as an indispensable font through which others may participate in healing. It is thus understood that the Wounded Healer archetype can only be attained when, paradoxically, it is not pursued as an end. As Richard Patterson notes, if one were to know what Wounded Healing demands they would probably seek other prosperous opportunities to excel in. Patterson further argues that whilst

5. "Secrets of a Wounded Healer | Nancy Simpson | TEDxCharleston," *YouTube* Video, 11:30, from a TEDx Event, posted by "TEDx Talks," (26 May 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfSXQgksae4 (Accessed in April 2023).

6. Neel Burton, "The Myth of Chiron, the Wounded Healer," *Psychology Today* (Published 20 February 2021), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/202102/the-myth-chiron-the-wounded-healer (Accessed in April 2023).

7. Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional's Guide to Inner Resources* (New Jersey: Dimension Books, Inc., 1990), 5-6.

8. Amongst the best known who worked in the spiritual field is Fr Henri Nouwen. See Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2010).

accompaniment relies on the uncertainty that words are an agent of the healing process, help-oriented activities take place upon the realities of psychological and spiritual suffering. Very often the journeys of those who intend to ameliorate others have little noticeable gratification. This, in return, provokes companions with more questions than soluble answers. The companion might want to apologetically solve or avoid such painful questioning, quite often because encountered wounds resonate with their own. This tends to frighten those offering the service and may also bring about the risk of avoidance of intimacy, very often through establishing paternalism or differential statuses (e.g. "I am here as your therapist, confessor, pastor, etc., so the details of my life are irrelevant."[9]). Inversely, Wounded Healing proposes another kind of attitude; it perceives the unfathomable questions as key for the helping process. Through the understanding and embracing of their wounds, companions will have the potential to increasingly become compassionate, helpful, and above all human alongside the encountered other.[10]

Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig offers the following image of understanding: the physician's attempt to understand and to heal their patient may be triggered by the perception that the sick person is a relentless, painful reminder of the potential degeneration of the physician's own body. Such an outlook enables the companion to find a common ground through life experiences with the patient and thus "makes of the doctor the patient's brother rather than his master."[11] This discussed archetype is found across cultures: from practices of shamanic medicines, to living examples as are Carl Jung and Milton Erickson, whose commitment towards bringing about healing were triggered by the attempt to understand and heal their very

9. Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional's Guide to Inner Resources*, 3.

10. Ibid., 1-9.

11. Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig, *Power in the Helping Professions* (Dallas: Spring, 1971), 97.

own selves. The Christian faith is in itself a belief in redemption offered and brought about by a Wounded Healer experience. God's course of action to save his beloved humanity from its wretchedness was to become human and experience relatable misery: pain, hunger, disappointment, tiredness, temptation, and loneliness. The image of Wounded Healing in Christ significantly reaches its culmination in the experience of the Cross, through which Jesus takes on the sin of humanity: "Only by moving through our woundedness could he then give us his message of triumph through the Resurrection."[12]

The books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers, through which the reader inherits an acquisition of knowledge about Moses, are not detached from human suffering. Exodus in particular introduces a nation oppressed in a foreign land, forgetful of God's promises. Through Moses and his interventions, God reclaims his presence with this nation, and leads them out of Egypt on a journey towards the land of Canaan. As he "becomes the great servant of God, [a] model for the biblical portraits of Joshua, Jeremiah, Second Isaiah, and Jesus,"[13] Moses' companioning presence with the people brings about mediation into a faithful relationship with God. The Biblical figure heartens the God-seeking community to walk from the "demeaning servitude in an alien land to journey to the promised land."[14]

However, behind these interventions, lies a human and vulnerable Moses. Moses is encountered as a messenger of God yet he describes his very own self as "never eloquent... slow of speech and tongue" (Exod 4:10). Just after his first utterance to Yahweh's call – "Here I am" (Exod 3:4) – Moses struggles with negotiating his identity and quickly stumbles with the

12. Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional's Guide to Inner Resources*, 1-9, especially 6.

13. Richard J. Clifford, "Exodus," In *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, & Roland E. Murphy. (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1990), 44.

14. Ibid.

question: “Who am I?” (Exod 3:11). It was only through this bearer of the mentioned vulnerabilities and personal traumas that the Israelites were offered mediation and an exodus from oppression.[15]

Even after the exodus journey, Moses’ companionship and leadership did not do away with his human vulnerabilities up until his very own passing. This everlasting frailty becomes expressively tangible towards his last months of life in which the biblical figure describes the desert experience to his people by narrating it in the first person. In Deuteronomy 3:23-29 Moses admits having related with his people at times when he could not comprehend God’s plans. These frailties and further struggles and traumas, which are going to be studied in this dissertation, shed light on the realisation that Wounded Healing does not merely revolve around a one-time experience, it essentially rests on a perpetual human process.[16]

15. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). 1-8.

16. Ibid. See also Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional’s Guide to Inner Resources*, 93-97.

Methodology

Old Testament passages, despite comprising of "incomplete and temporary"[17] details, manifest to us a "true divine pedagogy."[18] Even before the ultimate revelation and salvation drawn from the person of Christ, the Old Testament demonstrates the understanding of God and how God was actively present with them, as held by faith communities centuries and millennia before the incarnation. *Dei Verbum* notes that through Moses "the God of infinite love... manifested himself through words and deeds as the one true and living God."[19]

To better illustrate the relevance of such a Biblical figure to the nature of spiritual companionship, an intertextual method was adopted to substantiate the argument, drawing from streams of theology and psychology in both Christianity and Judaism. The objective of intertextual interpretations is to meaningfully unite concepts from biblical and extra-biblical texts[20] in the realisation that "no text is produced and received in isolation from other texts."[21]

In view of this, I was intrigued to further understand such a Biblical personage through Catholic and non-Catholic commentaries, particularly the interpretation of Jewish rabbinic literature and Torah scholars. The former's consideration was of benefit towards this study as it shed light on the cultural, psychological, and spiritual understanding of the text. Christianity has also inherited the text of the Old Testament from the Jewish heritage, as well as the tradition

17. Pope Paul VI, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965).

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Paul E. Koptak, "Intertextuality," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings*, edited by Tremper Longman and Peter Enns, (Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Press, 2008), 325.

21. Stefan Alkier, "Intertextuality and the Semiotics of Biblical Texts," in *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, ed. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy A. Huizenga, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 3.

behind it. On this note, Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, a contemporary Torah scholar, remarks that while reading the Biblical biography of Moses one acknowledges room for that which is "creative and even unpredictable endeavour[s]"[22] to further understand such a personage. Thanks to the Midrashic texts compiled until the tenth century, further gaps have been filled and the interpretation of Biblical narratives have been further enriched.[23]

The interdisciplinary approach uniting the theological and psychological fields is drawn from the very nature of helping attempts in both pastoral work and helping psychosocial professional work. Whilst "no clear boundaries and limits can be established"[24] between the mentioned academic disciplines, the unity of these "operational synergies"[25] strives to better understand and subsequently, help the persons needing accompaniment. The helping professional can "fully understand the nature of [humanity]"[26] by attending to all needs of clients, including spiritual needs. On the other hand, the pastoral worker, by further understanding biopsychosocial components, can better appreciate the human person as God's image being simultaneously spiritual and corporeal.[27]

Joseph Ciappara confirms that "Moses was indeed a historical figure who led the Exodus from Egypt."[28] Ciappara further argues that historicity was a prerequisite for religious

22. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 3.

23. Ibid.

24 Vasile Hategan, "The Practice of Counseling between Philosophy and Spirituality," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 20, No. 58 (2021): 148.

25. Ibid., 149.

26. Mary Gillian Coudy, *Counsellor's Skills in Existentialism and Spirituality* (Bloomington: Balboa Press, 2018), X.

27. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 355.

28. Joseph Ciappara, "The Quest in the Hebrew Scriptures for the 'Prophet like Moses' in the Light of Deut 18:9-22" (Thesis for the Degree of Doctorate in Sacred Theology) Faculty of Theology, University of Malta, 2018, 290.

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historiography to present the literary Moses as known today. As for my dissertation, however, I have distanced myself from studying the historical Moses. I focused on the literary Moses as this would further help me to attain my objective to better understand the wounded humanity of Moses and how this served to be a significant tool in his service. While approaching Biblical and extra-biblical texts, I made use of the following methodological tools: Mystagogy and Phenomenology. Whilst the latter endeavours to gather insights on how one experiences the world and its encountered systems pre-reflectively,[29] Mystagogy deals with the attentiveness to the spiritual movement of an experience.[30]

This dissertation is divided in three main chapters. The first deals with the acknowledgement of wounds in both Moses and the Hebrew community through which the virtues of attentive listening, recognition of motives in service, and supervision are realised. In the second chapter, which delves into the experience of liberation from Pharaoh's tyranny, further reflection is done in relation to empathic responses, mediation, and the sustaining presence of the spiritual companion. The last chapter, revolving around the rest of the journey in the desert towards Canaan, focuses on the notions of transference, countertransference, and the perpetual ascetical journey towards perfection.

29. Manen Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Writing* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2014), 66.

30. Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven: Peets, 2002), 873.

Chapter 1
"Who am I?" (Exodus 3:11): Acknowledging Woundedness

1.1 A Seemingly Forgotten Nation

The Exodus narrative commences by the bearing of news that a new king started ruling over Egypt. Remarkably, this Pharaoh "did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8) and, among many interpretations of such a verse, Rashi implies that the new king "acted as if he did not know about [Joseph]".[31] This reality of not knowing - of not acknowledging Joseph's salvific service to both Egyptian and Israelite nations during famine - paved the path to a politics built on hatred and anger, amongst which the genocide policy was birthed. This was the socio-political system surrounding the birth of Moses. While the Pharaoh turned his gaze away from Joseph and God's intervention despite the implied probable influence on his own reign, God's gaze fell on Moses. God used the gaze of other figures to protect Moses: Moses' mother "saw him that he was good" (Exod 2:2) just after his birth, his sister kept on watching him when the child was placed in the river (Exod 2:4), who was then seen in the basket by the Pharaoh's daughter (Exod 2:6). The latter was filled with compassion for the Hebrew child. It is worth mentioning that the term in Hebrew for "basket", '*aron*, is also found in the book of Genesis when the author refers to Noah's "ark" (Exod 6:14). An Ignatian commentary on Exodus remarks that this similar use of terminology sheds light on the existing parallel between Moses and Noah, in which they both manage to survive the tragic waters and eventually lead others towards salvation.[32]

When the Israelites are first mentioned as a people, they are attributed with four different synonyms for crying: they were "groaning", they "cried out", their "screams" rose up to God, and they presented their "moaning" to God (Exod 2:23-24). Suffering is wordless for this

31. Sefaria, "Rashi on Exodus," A Living Library of Torah, Accessed in October 20, 2022, https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Exodus.1.8.2?lang=en

32. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 18.

seemingly forgotten nation during such times, as if even their language failed to verbalise their pain. Yet God did not fail to hear them. His responsiveness is likewise described in four reactive verbs: He "heard", "remembered", "looked", and "knew" (Exod 2:24-25). Whilst echoing responsiveness to the aforementioned synonyms for crying, these verbs contrast God's absence in the Israelite's story in Exodus till then. Rashi interprets the verb "knew" with the sensitive attention which God chose to pay at that moment in time, in the sense that he is now no longer hiding his eyes from his beloved:[33] "He now hears, remembers, sees, knows."[34]

Interestingly, the original text refers to the crying infant Moses as *"na'ar bocheh"* which translates to a "crying youth."[35] Among many interpretations trying to address why such words were attributed to an infant, one midrash account by Tzror HaMor reflects that this same reference to youth, *"na'ar"*, is similarly found in Hosea 11:1, which reads: "For Israel is a youth and I love him." Whilst the crying represents that which was shared by the tormented Hebrew community, the beloved youthfulness starts hinting energy sufficient to overcome presumed obstacles.[36]

33. Sefaria, "Rashi on Exodus," *A Living Library of Torah*, Accessed in October 20, 2022, https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Exodus.2.25.1?lang=en.

34. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 11.

35. Ibid., 18. "*Na'ar bokeh"* instead of "*yeled bokeh*".

36. "Tzror HaMor," quoted in Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 18.

1.2 Identity Crisis: A Youthful Cry

God's desire to free the Israelites is first communicated in the burning bush episode with Moses. The latter's initial reaction echoes Abraham's response prior to the request to sacrifice his only son: "Here I am!" (Gen 22:1, Exod 3:4). Yet Moses' following words contradict his portrayed availability as he soon doubts himself. He reports readiness to serve, however, he soon realises inadequacy to fulfil such a role. Many prophets acknowledged this same mentioned incapacity to satisfy God's request; nevertheless, Moses' first uttered words reacting to the call are remarkably exceptional: "Who am I?" (Exod 3:11) Such a question is interestingly expressed after God reveals himself as the 'God of his father'. This revelatory reference, as certain commentaries suggest, raises further uncertainties: did Moses actually know who his father was? Nothing in the Scriptures proposes that Moses had any contact with his biological father, especially after he is adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. The biological father is solely mentioned in the first verse of the second chapter and the tenth verse of the sixth chapter of Exodus, in which he is identified as Amram, the husband of Jochebed, a man from the house of Levi. Apart from these instances, he seems to be absent in the remainder of the narrative. Thus, God's revelatory comment raises the question: which father is God referring to? This stimulates a probable crisis of identity that Moses could have gone through.[37]

Apart from the Nile trauma, the first lines about Moses narrate a story consisting of two contrasting social classes and cultures, and two mothers: one who assumed her motherhood to the child and named him, and the other, the biological mother, who returns to the scene by acting as a hired nurse. Some Talmudic commentaries further argue that prior to the hiring of Moses' mother, there might have been Egyptian women candidates who attempted nursing the infant. This hunch attains validity because during such times, royal households used to employ

37. Ibid., 14-16.

wet nurses to take on these roles. In view of the significant initial physical bond between the breast and the child, it is thus understood that Moses' composition of attachment was turbulent. Such a complex account comprises the issues "of loss and retrieval, trouble and resolution"[38] through which it is understood that this salvific narration "holds repression at its heart".[39] Does Moses remember his origins and how does he relate to such a significant identity? The book of Acts (7:22) hints that the Egyptian customs were well ingrained in Moses as he is acknowledged by the historian-author as being well "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."[40]

When attempting to emerge from his Egyptian cocoon, Moses endeavoured to reconcile with his ancestry by physically drawing near his Hebrew "brothers" (Exod 2:11) and acknowledging their burdens by "directing his eyes and his heart to be distressed over them."[41] The witnessing of suffering somehow evokes a sense of fraternal consciousness. Gottlieb Zornberg comments that such allowance to "see" makes him truly "grow."[42] As described in the Scriptures, this empathic response provoked him to kill the Egyptian harasser in Exodus 2:11-12. The following day, in which he reattempts to draw near his Hebrew brethren, Moses is shocked with the perplexing scene of two Hebrew men fighting each other. After this the word "brothers" is no longer used when the Hebrew men are next mentioned and Midrashic commentaries suggest that this might be due to Moses' internal struggle to reconcile this event

38. Ibid., 16.

39. Ibid.

40. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 18.

41. Avraham Bukspan, "The Making of Manhig," Sefer, Classics and Beyond, quoted in Bais Medrash of Ranchliegn, *A Journal of Divrei Torah in honor of Pesach 5782* (Independent publisher, 2002), 53.

42. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 17.

with the one of the day before. His fleeing towards Midian separates him from both surrounding identities: the Hebrew and the Egyptian.[43]

Following the episode of the Burning Bush, Moses later identifies himself as "not a man of words… heavy of mouth and of tongue" (Exod 4:10) and "of uncircumcised lips" (Exod 6:12). These shed light on the inadequacy of Moses to express words. Whilst these may refer to actual stuttering, it is important to acknowledge the emotional consequences resulting from possible past traumas characterised by his troubled nurturing environment. Who was ever able to hear what he had to say and go through? Such an exile to utter words sufficiently and to verbalise thoughts and emotions could have isolated him since infancy despite the apparent desired care portrayed by both adoptive and biological communities.[44]

The "youthful cry" (*na'ar bokeh*) of infant Moses was a most eloquent one, accompanying him from his "transient cradle" ('*aron*) to his young adulthood. Erikson's psychosocial development stages describe the youth period as a turbulent one in which individuals encounter confusion on how to negotiate their identity. Erikson explains how in their youth a person asks these following vital questions: whether they are still a child or an adult, what their role in society is, and whether they are an agent of success or failure.[45] These quests bring about emotional turmoil, especially since at the same time of such identity negotiation, requiring a lot of energy in the processes, the surrounding social systems make

43. Ibid., 17-20.

44. Ibid., 20-21.

45. Erik Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis* in Saul Mcleod, "Erik Erikson's 8 Stages Of Psychosocial Development," Simple Psychology, Published on February 24, 2023, https://simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html#:~:text=Erikson%20maintained%20that%20personality%20develops,negative%20outcome%20for%20personality%20development.

significant demands on the individual.[46] Youth is thus considered as a problem age, but not only. It is predominantly the age of transition: requiring the person to put away childish things and let oneself be immersed in intellectual changes and maturity with which one can then successfully relate to the rest of the community.[47] Pope Francis emphasises that youthfulness is characterised by dreams, relentless searching, risk taking, and a hunger for that which is good, while nurturing a heart that knows how to donate itself to others.[48] The Holy Father further says that youthfulness is the real driving force to renew the Church as a community by acknowledging who she is and by challenging the status quo.[49]

46. Anna Freud, "Adolescence as a developmental disturbance," *Adolescence: Psychosocial perspectives* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 5-10, quoted in Elizabeth Hurlock, *Developmental Psychology: A Life-Span Approach* (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1981), 224.

47. Jean Piaget, "The Intellectual Development of the Adolescent," *Adolescence: Psychosocial perspectives* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 22-26, quoted in Elizabeth Hurlock, *Developmental Psychology: A Life-Span Approach* (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1981), 222.

48. Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *CHRISTUS VIVIT*, 16-17.

49. Ibid., 30-31. See also Elizabeth Hurlock, *Developmental Psychology: A Life-Span Approach* (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1981), 222-224.

1.3 The Attempt to Relate

As the protagonist attempts to distance himself from the Hebrew and Egyptian identities, the scenes in Midian, which embrace Moses, echo his ancestors' bearings. The well, thanks to which Moses first encountered Zipporah's father, reminds the reader of how Isaac (Gen 24:11-67) and Jacob (Gen 29:1-30) found their brides in Genesis, namely by the well. This well was the first step of Moses towards satisfying his thirst to belong and relate to others. It is worth noting that in the second chapter, Jethro is first addressed as "Reuel" (Exod 2:18), which literally means "friend of God".[50] Thus, this enables the reader to identify God as a person who permits friendship and intimacy. And while Moses is observed struggling to connect with his Hebrew and Israelite identities and families, God "remembers" (Exod 2:24) his connection sealed by the covenant with Abraham, which promises a new homeland to his descendants and freedom from oppression (Gen 15). Further attributes of God are revealed in the theophany granted to Moses through the Burning Bush. Fire is present in this first private encounter between God and Moses and it is also present later in Exodus 19:18 in which God then visits his people by descending on Mount Sinai in fire. Therefore, fire permits God's people to know that his presence is glorious (Exod 24:17), just (Num 11:1), and he is jealous out of love for his beloved (Deut 4:24).[51]

This revelatory image of God, as the same one of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which encourages Moses to recognise his roots, invites him to act differently than Pharaoh in his relation with the story of his ancestry. Pharaoh and his generation were forgetful of Joseph's story, yet Moses here is invited to remember. The reader is also invited to remember. Pope

50. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 19.

51. Ibid., 18-20.

Francis says that preservation of memory brings about hope: "we need the covenant between young and old, lest we forget the lessons of history."[52]

Who precedes Moses' story? It is none other than Joseph, another wounded healer who permitted this same God to intervene through him despite his numerous tragedies. It is a reminder that in the deepest pits of life one must look upward and that God abides in the crises of His people.[53] Joseph's route was neither painless nor quick; yet, God used his perfect mess in order to bring about restoration.[54] In one of the last verses in Genesis, Joseph is quoted as saying that the harm inflicted on him by his brothers was used by God to bring about salvation among the nation. The Hebrew term translating "bring about" is also strikingly found in Genesis 13:4 when Abraham built an altar, and in Proverbs 8:26, in which God is described as the one who made the earth. It is a construction-related term.[55] On this notion, spiritual companions are encouraged to ask, "What was planned to be constructed with Moses' wounds?" and apply it to themselves by asking, "What can God construct with my own wounds?" and more importantly, "am I allowing God to construct his plan with my own wounds?"

52. Pope Francis, *Message for World Youth Day 2022-2023* (12, September 2022).

53. Max Lucado, *God will use this for good: Surviving the mess of life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2013), 23-30.

54. Ibid., 21.

55. Ibid., 15.

1.4 The Call

The aforementioned Burning Bush theophany did not happen in a vacuum, rather it set forth a calling to Moses intended to free the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. Moses' resistance to such a calling foretells his attributes of a deliverer and a prophet as the text parallels Gideon's (Judg 6) and Jeremiah's (Jer 1) reluctance. The protagonist's weaknesses are once again highlighted. While the text also sheds light on characteristics attributed to God, the reader is reminded that in service, individuals are not called due to excellency. Rather, they are called to surrender and rely on God's own might: "I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 2:3-5).[56]

Among the attributes to God, there is the revelation of his name: "I AM WHO I AM". Traditionally, as Aquinas' Summa Theologiae suggests, this name acquisition has been revelatory in the understanding of God's nature being infinite, without a beginning and an end, whose existence does not rely on other existing things. This mystery is somehow identical to the image manifested in the Burning Bush fire that burns undiminished, independently of a created cause or stimulus to its sustainment.[57] Alternatively, other scholars propose the translation "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE",[58] which is believed to be God's promise to Moses that he will remain present in his coming missions, and is an echo of God's reassuring words to Moses "I will be with you" (Exod 3:12). This consolation is then manifested tangibly to the

56. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 20-21.

57. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, 13, 11, quoted in Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 20.

58. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 20-21.

protagonist through signs (Exod 4:2-9), relentless direction (Exod 4:12), and the warmth of human companionship through Aaron (Exod 4:14).[59]

What is the reason behind God's will to free his people? The text itself proposes that the primary objective of this calling rests in Exodus 3:18 in which God contemplates the Israelites leading a journey into the wilderness offering sacrifices to him. Similarly, when God instructs Moses with what to say before Pharaoh, He fosters the identity as a Father to Israel and in return invites the child to "serve" him (Exod 4:23). Service is his desire. Service is one of the callings of the faith community. In Hebrew, the word "service" - *'abodah'* – is also translated into the word "work". This also evokes the universal call when God invites man to work and take care of Eden (Gen 2:15). This term therefore creates a tug-of-war between God and Pharaoh who forced the Israelites to "work" for him as slaves. However, as opposed to Pharaoh, God's intent for his people to serve him is not self-inflating. Service and the offering of sacrifices in the wilderness are believed to be an anticipation of the Sinai experience in which God meets and ratifies the covenant with his people. It is thus understood that the rationale behind Moses' calling is none other than God's desire to be in full communion with his beloved in freedom.[60]

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 22-23.

1.5 Equipment

As repeatedly observed, Moses remained objecting to God's call while accentuating his inadequacy. In return, the Lord responds by demonstrating extraordinary signs which Moses could count on in future episodes: the rod turning into snake and the healed leprous hand. Despite such entrustment and empowerment intended to equip Moses, the latter remained adamant about his wish to object to the calling. In the end God responds by providing Moses with other companions, namely Jethro and Aaron.

Matthew Henry comments that, very often, the spiritual companion might not understand how and why God chooses such inadequate servants. Henry explains that in the least of advantaged situations his grace stands out all the more just as "Christ's disciples were no orators till the Holy Spirit made them such".[61] While readers may have the tendency to blame Moses for shying away from the call, they are also encouraged to look within themselves to take note of their lack of wholeheartedness and neglect in service. Thankfully, the Lord does not give up on anybody. On the contrary, he equips his people with fraternal aid. God intervenes with his people through the tongue of Aaron, together with the heart and mind of Moses. It is worth noticing that despite Aaron's eloquence in speech, he still followed God's instructions, implying that "without the constant aid of Divine grace, the best gifts will [still] fail".[62]

Fr Paul Sciberras, on the dialogue between Moses and Jethro, reflects how such an encounter brought forward the sharing of spiritual movements and how this encourages further belief in God.[63] Moreover, this relationship with Jethro also sheds light on faith formation,

61. Matthew Henry, "Exodus," in *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997), 79.

62. Ibid., 80.

63. Paul Sciberras, "Jethro and Moses in Dialogue (Exodus 18:8-26): Ethics of Communitarian Responsibility," *Religions* 14, No. 687 (2023): 4.

especially by offering advice in ethical issues: Jethro sought to provide Moses with "fresh and informed responses to new ethical situations… as one united people seemed to become more complex and multi-faced."[64] Among these responses, Sciberras identifies the notion of subsidiarity: the sharing of responsibility which encourages the rest of the community to be participatory in the pilgrimage towards freedom. On this note, Margaret Guenther proposes that the actual director in spiritual companionship is indeed the Holy Spirit. This is truly the mission of the companion: not to take responsibilities on behalf of others, but to enable a space of encounter between God and the person in a loving and prayerful manner.[65] Moses was not supposed to merely "show the physical and geographical path from Egypt to the Promised Land, but the path on which the true People of God should be."[66]

64. Paul Sciberras, "Jethro and Moses in Dialogue (Exodus 18:8-26): Ethics of Communitarian Responsibility," 5.

65. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Companionship* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992), 1.

66. Paul Sciberras, "Jethro and Moses in Dialogue (Exodus 18:8-26): Ethics of Communitarian Responsibility," 9.

1.6 Spiritual Companionship Lessons

1.6.1 Attentive Listening

In this journey to participate in God's desired intimacy in freedom with His people, just like Moses, the companion is invited to foster an obedient attitude. "Obedience" is composed of the Latin word *audire*, which means to listen. Prospective companions are thus encouraged to imitate Moses in adopting a listening approach. It is only after lending their ear to the cries of others that companions can minister to the wounded people of God. Henri Nouwen proposes that the opposite to "active listening" is "absurd living"; similarly, the word 'absurd' is derived from the Latin word *surdus*, meaning 'deaf'. Through the vehicle of readiness to hear, companions can attempt to connect with their source of existence whom they believe is actively present in everyone's life.[67]

Listening, despite its desired effectiveness, can be a challenging endeavour as conscious and unintentional resistance are likely to be encountered. There is often a preoccupation with control and effectiveness, so much that the uncontrollable silent spaces reserved to God tend to drive the companion "right back to the security of having something valuable to do."[68] Every person has their own Egypt they want to run away from. In view of this, among the surrounding noises and voices, it is of utmost importance for companions to allow time to listen to their inner self to make sense of their human existence. Sooner or later, neglect of personal reflection manifests its imbalance in a physical, psychological, or spiritual manner. Carl G. Jung observed that patients aged thirty-five years and older consistently express profound worries about the

67. Henri Nouwen, *Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith: Spiritual Direction*, compiled by Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird (New York: HarperCollins Publications, 2006), 16-19.

68. Ibid., 18.

ultimate purpose of life and spiritual values.[69] Similarly, Victor Frankl speaks of the 'Sunday Neurosis' as a specific, momentary depression experienced by people who acknowledge the sense of void in their inner selves when the rush of a hectic working week halts.[70] In 'Farther Reaches of Human Nature' Abraham Maslow indicates that persons struggling with meaning tend to look for directions from the outer world to seek navigation.[71] Whilst the latter is true as it also encapsulates the objectives of spiritual companionship and of supervision, such modes of coping should not entirely substitute solitude. Solitude is a prerequisite for personal and spiritual maturation to come about. In view of this, just like Moses, it is a must to escape the cacophonies of one's surrounding systems. "The desire not to be alone is an unwillingness to be with oneself… Solitude and withdrawal provide the opportunity for encountering one's inner self and for return to wholeness."[72] It is only through breakdown that reintegration can materialise. Maslow, in his theory of Self-Actualisation, further explains that the awareness of self, which encourages reconciliation with one's inevitable suffering, is fundamental in the journey towards wholeness.[73] This creates the space for humanity to seek more profound meaning with which one can also integrate their outer-self behaviour. Moreover, Paul Tournier hypothesises that the quest to seek meaning in life is conclusively the universal and ultimate search to discover God.[74] Jung implies that behind the psyche, there are divine traces found in

69. Calvin Hall and Vernon Nordby, *A Primer of Jungian Psychology* (New York: Mentor Books, 1973), 92, Quoted in Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 4.

70. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 108-109, Quoted in Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 4.

71. Abraham Maslow, *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 33.

72. Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 4.

73. Abraham Maslow, *Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, 291.

74. Paul Tournier, *The Meaning of Persons* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 32, Quoted in Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 9.

the sense of entirety that everybody thrives for[75] and similarly Guenther furthers that "what we really hunger for is wholeness and God."[76] Surrendering to God can only be fulfilled after seekers surrender to their innermost being.

1.6.2 The Quest

The word 'calling' is mostly used in the Bible referring to God's project to take part in Christ's redemption offered to the world and to attract people to draw towards him (Rom 1:6; 8:28, 1 Tim 2:4). Genesis teaches that God created man and woman in his own image and likeness, and invites everyone to imitate him through fruitful work on Earth (Gen 2:15). However, what God's plans are for companions to minister might be troublesome to many, especially since Moses' experience of a physical theophany to hear God's calling at the burning bush was unique to him. This requires a process of discernment to allow the Spirit to guide and to equip companions in this pilgrimage of service. Patterson refers to this process as a 'quest' that many would not be aware of what it consists of prior to taking the first steps to being of service towards others. Spiritual companionship, like other secular helping professionals, points towards a significant paradox: to be competent companions requires one to be sensitive to the vulnerability of "the other". However, this sensibility can easily wear one out; at the same time, gratification is very often minimal, and 'burnout' is a relentless danger companions need to be aware of and avoid experiencing. Helpers are frequently faced with more questions than soluble answers. So the question naturally arises: what is that which is attracting individuals to the quest to serve others in this companioning activity?[77]

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75. Regina Bechtle, "C. G. Jung and Religion," *Psyche and Spirit*, Quoted in Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 9-10.

76. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Companionship*, 2.

77. Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional's Guide to Inner Resources*, 1-9.

Max Hammer provides the following factors that possibly motivate people to caring professions: the need to control, attention seeking, curiosity about others, the need for affection, fear from attachment, loneliness, power, the need to hurt and be hurt, the desire to be desired and loved, escapism from the self, and seeking self-cure.[78] It is worth for potential companions to sit with themselves and discern whether their inclination towards this helping activity consists of any of these influences. Such examination of conscience should not advocate for perfect motivators, rather it should lead one to accept that the drive towards being helpful can be complex, frail, and ultimately involve very human driving factors. Hammer further explains that many times people enter this wounded field because they themselves are wounded: some attempt pursuing meaning to their own vulnerability, whilst others attempt to focus on others' issues to avoid dealing with their own.[79] Quite often these triggers are not conscious and it might take a while until spiritual companions acknowledge that the very vulnerability that they attempt to figure out or run away from is the ultimate key to transforming themselves in individuals able to participate into authentic healing: "the pathway to becoming truly compassionate and helpful involves understanding and embracing our own woundedness."[80] Facing one's vulnerability and letting it be a wellspring from which others can benefit, can bear immeasurable fruit. Jung's interest in spirituality, for instance, is believed to have been triggered by his own spiritual pain and Milton Erickson's efforts to explore inner strengths through hypnosis are believed to have been triggered by his attempts to heal himself of the consequences of Polio. Patterson insists that in being a wounded healer, individuals do not produce any cure themselves, rather they become available persons whose perceptions

78. Max Hammer, *The Theory and Practice of Psychotherapy with Specific Disorders* (1972). Ed. International Psychotherapy Institute (Electronic Version, 2015), 33-47.

79. Ibid, 47.

80. Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional's Guide to Inner Resources,* 3.

complement healing. It is not a matter of what one possesses. It concerns who a person is as a process that is still subject to movement in its unrelenting quest towards maturation.[81]

1.6.3 Companioning the Companion

Elizabeth O'Connor adds that oneness with self on its own does not satisfy the ultimate quest for meaning, it has to be integrated with two other important pillar engagements: with God and with others.[82] Before companioning and engaging with the Israelite nation, Moses is first engaged with a companion himself, Aaron. On this note, Guenther remarks that prior to hosting others, companions must first cleanse their 'house' and maintain its cleanliness so that others may find dignified refuge in prospective companions. [83] In order to do so they must first be able to accept being hosted by others, which at times might be more difficult than providing hospitality themselves. Accepting to be hosted stimulates increased self-awareness: the acknowledgement of vulnerability as well as strengths. Failure to recognise the need to be accompanied before accompanying others may bring about self-deception, which might impinge on the companion's encounter with others.

In view of this, spiritual companions have to seek safe spaces and persons with whom they can be honest and accountable while becoming aware of areas of personal growth that might be neglected. Apart from having personal spiritual companions, it is also beneficial for companions to be surrounded with spiritual friends who, in their informal and rather unfiltered relationships, do not hold back from being truthful in their feedback about them. A Cistercian

81. Ibid., 1-9.

82. Elizabeth O' Connor, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*, Quoted in Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 10.

83. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Companionship*, 10-12.

monk from the twelfth century once said that a person is to be pitied if they ever find themselves without others with whom they can celebrate joy or confess hard knocks.[84]

Spiritual friendship is rather individual and personal; however, this is also what the Church at large should look like. Maria Santa-Maria underlines the fact that "there is no such thing as a Christian outside of the church… the organic phenomenon of the people of God… which feeds and nourishes".[85] In similar terms, Jung observed that the structural composition of the Church has the potential to offer the best psychotherapeutic interventions to its community members. Nouwen says that had Thomas the Apostle not remained faithful to the first church community, he could have missed the risen Christ manifestation; similarly, in troubling times to one's faith, the community can accompany, carry, and be the environment that hosts a renewed encounter with the Lord.[86]

Other means of companionship can take the form of practical exercises. Personal journaling, for instance, is considered to be one of the most encouraged forms to stimulate a better sense of self-understanding. In writing one can candidly "wrestle with angels and struggle with demons".[87] Retreats are equivalently fruitful. In retreat houses, which generally value silence and tend to limit physical works, busyness, and distractions, an opportunity is provided to interrupt one's ordinary, restless schedule while providing with time to engage in an examination of conscience. The latter helps one acknowledge their relentless frailties and dependence on God's grace. Such humility is restorative, provides perspetive, and helps individuals remember who they are, and more importantly of whom they are. Moreover, Santa-Maria adds that two means that ought to accompany faith seekers are rituals and sacraments.

84. Ibid.

85. Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality*, 46.

86. Ibid., 47-48.

87. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Companionship*, 13.

These provide connection with one's history from which the current pilgrimage has been inherited. They "provide us with a base of reality for the inward journey" and "keep us in touch with the historical reality of Christianity, the way God entered the world in Christ".[88] Through ordinary substances and actions, companions can continue allowing God to re-enter their life today.[89]

Lastly, the figure of the supervisor also fits into the role of companions that Aaron and Jethro were to Moses. Despite many encouraging calls, supervision is still not very sought in pastoral care. At the same time, the secular helping professions continue teaching that the ultimate objective of such an activity is the maturity of helping professionals and how their interventions can be bettered so that they become more curative for the patient or client. Similarly, supervision in spiritual companionship, as proposed by Barry and Connolly, has the potential to aid companions in becoming better enablers of the relationship between God (the ultimate director) and the directee.[90] The authors emphasise the significance of ongoing supervision in the realisation that the companion's relationships are equally dynamic. At times companioning relationships nourish and at other times these may also burden companions; all these contributing factors, together with the expected personal celebrations and turbulences of life, may impinge on the way companions listen to the directee and also on the way they interact, verbally and non-verbally. Correspondingly, supervision should continue advocating for the personal and professional growth of companions as men and women of faith and service. Just like the quest to help others varies from one person to the other, the purpose of supervision may also vary: some seek it after encountering a problem with a directee; others seek

88. Maria Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality*, 47.

89. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Companionship*, 10-14.

90. William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice Of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 185-186.

reassurance or alternative routes on how to deal with a situation; and others, just like Moses, might seek it due to feelings of inadequacy in their role. Whatever the purpose is, growth in spiritual companions does not afford to be superficial, allowing the self to be challenged is vital to continue fostering discerning hearts, hope, and love, whilst being attentive not to fall into the common traps of spiritual resistance and transferential processes. The latter are believed to be "natural, to be expected processes"[91] that involve the passing on of personal feelings, fantasies, and thoughts from one party to the other in relationships.[92]

In conclusion, there is a question that concerns transference and Moses' perception of the God of his father: before attending to the potential directees' needs, what is the spiritual companion's personal image of God? One of the questions with which one may acknowledge transference in the context of spiritual life concerns with whom Christian spiritual seekers tend to best relate in prayer: whether it is God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, or Our Lady. Acknowledging fluent connections or struggles with certain persons may point towards possible difficulties in one's spiritual life, which in return, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is united with the rest of the body in the nature of humankind.[93] Allison Ricciardi - a licensed mental health counsellor, founder and director of an alliance of Catholic therapists - illustrates how family roles attributed to God as father, mother or siblings, have the capacity to point towards past traumas in one's life.[94] In view of this, companions should ask themselves the following question: "what areas in my personal spiritual life should I prioritise

91. Teresa Blythe, "Transference in Spiritual Direction," Patheos, *Spiritual Direction 101*, Published February 7, 2014, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/spiritualdirection101/2014/02/transference-in-spiritual-direction

92. William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice Of Spiritual Direction*, 185-202.

93. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 365.

94. Allison Ricciardi, "Can Transference Occur In Spiritual Direction?" *Catholic Spiritual Direction*, Published February 21, 2014, https://spiritualdirection.com/2014/02/21/can-transference-occur-spiritual-direction.

at present, with all mentioned forms of ‘Aaron’ and ‘Jethro’ which are available to me, in order not to let them impinge on my interventions with directees?”

1.7 Synopsis

This first chapter has delved into the first few chapters of Exodus in which God’s attentiveness to his peoples’ cries was explored. Flowing from this compassionate characteristic of God, God’s calling to Moses was then dealt with. This calling, which highlights the intentions needed to serve in the ministry of accompaniment, requests one to face any unaddressed sufferings prior to attend to the needs of others. Confrontation with these personal uninvited instances through being accompanied, just as Aaron and Jethro were to Moses, has been reflected upon. Similarly, one is encouraged to seek maturation through communities, sacraments, supervision, and personal spiritual companionship. Through these means, which respond to one’s perpetual psychosocial and spiritual needs, companions will be increasingly in tune with God’s desire to be among his beloved people, with an enhanced disposition to listen attentively to the cries of their brethren.

Chapter 2
Exodus: The Journey Led by a Wounded, yet Trusted, Companion

2.1 Facing Adversaries with Perseverance

"Encounters with the living God do not end in personal satisfaction or fulfilment – they end with calling. Moses' invitation to experience the mystery and wonder of the burning bush is not merely for his own sake, but for the sake of participating in God's plan of salvation for his own people."[95]

With the above quote in mind, the next step of Moses responding to the call in obedience are the plagues. These can be categorised into three cycles grouping three plagues each that climax to the tenth plague. The first instruction in each cycle commences with the direction "in the morning" (Exod 7:15, 8:20, 9:13), the second with "go in to Pharaoh" (Exod 8:1, 9:1, 10:1), and the last with a forewarning from God and Moses. Even though many commentators have attributed the plagues with natural calamities, which are known to take place in the Nile, Exodus portrays these as extraordinary measures with which God threatens the stronghold of Pharaoh. Scott Hahn interprets the plagues as a destruction to "the beauty and harmony of creation in Egypt… reversing several of the creative actions in Genesis 1:1-31,"[96] in which darkness wins over light, the waters become unsupportive of life, and vegetation and living organisms taste the bitterness of death, to which human life is also susceptible. Other scholars also propose assimilations between these acts of judgement with deities worshiped in Egypt. For instance, the second plague threatens Heket, a goddess manifested as a frog; the fourth threatens Uatchit, a god depicted as an Ichneumon fly; the ninth threatens Re, Aten, and Atum, gods of sun and light; and lastly, the tenth threatens Osiris, which was acknowledged as the god of life and a patron of Pharaoh. Throughout such experiences it is worth mentioning the magicians' realisation that such manifestations were brought about by the "finger of God,"

95. Mark Scarlata, *The Abiding Presence: A Theological Commentary on Exodus* (London: SCM Press, 2018), 50.

96. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 25.

(Exod 8:19) a term that symbolises God's might in the New Testament (Lk 11:20) and anticipates the covenant that God makes with His people later on in Exodus (Exod 31:18).

Despite these revelations to which John Durham chooses to refer as the "proof-of-Presence" of Yahweh,[97] Pharaoh remains resistant to allow the Hebrew nation to offer their sacrifice to God in the desert. It is worth mentioning that the sacrifice of animals was unfathomable to the Egyptians given that some of these animals represented their gods and were idolised in reverence. Such hard headedness displayed by Pharaoh persisted despite the numerous "proofs-of-Presence". The number of plagues does mean that God is showing off. Durham explains that it is rather a representation that he perseveres in extremes to keep his promises of salvation with his people and to eradicate any glimpse of human doubt in him. Yahweh wanted to demonstrate to the Egyptians how seriously he wanted to save his children from their tyranny, but most of all, he manifested these wondrous deeds "so that Israel may come to full belief" in him.[98] Nevertheless, Pharaoh remains disinterested in freeing the Hebrews. How was the Hebrew nation going to come to full belief in Yahweh when their situation was not changing? If anything, it got worse. Notably, the Israelites' belief is not mentioned during these phenomenal acts as opposed to the belief of Pharaoh, which is mentioned after each plague. Despite these accounts of belief in God, Pharaoh does not sustain his faith. So to whom are these narratives addressed? Durham concludes that such accounts "are written from faith to faith... [so] that the generations of Israel to come might know that Yahweh Is, and to know also the redemption of exodus, whatever their bondage."[99]

97. John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus*, Edited by David Hubbard, Glenn Barker, and John Watts (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 92.

98. Ibid., 99.

99. Ibid., 100.

2.2 Self-Determination

"Marvels are not performed for the purpose of terrifying those who happen to be present, but they look to the benefit of those being saved."[100] This explanation put forward by Gregory of Nyssa, a Church Father, leads to an attempt to delve further into the hardened heart of Pharaoh in the narrative. Just like marvels, St Gregory notes that the Word has the potential to bring about either enlightenment or darkness of ignorance, according to one's disposition for truth. With this understanding, a lesson is provided as to why the Hebrews remain unaffected by the plagues despite living in the same Egyptian grounds. Just like the streams of living water, the stream of faith may be refreshing to genuine seekers of the divine, but to others with corrupted presuppositions the water becomes unpropitious. It is the same with the plague of frogs, a destructive offspring that surrounded the houses of the Egyptians exhibiting amphibious ways of living, human by nature but brute in attitude. Such plague resulted in illnesses impinging on the whole household and the whole being of a person. In addition, the Egyptian term 'Pharaoh' refers to a "great house."[101] On this notion, Gregory of Nyssa adds that the true apostle should endeavour to foster purity in every activity without compromise to keep away from potential spiritual illnesses in one's house. Furthermore, George Maloney writes that the Burning Bush is a reminder of God's desire for one to surrender all aspects in their life in order to fully accept his burning love.[102]

The Church Father then comments on the piece of Scripture that says that Pharaoh's heart was hardened by God. He declares certainty that it is never God's intent to bypass self-determination. To the contrary, it is with one's interior life that choices are made and that power

100. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, Translated by Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 68.

101. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS, 17.

102. George Maloney, *Why not Become Totally Fire?* (Manhattan: Paulist Press, Inc, 1978), 36.

is exercised. Yet the persistence to discard God ended up being the very same reason why Pharaoh acted dishonourably. The author simplifies this explanation by metaphorising with this example: failure to participate in light would be the same cause as to why a blinded person falls into a trench. In other words, it was Pharaoh's own inclination towards evil through free will that led him to remain in the absence of light.[103]

The outstretched hand of Moses (Exod 9:33) drives away thunder and hail with immediacy. Here there is an anticipation of the ultimate Lawgiver, Jesus, whose stretched hands on the cross would drive away any potential threats to a person's soul. The hand suddenly becomes a source of light to all, in which some find their delight, and to which others remain insensitive to. It portrays Moses as the mediator between God and both the Egyptian and Hebrew people. It provided possible healing of pain and deliverance to both nations; yet just like the hardening of the Pharaoh's heart, it is up to each person to freely accept or reject its potential benefits.[104]

Pharaoh acknowledged his sins (Exod 9:27); however, it seems that this was merely a desire of immediate respite from plagues since his following actions were incoherent with such admission of guilt. Similarly, repentance does not merely mean forsaking immoral behaviours, it is rather "a change of vision, a change of home, a change of lover."[105]

103. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 70-72.

104. Ibid., 72-73.

105. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 158.

2.3 Ineloquence in Speech bringing about Eloquent Questions

As previously discussed, one person's wounds have the potential to be an indispensable font from which others can engage in a healing process themselves. Throughout the narrative of agony so far, the voice of Israel has not yet been given much significance. Among their few expressions, as previously discussed, the Hebrews have only groaned, cried, wailed, and screamed in desperation. '*Na'aka*' in Hebrew, which God hears when remembering His covenant, is the "death rattle of those who are immured,"[106] according to the Jewish scholar Ramban.[107]

To such agony that seemingly worsened, Moses' reaction was "suffused with anger, reproach, frustration." His plea to freedom seemed to remain overcome by Pharaoh's evil responses. One can only imagine Moses' sense of failure to the Hebrew community. Agony, which now becomes burdened by Moses too, leads him to break ground with the expression of a question that has not yet been addressed by preceding Biblical personages: 'Why?' With such a question, which is still troubling this present generation, Moses demands an explanation from God about the portrayed sense of desertion in this delicate situation (Exod 5:22-23). This 'why' question appears just a few verses before Moses' demand, uttered by the Hebrews in which they asked Pharaoh for reasons about his harsh attitude towards them. Consciously or unconsciously, Moses picks up this just protest and addresses it towards God. It is worth noting that Moses refers to this wounded community as "this people," in which one gets the sense of estrangement between Moses and his brethren, and "Your people," in which Moses addresses them to God as his very own responsibility to love (Exod 5:22-23). Gottlieb Zornberg, who refers to this uttered question as innovative in Moses' way of speaking with God, describes

106. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 51.

107. Sefaria, "Ramban on Genesis 47:28," *A Living Library of Torah.* https://www.sefaria.org/Ramban_on_Genesis.47.29.1?lang=bi (Accessed in May 2023).

how God now also hears Moses in a new way: "He hears him in chords… to speak in God's name and in the name of vulnerable flesh and blood… like those Mongolian singers who can utter more than one pitch at the same time."[108] This harmony of understanding brings about mediation, which is to represent God and the people at once. Moses, who has just been referred to as ineloquent of speech, is now representing a nation who can merely produce unarticulated sounds. Similarly, a Jewish commentary by Ha'amek Davar proposes that the assurance of God that the Israelites were going to be attentive to his voice, was not merely a promise. It was rather a command as if it was only through his voice that the people would listen and join forces to oppose Pharaoh. The reading goes on to say that Moses' throat spoke out the *Shechina*, the presence of God, as if the mediator was God's ventriloquist.[109]

Despite the people's belief in him (Exod 4:31), Moses' claim that the people were not going to listen to him remains valid as seen in the rest of the narrative. Nevertheless, his voice remained a healing agent. For Moses to start uttering words and mediating from his "uncircumcised lips" (Exod 6:12) is a humbling voyage that provides ample lessons to learn from. The book of Numbers speaks of Moses (Num 12:13) as being "very humble, more than any human being on the face of the earth." The Hebrew form of 'humility' in this regard is '*kol ha-adam'* meaning that Moses was not only the humblest, but his portrayed humility exceeded the human spectrum. On this note, Shmuel Lewis remarks that any person surrendering one's self to humility will bring about God's dwelling within humanity.[110] God's humility is not inseparable from his power and so, Moses' way of living '*kol ha-adam'* leads the way for God to intervene for the redemption of his people.

108. Ibid.

109. "Tzror HaMor," quoted in Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 52-53.

110. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 72.

2.4 The Passover

The last plague, which climaxes in its position after the triplet series of plagues,[111] was the first warned yet the last to be completed. In this regard, Matthew Henry comments that this sheds light on how God is slow to anger, despite all of his might.[112] Anger is now also experienced by Moses at Pharaoh's obstinance.[113] In significant contrast to previous attitudes, following the tenth plague Pharaoh is seen as eager to get rid of the Hebrew nation that he forces them out of his country.[114] It is worth noting that from the Hebrew term for 'neighbours', *rea',* Durham draws out the synonym 'companions', from whom the wounded nation used to be looked after and exploited.[115] With their request of silver and gold (Exod 11:2) from these 'companions' who are now humiliated in front of Yahweh's might, the people of God are now invited to symbolically withdraw themselves from the companionship of oppression, and submit themselves to the one true companion who brings about freedom, God.

The counteracting symbol that follows is the institution of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The etymology of the word 'companion' remarkably finds its roots in the Latin word '*panis*', meaning bread;[116] suggesting that the companion is the one bread can be broken with. This initiative commenced by God is described as "a lasting ordinance," (Exod 12:14) in Hebrew '*Zikkaron*', which "refers to the fact that God's saving deed is not only

111. St Jerome, "Exodus," Edited by Richard J. Clifford, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer & Roland E. Murphy (Banglore: Theological Publications in India, 2000) 49.

112. Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 88.

113. Ibid.

114. John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus*, 146.

115. Ibid.

116. Merriam-Webster, "Word History: Breaking Bread with 'Companion'," *Merriam Webster*, Accessed on March 15, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/history-of-word-companion.

recalled but actually relived through the ritual meal."[117] This ever-present meal invitation was not only celebrated by Jesus in his humanity, but was also given a new distinctive "Christian memory" to it.[118] In an allegorical way Jesus sacrifices himself as the unblemished lamb at the Last Supper, from which he "transforms the Jewish Passover into the memorial meal of a new exodus from sin."[119] On a similar note, whilst bread in the Passover meal is left unleavened because of the Israelite's hurriedness to leave Egypt and thus there was not enough time for the dough to rise, leaven is also symbolic of sins that the people of God are invited to do without for the rest of their lives.[120] Building on this, the Archdiocese of Malta refers to this 'breaking of the bread' as a necessary path that the Church has to take: She has to go through this breaking in order to rediscover her call to proclaim the Good News to everyone while at the same time healing from past wounds.[121]

The anguish sounds of mourning of the Egyptians' loss of their future contrasts the silence that passes over the households of the Hebrews. A kind of silence that vividly proclaims security in the realisation of Yahweh's supremacy over Pharaoh and his oppression.[122] It is through silence that God's words "find a home in us."[123]

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117. Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy, "God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching," National Conference of Catholic Bishops September, 1988, *Boston College*, March 17, 2023, https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/catholic/NCCB_Gods_Mercy.htm#:~:text=Applied%20to%20the%20Passover%20celebration,relived%20through%20the%20ritual%20meal.

118. Ibid.

119. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 32.

120. Ibid.

121. L-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, *Knisja Waħda Vjaġġ Wieħed: Proċess ta' Tiġdid Ekkleżjali 2020-2024* (Imrieħel: Progress Press, 2021) 42.

122. John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus*, 149.

123. Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily during the General Audience Mass*, Rome, 7 March 2012.

2.5 Advent

In remembrance of Joseph's brethren's promise (Gen 50:22-26), the Hebrew nation starts journeying towards the Promised Land with Joseph's bones; according to St Jerome's commentary, these bones indicate that the visitation of the Lord has been taking place within them.[124]

However, the journey does not take the most desirable direction for the pilgrims: a straightforward one guarded by the fortress at Zilu, but in the wilderness around Lake Balah.[125] The actual route follows a path that no one would have ever thought of and the companioning presence of the Lord puzzles Pharaoh and his reign. It is believed that the primary objective of this initial journey was not Sinai or anywhere else, but towards a once-and-for-all victory over the tyranny of Egypt. Gregory of Nyssa comments that such an aggressive army points towards the passions of the soul and undisciplined intellectual drives that are in relentless attempt to enslave spiritual seekers to obstruct their intimacy with the Lord in the name of pleasure.[126] To the Israelites' surprise, Pharaoh goes through a change of heart that heartened his military to reclaim their oppression over the Hebrews. Durham forwards a valuable lesson as he proposes the reason behind Pharaoh's change of heart: "Fear and shock of grief are now replaced by practical considerations… knowing something will come and actually experiencing it are quite different to us."[127] The following massive aggressive force leaves no possibility of self-defence for the Israelites. They enter a panic state. Although their protests to

124. St Jerome, "Exodus," 49.

125. Ibid.

126. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 83.

127. John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus*, 191.

God are not recorded, they do not fall short of complaints to Moses: "an anticipation of the murmuring and rebellion motives to come in the narratives of the wilderness."[128]

Yet the silent prayers of Moses prevail more with Yahweh than the murmuring nation's cries of fear.[129] The true leadership in Moses does not let fear overcome hope. Help, on the other hand, "will not come unless the heart of the leader speaks with God."[130] There is no audacious prayer recorded of Moses, yet God still attended to Moses' cries: "the voice which is melodious and ascends to God's hearing is not the cry made with the organs of speech but the meditation sent up from pure conscience."[131] In reaction to Israel's situation of shock and distress, Moses directs the people to enter a process of advent: to set aside any form of demoralising fear, to stand firm, and to wait upon the Lord's salvific response. The portrayed advent meant that, as opposed to one's innate drives to fight or flight, the nation should foster an attitude of surrender for all the fighting had to be done by Yahweh alone.[132] The presence of both nations together at the same place and time poses the need of some form of separation. To see this gap bridged, the attendant of God intervenes (Exod 14:19) by guiding the accompanying pillar of cloud behind the Hebrews and before Pharaoh's army. In doing so, he becomes the mediator between God's manifesting presence to the nation.[133] Echoing the preceding book of Genesis, here God is once again differentiating light from darkness.[134]

128. Ibid.

129. Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 93.

130. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 82.

131. Ibid.

132. John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus*, 192.

133. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 36.

134. Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 94.

Following Moses' lead, whose faith as small as a "grain of mustard seed" was "capable of opening up the sea",[135] the Hebrews walk through the dry grounds of the sea. The same sea, shortly, returns to its usual form at the command of Moses' stretched hand, leaving Pharaoh and his army drowning to death. The latter's fatal route serves as the route of deliverance to Moses and his followers. This proof-of-presence climaxes in the conclusion of the fourteenth chapter of Exodus implying that Israelites do not only "see" Yahweh's work, but they also finally "fear" him and "believe" in him and his servant, Moses (Exod 14:31).

Subsequent to the crossing of the sea, both Israel and Moses start singing praises in acknowledgement of the Lord's victory among them in their crisis. In the mentioned hymn, Yahweh is both the subject and object of such singing as all praises are about him and towards him.[136] In view of this, Durham theorises that the hymn is more than a mere song of victory. It is rather a "celebration of Yahweh and the kind of God he is:"[137] a Saviour, Warrior, Redeemer, and King (Exod 15:2, 15:3, 15:13, 15:18). With the image of Miriam in mind, St Ambrose points towards what the Church ought to be: the One who accompanies all redeemed persons and leads them to a dance of victory.[138] All in all it is a song that one can celebrate the Lord with: whose grace strengthens weakness, his salvation threatens death, whose song comforts all sorrows, and whose advent leads to ultimate joy.[139]

135. Dominique Barthelemy, *God and His Image: An Outline of Biblical Theology*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 67.

136. John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus*, 205.

137. Ibid., 210.

138. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 37.

139. Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 94.

2.6 Spiritual Companionship Lessons

2.6.1 Presence

Following the call and the companioning presence of Aaron and Jethro, as seen in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Moses redirects his presence in Egypt, which is not only the place where he meets adversaries, but also the place where his brethren dwell in hardship. The people did not trust him immediately. It was only through a relational process that they manage to build their trust in him after the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. Just as Moses had to persevere in bringing his hopeful presence to the nation in times of trial, spiritual companions must exhibit a presence of warmth to encourage trust among their directees.

Prior to attending to the directees' needs, Murphy and Dillon emphasise the importance that helpers attend to their own selves for three primary reasons: 1) in order to be attentive about what their intentional and unintentional reactions may evoke in others, 2) because their own reactions to the directees' disclosure may provide key information about how their surrounding persons might be reacting to such a story, and 3) because self-knowledge brings about the most beneficial use of self, which in helping professions is considered as the most essential tool in the context of therapeutic conversations.[140] On this notion, Barry and Connolly add that attentiveness should be fostered in order not to fall into the trap of self-absorption, which threatens the contemplation of beauty. Furthermore, they point towards transcendence as a tool that brings about a conscious forgetfulness of self, a prerequisite to create a space of readiness to contemplation.[141]

140. Bianca Cody Murphy and Carolyn Dillon, *Interviewing in Action in a Multicultural World* (Brooks/Cole: Cencage Learning, 2011), 12.

141. William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice Of Spiritual Direction*, 52.

Interestingly, Guenther shares a reflection on Shiphrah and Puah (Exod 1:15-21), whose hidden yet tenacious role as midwives safeguarded Moses' life from death. The author argues that whilst the Bible is filled with male experiences, their initiatives could not have come about without the punctuating narratives of their birth. Similarly, Jesus points towards this reality in His instructions concerning the vitality to be born anew (Jn 3:1-4). Guenther adds that the role of spiritual companions should "emulate Shiphrah and Puah in their courage and commitment."[142] Spiritual companioning, just as midwifery, should foster faithfulness to the protection of new life: "the literal meaning of [midwife] is 'with-woman' … like the midwife, spiritual companions are with-women and with-men"[143] in their sensitive safeguarding of souls. Birth-giving, in both physical and spiritual senses, is not always a smooth process, comprising of waiting time and acts of surrendering.

Even though the initial impulse to receive direction may arise from an urgent need, spiritual companionship is not merely a crisis-management ministry. Just like midwifery, companioning should view the person in a holistic manner. This involves time, which contrasts the busy schedules and appointments with medical consultants or overwhelmed parish clergy. The companion is there when nothing else seems to be happening. Nevertheless, growth in spiritual life is very often gradual and hidden, and despite the discomfort with waiting, one should enable trust with companions in the "slow work of God."[144] Even though the companion may be inclined towards fixing, helping or improving the lives of others, companionship is many times about patiently sitting with what cannot be repaired. Just like midwifery, reactive interventions should take place only when deemed as necessary rather than for the sake of

142. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Companionship*, 85.

143. Ibid., 86.

144. Ibid., 93.

doing something. This is painfully contrary to the surrounding culture that seeks to value doing over being.[145]

A crucial element in the art of presence is what Carl Rogers used to refer to as the 'unconditional positive regard'.[146] This poses a challenging task as to foster acceptance of individuals despite their behaviours may at times go against professional and personal values. Whilst confrontation is valuable in similar contexts, this should not jeopardise the relationship between the director and the directee. The companion should provide a relentless holding environment with which others may acknowledge that they can count on them, regardless of the nature of developments in their lives. Even in times of unexpectedness, companions should attempt to remain calm and composed in both their verbal and nonverbal communication, so that nothing obstructs the directee's reassurance and validation. The latter comes about when the directee's revelations are endorsed and appreciated.[147]

145. Ibid., 82-95.

146. Carl Rogers, "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* (21), 1957: 95-103.

147. Bianca Cody Murphy and Carolyn Dillon, *Interviewing in Action in a Multicultural World*, 127-138.

2.6.2 Articulating the Right Questions

An asset without which any clinical relationship cannot move forward is empathy: the immersion of the helper in the other's experience. It is different from cognitive perspective taking. Whilst the latter refers to the capability of understanding deep rooted desires and beliefs, empathy is an affective state triggered by a process of sharing of emotions. Empathy entails seeing and experiencing the world from the other person's subjective perspective. Consequently, it requires unceasing oscillation between subjective experiencing of something as if it were the companions', and the objective feeling and thinking about the directees' experiences.[148] Here is another reminder of the intentional forgetfulness of self and this is when Moses articulates the right question before the Lord on behalf of his entrusted nation.

But how could Moses do this when Israel was silent, or murmuring, most of the time? Freud says that following a traumatic neurosis triggered by a shocking experience, one may experience an 'incubation period'. It is a phenomenon of latency that hinders consciousness to the extent that one is not able to grasp what happened. Gottlieb Zornberg theorised that this explains Israel's portrayed apathy to their traumatic oppression under Egypt. The murmuring "is audible in the primal communication of the human voice, seeking out, in singular and common human experiences, the companion depths in the other."[149] A message could not be extracted because the experience was so overwhelming that consciousness restricted it. With Moses' and with the spiritual companions' stammering voice, God still wants to lift the

148. Bianca Cody Murphy and Carolyn Dillon, *Interviewing in Action in a Multicultural World*, 139-141.

149. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 54.

people's murmuring:[150] the "deep calls unto deep" (Psalm 42:7) experience upon which God's uttered words creates light (Gen 1:2).

2.6.3 Mediation in the Unknown

Henri Nouwen says that the essence of spiritual direction is the process of asking the most fundamental questions within a supportive environment. Through the process of asking, humanity can progress to the next process, that of living the question as inspired by God's spirit in the form of discipline and courage.[151] Sound spiritual companionship brings about a discovered reality that the directee encounters in this maturing journey between the accentuation of the question and its living: the hiddenness of God. Despite their exit from Egypt, the Hebrews struggled with the apparent absence of God just before passing through the Sea of Reeds when threatened by the Egyptian chariots. It is an unavoidable struggle if one recognises that their minds are truly insufficient to fully grasp God's discovery; consequently, here lies the acknowledgement that humanity does not hold the fullness of truth. The moment the fullness of God is conformed with a particular incident is the moment that the perception of truth is twisted.[152]

Jungian psychology describes this reality of unknowingness as the place where humanity must deal with its shadow, a fragility that is quite often an unsought part of living. Sanford claims that this shadow seems to be a relentless opportunity for seekers to draw closer to their Maker. Intimacy is realised as individuals find themselves wrestling with God, like Jacob did in Genesis 32 and like Moses himself did in Exodus 4 on his way to Egypt. Sanford expands that even if the scientific lens considers these turbulent journeys as breakdowns, through the

150. Ibid., 55.

151. Henri Nouwen, *Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith: Spiritual Direction*, 4-13.

152. Ibid.

spiritual outlook these can be beheld as a path that one has to endure so that a transformation in consciousness might be realised.[153] "Where God's absence was most loudly expressed, God's presence was most profoundly revealed."[154] This walk of illumination that rests in the midst of contradictions is personal. Thus, the utterance of quick-fix solutions from companions do not do justice in questioning periods, even if companions would have a seemingly appropriate response at the tip of their tongue. "Glib apologetics" from the spiritual director's side, which many times are triggered due to a lack of tolerance to pain masked underneath the directees' questions, serve only to further "animate hostility and anger, and… alienation."[155] Thus, the companion's responsibility in this respect is simply to mediate the space between the seeker and God. By mediation the director is required to enable a journey of living the questions by being silent, yet always present; the need to listen attentively to the encountered person's needs and to attend to the dark intimate parts of a person without fear. "Without a question, an answer is experienced as manipulation or control. Without a struggle, the help offered is considered interference. And without the desire to learn, direction is easily felt as oppression".[156] On the other hand, "in living the questions, answers are found".[157]

As an activity that is meant to mediate between God and his beloved, spiritual companionship has one crucial necessity: prayer. In this regard, the companion should not only encourage this communicative aspect in the directees, which enables them to foster a living

153. Maria L. Santa-Maria, *Growth through Meditation and Journal Writing: A Jungian Perspective on Christian Spirituality*, 44-45.

154. Henri Nouwen, *Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith: Spiritual Direction*, 80.

155. Ibid., 8-11.

156. Ibid., 8.

157. Ibid., 13.

relationship with God,[158] but also intercede for the entrusted directees to grow in their faith. It is therefore essential to reflect on how to encourage the accompanied's intimacy with God. André Louf says companions only have to teach the accompanied to remain waiting upon the Lord in their present state of being, in the assertion that God is not only close to them, but within them. Many times, individuals try searching for God outside of themselves, which only makes it more difficult to encounter him. Just like St Augustine contemplated, after years searching for him outside of himself, he met God within his very own self. Thomas Merton calls this state of being 'fully born', in which one manages to get rid of the superficial old self and reach the true new self. Truth in the concept of self makes one realise that through the experience of joy and pain, a person's identity rests in the realisation that every person is a child of God and a brother to all community members. This brings about freedom. This is Exodus.[159]

Moses was consistently attentive to the Lord's voice to share with his people and vice versa. It is evident how important it is for the companion to be attentive to what the Lord has to say to their entrusted directees and to present their needs before him in prayer. Words and gestures on their own merely result in insignificant symbolism. Their objective within accompaniment is to ultimately lead the way to the 'interior Master', the Holy Spirit. Just like a midwife, the companion is simply a person who aids at the birth of a person, the coming of a new creation in the Holy Spirit.[160] Intercession, an essential part of such aid, is not only the companions' pleading for directees, but their entering into Jesus's own intercession for all needs of humanity to the Father. Openness to the Spirit, which is a relentless call to all, provides

158. Thomas Acklin and Boniface Hicks, "Guidance in Prayer from a Spiritual Director," *St Paul Center for Biblical Theology*, Published on September 14, 2018, https://stpaulcenter.com/guidance-in-prayer-from-a-spiritual-director/

159. André Louf, *Grace Can Do More: Spiritual Accompaniment and Spiritual Growth* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 33-40.

160. Ibid., 50-55.

fruitfulness and meaning. God's answers, or lack of, to one's prayers should never point to their virtues, but only towards his freely bequeathed love and mercy. Thus, thanksgiving must always accompany prayers. Perseverance, trust, and daring prayers humble one to always remain submissive to the will of God in the awareness that companions and directees are both on this relentless pilgrimage towards the Promised Land, representing full communion with the one who loves them most.[161]

2.7 Synopsis

This second chapter has delved into the Hebrews' experience of freedom as mediated by Moses under God's guidance. Pharaoh's hard-headedness was touched upon, despite him acknowledging God's presence and desire. This further accentuated the Israelites' pain that led Moses to ask the innovative 'why' question towards God, mirrored by what was being asked by the accompanied people. While fostering an obedient behaviour towards God, Moses now does not flee from such suffering. To the contrary, he learns to wait upon the Lord. From the portrayed attitudes of the Pentateuchal character of Moses, several insights beneficial to the spiritual companioning activity were reflected upon, namely the themes of empathic responses, mediation, and spiritual maturation. Maturation has been studied within the context of a journey from asking fundamental questions masked by human vulnerabilities to living these same questions. Apologetical responses do not resolve pain experienced by the accompanied seekers. However, in the embracing of suffering endured with the director's sustaining presence, answers might be found and the "Exodus" might be reached.

161. Jacques Philippe, *Thirsting for Prayer*, Translated by Helena Scott (Strongsville: Scepter Publishers, Inc, 2014) 143-152.

Chapter 3
Towards the Promised Land: A Perpetual Process of Wounded Healing

3.1 The Desert Experience

Two attitudes that persist in the following Exodus chapters are murmuring from the Israelite people and relentless mediation from Moses. Despite the Hebrews' renewed faith following the crossing of the sea (Exod 14:31), their reaction to the upcoming challenges in the desert was nothing less than griping. They dare accuse Moses and Aaron of further endangering their lives in the desert (Exod 16:2). Years later, as recounted in Deuteronomy 32:5, Moses rebukes the people as "a perverse and crooked generation," which hints at the mediator's frustration at those he was serving. Nevertheless, God's response to this manifested ingratitude is nothing less than providential. When the people complained about the waters of "Marah" (*marah*) because of its bitterness (*mar*), these became sweetened by the tree. On this transformation, Tertullian comments that this prefigures the Baptismal waters that are restored to life by the tree on which Jesus was hung.[162] When complaining about hunger, God provided the people with quail and manna. The latter, also referred to as "bread from heaven," (Exod 16:4) was provided in ration on a daily basis until the people arrived in the Promised Land (Josh 5:12). With such provision the people were taught not to hoard so that they could foster a relationship of trust in their dependency on the Lord. St John Chrysostom implies that the manna experience teaches that earthly possessions and pleasures, if not restrained, may threaten corruption.[163] The grounds of grumbling eventually became known as *Massah*, recalling the instances when Israel tested God, and *Meribah*, recalling the lashing out of Israel at Moses

162. Tertullian, "On Baptism," edited by Kevin Knight, *New Advent* (2021), https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0321.htm (Accessed in April 2023).

163. Chrysostom, "Homily 40 on First Corinthians," Edited by Kevin Knight, *New Advent* (2021), https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220140.htm (Accessed in April 2023).

questioning the Lord's faithfulness.[164] As the Catechism of the Catholic Church implies, scepticism in God's power, love, and providence wounds one's relationship with the Creator.[165]

However, the desert is not merely a place of death. It is rather the experience in which the spiritual seeker recognises "dependence upon God… where one listens unhindered to the word of God."[166] The desert is the school from which one can learn how to connect with God, even if consolations and proofs-of-presence are not there. It makes searching for God purer as one learns "how to seek him for himself alone rather than to seek him for his gifts."[167] Interestingly, the Hebrew word for desert is '*midbar'*, the roots of which are related to '*dabar'*, which means "word."

"God does not have a human mouth or breath; his mouth is that of a prophet."[168] Through Moses, God continues to speak to his beloved's heart as he continues to lead the people in the desert, echoing Hosea 2:16, which speaks of Israel as an unfaithful spouse. Apart from his intercessory actions through the mouth, Moses also acts as a mediator by holding up his hands during the Israelites' battles. Such an act was used to bring about victories among the people. The weariness of hands, which leads Aaron and Hur to elevate his arms, manifests Moses' physical tiredness during his direction journey. St Justin Martyr expands on the likeness of Moses' outstretched hands with that of Jesus, in whom one finds the mediator par excellence.[169]

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164. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 39.

165. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 2119.

166. Hector Scerri, "The Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei: Cross-sectional Theological Reflections and Pastoral Implications," *Melita Theologica* 63, No. 2 (2013): 43 https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/516/1/The%20Apostolic%20Letter%20Porta%20Fidei.pdf.

167. Frances Hogan, *Words of Life from EXODUS*, (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1985), 133.

168. Raniero Cantalamessa, *Jesus Began to Preach: The Mystery of God's Word*, ed. Vera Castelli Theisen, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 3.

169. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 40.

3.2 The Sinai Experience

The climax of the protagonist's mediation between Israel and God is believed to have been reached at Sinai where the people assemble to encounter their Saviour (Exod 19:17), witnesses His omnipotence (Exod 19), receive the commandments (Exod 20-23), and participate in a sacrificial ritual in acceptance of God's covenant with them (Exod 24). On this mediation, Psalm 106 says that "had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them," (Ps 106:23) the people would not have been rescued. Throughout these experiences Moses is repeatedly observed to go up and down the mountain to negotiate the relationship between the Redeemer and the redeemed (Exod 19). Forty days after this movement to and from the peak, Moses is once again bitterly dismissed from the mountain because of the corrupted behaviours of his brethren. Rabbinic interpretations theorise that this dismissal echoed the one before the providence of the Commandments, in which God is observed to have instructed Moses to go down from his greatness because such peak experience was not an end in itself but a means to the people's unity with God. Now that the people turned their back on Yahweh maliciously, Moses' peak experience was not making sense anymore. In other words, the theophanic experience had to be halted because Moses ultimately belonged to his entrusted people. Hence, the climbing down of the mountain represents a sacrifice of intimacy with God. [170]

At the foot of Sinai there clearly is an experience of the sin of idolatry. The commentary *Meshech Chochmah* says that whilst adoration to objects is distorted reverence, any object, irrelevant of its sanctification, is only meaningful because of its symbolic expression. It adds that Moses, despite his charismatic traits, held no innate power.[171] Gottlieb Zornberg builds on

170. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 74.

171. "Meshech Chochmah," quoted in Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 82-83.

this argument by hypothesising that idolatry in the Golden Calf was birthed in the Israelites' veneration of Moses: "so great is the human desire to adore that the screen through which the light radiates is worshipped as the source of light."[172] Moses' delay to meet the people waiting for him at the foot of the mountain distresses them so much that they felt deserted by the divinity misplaced in him. In Moses' absence the calf was the first substitute to be adored, representing supernatural force. This interpretation furthers the reflection on Moses' failure to sufficiently point towards God who is truly divine: "they have inflated him (Moses) and at the same time vulgarised him."[173]

Deuteronomy 34:9, "Forgive our iniquity and our sin!" has troubled many in the question of what sin Moses could have committed. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge the leader's journey from referring to his brethren as "this people" to "Your people" to this engagement of solidarity with them: "our iniquity and our sin." In the breaking of the tablets, Rabbinic literature explains that Moses "joins his soul with them"[174] through a behaviour with which he could speak comprehensible language with the people and on their behalf to God. It is as if the act of smashing tore up the marriage covenant before it was given to the bride. Moses might have thought that it would have been better if the people remain ignorant of the tablets rather than fail to abide by them. In restricting their access to the commandments, however, Moses becomes an accomplice with the vulnerable idolatrous bride.[175]

It is worth reflecting on the need to be loved and needed. The latter, according to Hammer, is very often triggered by unconscious feelings of worthlessness due to previous life experiences that deprive the helper from love. Persons who lack affirmation and engage

172. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 83.

173. Ibid.

174. Ibid., 100.

175. Ibid.

themselves in help-oriented activities often tend to be overinvolved in their directees' lives. This unconscious over-involvement would provide helpers with a means of gaining love in reciprocity for their benevolence. Acting on behalf of a person, or in this case on behalf of a whole people, prevents the other "from ever growing and becoming aware that he is capable of dealing with life effectively on his own."[176]

After ascending to the peak again following the breaking of tablets while encountering worship before the Golden Calf, Moses then returns to his people with new tablets after eighty days of nearness to the Lord. For the very first time in Exodus the people manages to "see" Moses (Exod 34:30, 35). The radiance of his face impacts the vision of the people so much that they started distancing themselves from him at first. In view of this, Moses starts entering rituals of veiling and unveiling his face during his encounters with both God and the people. This represents the tension of revelation in spiritual life: for the sake of those being accompainied, companions must surrender a piece of themselves. Gottlieb Zornberg draws from literature that suggests that the veiling and unveiling reveals two possible longings desired by Moses: the desire to be known amid fulfilling the demanding role of mediation, and the desire to please the people in their wish to see him while receiving teaching from him. In relation to the latter, Hebrew scholars believe that this very moment kickstarts Moses' role as a teacher, *Moshe Rabbenu*, whose words were uttered in the illumination of his encounters with God.[177] Still troubled by the previous Golden Calf experience, which also evokes the people's craving to engage with sacramentals, the people and Moses now choose to interact face to face. This resonates with Isaiah's relation to the face as a medium that further encourages learning: "your eyes shall see your teacher's face" (Isa 30:20).

176. Max Hammer, *The Theory and Practice of Psychotherapy with Specific Disorders,* 45.

177. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 76.

3.3 The Unheard Humanity of Moses

Alongside these attempts to relate with the people by the unveiling of his face, Moses puts forward his request to see God's face (Exod 33:18-20). In return, God's revelation does not accurately respond to Moses' desire, as he is only granted the opportunity to see the Lord's back.[178] The last theme treats Moses' vulnerability, which endures throughout the rest of the journey, as seen in his own recollection of experiences written in the book of Deuteronomy. The Talmud states that Moses is not only the author of Balaam's story and the book of Job, but also Deuteronomy; "his own book."[179] The latter, whilst shedding light on the gaps in the relationship with his brethren, "gives a new voice to Moses' inner world."[180]

Throughout his reflection about the situation, Moses complains that he "can no longer bear… the trouble… the burden, and the resentments" (Deut 1:9-12) of the people. This perceived exhausting burden manifests in physical, social, and emotional pain, triggered by the responsibility of carrying the burdens, lives, and souls of his companions. Similarly, in Numbers 11:12 the protagonist questions his role as a "nursing father [who] carries a suckling child" to these people whom he had not biologically conceived. Loneliness is striking in these claims. But loneliness is not only attributed to his relationship with the people, Moses also reports God's abandonment at times: "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter" (Deut. 3:26). It was God who first called Moses to use him despite his heavy tongue and uncircumcised lips. Now that Moses overcomes his insecurities, it is God who is restricting the protagonist's speech.

178. Ibid., 79.

179. Ibid., 148.

180. Ibid.

Why did Moses choose to expose these vulnerabilities and not boast in his heroic recollection of memories? It is believed that he wanted to speak a recognisable language to his followers so that he could finally interact sufficiently with them and satisfy his human desire to be desired. He might have wanted to showcase his wounds to the people, who considered themselves as subordinate to him, to show that he too had his own needs, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual, which sought their attention.[181]

Regarding God's absence of words, Rashi adds that from the time of the spies till the end of its generation of warriors, there is no mention of God's uttered words. This implies that for the duration of their thirty-eight years of disobedience, God did not communicate with the people. In return, this impacted the verbal interaction with Moses. The Rabbi comments that the Lord's speech did not reach Moses because such Presence had one exception to be expressed: "for the sake of Israel" (Exod 18:8). Only when the mentioned generation died (Deut 2:18) did Moses regain access to God's uttered words. [182]

Moses' interrupted prayer (Deut 3:26) concerned his own crossing over to reach the land of Canaan. He was more interested in his salvific arrival than in his brethren's. Through God's non-verbal communication, Moses is redirected to "another horizon of desire."[183] Through the reception of the disappointing news that he was not going to reach the earthly promised land, "Moses achieves a new force of language:"[184] to reach the heart of the people before his death. Rashi explains that God's desire for departure of the righteous one is intended for their purification, the relinquishing of their needs, and the reactive immersion in the needs

181. Ibid., 150.

182. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, "Commentary on Deuteronomy," ed. Morris Rosenbaurn and Abraham Maurice Silbermann, *Serafia*, Last Accessed in April 2023, https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Deuteronomy.2.16?lang=bi&with=About&lang2=en.

183. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Moses: A Human Life*, 182.

184. Ibid.

of the community. Deuteronomy is the attainable language from Moses' heart to his people's. In Moses' new way of speech, with which he is not troubled to undermine his authority, he conveys that in his humanity he did not fully comprehend all experiences. Moses dares to reveal that in the process of accompanying the people, he himself struggled with self-centred prayer, represented by the desire of his own crossing over of River Jordan. Despite him being a teacher, he now publicly reveals subjection to a continuous learning process. This teaches that the bearing of witness to the truth does not require full possession and ownership of it.[185]

In this new way of speaking, which is differentiated from the speeches in Exodus that ratified God's dictation, Moses encounters his identity. In his attempt to attend to the interior needs of his directees, he draws closer to answering the question "Who am I?" From being fearful because of his heavy tongue, he now engages his people in a poem-like discourse overflowing with honesty, vulnerability, and love. Towards the end of Deuteronomy, Moses says, "God has not given you a heart to know, or eyes to see, or ears to hear until this day" (Deut 29:3). This does not only point towards the people's own moral responsibility, but also to their reception of God's love through their senses. It is only through the latter that every person may live up to the vocation to reciprocate their love to God. This encourages relentless spiritual development, to which Moses adhered. Vulnerability marked his own development in his nurturing and companionship attributes, and also in his own being, filled with outstanding humility in being "attuned to the call of the Other."[186]

185. Ibid., 180-170.

186. Ibid., 187.

3.4 Spiritual Companionship Lessons

3.4.1 Transference

"Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." This is what Jesus had to say in John 5:45-46, which sheds light on the inherited misplaced projection on Moses. With this in mind, the notion of transference and countertransference will be delved into in the awareness that any kind of help-oriented relationship may, at some point, involve the unconscious transmission of emotions and fantasies between all involved parties.[187] These projections of impulses very often echo past emotions. Transference has the potential of being both fruitful and destructive to the therapeutic alliance. Thus, awareness of such a phenomenon is key in the companion's efforts to help directees.[188]

Sigmund Freud, being one of the early observers of this occurrence, reported that considerable progress in many of his neurotic patients was witnessed in those who developed an attraction to their analyst. He identifies this phenomenon as a repetition of feelings from the patients' most influential persons in their life, predominantly from the childhood period. Transferential emotions are generally evoked by the helper's responses.[189]

There are three kinds of transference:

1. Positive: referring to the clients' projection of pleasant components of previous

187. Ronald Lloyd Iverson, "Moved to Tears by Divine Presence: Sacred Experiencing, Transference, and Self-Development" (Doctorate of Philosophy Dissertation in Clinical Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute, August 15, 2008), 338-339.

188. Melissa Madeson, "Transference vs Countertransference in Therapy," Positive Psychology, Published February 5, 2022, https://positivepsychology.com/countertransference-and-transference.

189. Antonio Moreno, "Depth Psychology, Transference and Spirituality," *The Linacre Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (November 1991), 78-79.

relationships onto the helper, often characterised with positive perception of the analyst;

2. Negative: taking place when the projected feelings are undesirable and hostile towards the other party, triggered by an unconscious reminder of uninvited connections with the past; and

3. Sexual: communicated by a sense of intimacy, reverence, and sexual attraction towards the helper.[190]

Even though the last two categories may give the impression that they are damaging to the relationship, all kinds of transference, if attendeded to, have the potential of bearing fruit. This is realised when the communicated emotions are brought up in discussion, through which service recipients are encouraged to get in touch with their emotional responses. This may help the person to journey from directionless emotional repetition towards a purposeful recollection of emotions. In fact, Freud refers to transference as the best tool to cure a neurosis as it exposes both parties to the real battlefield of the mind: "The cure does not occur unless the transference is resolved and the energy of the libido channelled elsewhere, to normal objects."[191]

Referring to spiritual oriented ministries, Jung confirms the occurrence of transference in these kinds of activities as the individual experiences penetrate the psychic background and may easily activate contact with the unconscious.[192] Many times the spiritual direction alliance is one-sided, meaning that it is generally the directee who discloses experiences and communicates feelings with the director. Seekers who did not have sufficient affirmation and

190. Melissa Madeson, "Transference vs Countertransference in Therapy"

191. Antonio Moreno, "Depth Psychology, Transference and Spirituality," 78-79.

192. Ibid., 82.

support in their past may come to realise "a deep need for unconditional acceptance."[193] The latter may be portrayed in at least two ways: either through idolisation in the companion or through holding back out of fear of betrayal or judgement.[194] With this in mind, prospective companions should thrive towards realising the presence of these unconscious assimilations communicated in the here-and-now of the directee, and be gently present whilst addressing these issues. Having someone listening to their stories may help directees acknowledge restoration through spiritual companionship, which will also result in healing their relationship with God, the ultimate and perfect listener.

193. Allison Ricciardi, "Can Transference Occur In Spiritual Direction?"

194. Ibid.

3.4.2 Countertransference

As observed earlier, the burden of the people's grumbling and lifestyles took a toll on Moses. This resulted in various reactions with which the Pentateuchal character expressed his emotions, such as the breaking of the tablets, the need to unveil his face, and self-centred prayer. Jung once said that "the doctor is as much 'in the analysis' as the patient. He is equally a part of the psychic process of treatment and therefore equally exposed to the transforming influences."[195]

This draws out the importance that transference is a mutual process and actively involves the helper. Thus, if the directees' influence on the companion remains unconscious it would be difficult for the latter to perceive the encountered other in true light due to a gap in consciousness. Jungian views, as opposed to traditional psychoanalysis, suggest that projection from the helpers' side may not only be a reaction to the clients' transference; it can also originate independently in their own psyche. This makes one realise that spiritual companionship, just like any other help-oriented forum, is a vulnerable space to both the companion and the directee given that they are both engaging their very own selves throughout the whole process. Similarly, Spiegelman realises that both parties in the alliance are ultimately striving towards achieving the common goals of a positive therapeutic alliance, self-realisation, and wholeness.[196]

The Hebrews' idolisation of sensible objects and persons was reflected upon earlier on. Similar to Jung's 'Archetypical Transference', which points towards occurrences when

195. Carl Gustav Jung, "On the psychology of the unconscious" in *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (1966): 72. Quoted in Ronald Lloyd Iverson, "Moved to Tears by Divine Presence: Sacred Experiencing, Transference, and Self-Development." (Doctorate of Philosophy Dissertation in Clinical Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute, August 15, 2008), 378.

196. Ronald Lloyd Iverson, "Moved to Tears by Divine Presence: Sacred Experiencing, Transference, and Self-Development," 378-380.

patients attribute divine projections onto the analyst, Caruso speaks about the 'Christ Archetype'. His warning is to not fall into the trap of trying to save the encountered other, prompted by the longing for heavenly conditions. While there may be times that directees project redemptive attributes onto their companions, they must be aware not to give in to these expectations due to various potential dangers, one of which being the feeling of being more helpful than God himself in certain scenarios, especially in the practicalities. Jung attributes this God-almightiness trait to Nietzsche, who according to the former, was a spiritual being who mistakenly ended up killing god in the attempt to become one.[197] No one is immune to this temptation. Similarly, St John of the Cross passionately warns directors about the mentioned potential harm. It is believed that he was quite harsh with persons believing they were privileged with distinctive revelations by God. Companions are encouraged by Moses' awareness of sins, emotions, and self-centred motives to attend to their self-righteousness and pride by fostering obedience and humility.[198]

In spite of the probable harm by these emotionally driven reactions, countertransference, like transference, has the opportunity to lead towards growth. Given that companionship as an action revolves around the helper's relationship with God, Ruffing holds that companions should refrain from feeding transference. Self-awareness is considered a virtue and a prerequisite to all persons aspiring to offer companioning: "the more self-aware one is the more present one can be in the exchange."[199] Well-meaning motives are not enough. They must be complemented with "psychological health and emotional maturity"[200] so that

197. Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology & Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 103.

198. Antonio Moreno, "Depth Psychology, Transference and Spirituality," 80-83.

199. Ted Bowman, "Spirituality and countertransference: Individual and systemic considerations," *Death Studies* 41, No. 3, Doi: 10.1080/07481187.2016.1236851, 158.

200. Allison Ricciardi, "Can Transference Occur In Spiritual Direction?"

sound alliance can be beneficial to the recipient. Spiritual companionship requires dual-awareness: the attention of what is happening on the outside and interiorly during such processing. With reference to the first chapter of this dissertation, supervision is once again considered vital in this regard as it encourages the recognition of the companions' feelings, which in return provokes more realisation of transferential responses.[201]

Moses' relentless obedience and his resolution to write Deuteronomy shed light on his love towards the people. Moreno points to the notion of love that must accompany transferential projections: "the mutual encounter of director and the directed transforms both, and direction without love is sterile."[202] Louf reminds the reader of the love brought about by the 'third dimension' in spiritual companionship. This third dimension, which points towards God as the ultimate source that nourishes the encounter of companionship, brings alive the belief that where two or three gather in Jesus' name, he is in their midst (Mt 18:2). With this added dimension, Louf opposes Freud's belief that transference is the ultimate healing agent in therapeutic alliances.[203] Louf emphasises that Jesus, in whose name direction is gathered, is the ultimate healer. He "is able to overcome the pitfalls of transfer, however subtle they might be, and enables us to benefit as much as possible from the transfer, because the Lord is always 'greater than the heart' (1 Jn 3:20) of man."[204]

201. Ted Bowman, "Spirituality and countertransference: Individual and systemic considerations."

202. Antonio Moreno, "Depth Psychology, Transference and Spirituality," 82.

203. André Louf, *Grace Can Do More: Spiritual Accompaniment and Spiritual Growth* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 67-74.

204. Ibid., 74.

3.4.3 A Relentless Wounded Journey towards Perfection

Wounded healers must not only attend to their own unceasing vulnerabilities, they must be at the disposal of others during their healing process. This shows that the loneliness of companions is especially painful for they encounter the added weight of others.[205] Despite glimpses of revelation and healing, sooner or later, the Christian seeker discovers that faith does not take away loneliness. This is the story of Exodus as portrayed by the author in Deuteronomy and this is the present-day story. If both companions and directees live up to the expectation that their encounter with each other is a remedy to loneliness, the spiritual companionship ministry would not be beneficial to the involved parties. A journey of liberation can only commence after both individuals in the alliance stop preventing themselves from claiming their own pain.

3.4.3.1 Self-Transcendence

Karl Rahner illustrates that the human subject as a 'spirit in the world' has the capacity to distinguish between spiritual and material objects within the concept of self.[206] This is a process developed by the realisation that there are realities outside the concept of self; consequently, the tangible self-form is recognised as a limited creature in need of the Whole. Luigi Rulla builds on this argument by stating that the human psyche can be divided into three mechanisms:

1. The physiological state: that reacts to survival needs through hunger, thirst, and sleep;
2. The psycho-social state: through which one tries to relate with their

205. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Societies*, 87-88.

206. Karl Rahner, "Spirit in the World," in *Depth Psychology and Vocation: A Psycho-Social Perspective*, Luigi Rulla, Roma: Editrice Pont. Universitá Gregoriana; Chicago: Loyola University Press, 2003, 29.

surroundings and engage in meaningful connections to satisfy the need to be nurtured and loved; and

3. The rational state: referring to the human potential to grasp law and abstract concepts to develop scientific progress.[207]

The latter, which according to Rulla determines the main difference between humanity and other creatures, elevates humanity as an intelligent creation. It is the means through which one can comprehend immeasurable dimensions that do not necessarily exist in time and space. Here virtues that "transcend the limits of immediate facts and the material process" are encountered.[208] Many times the aforementioned states are intertwined and lead one to react to a need caused by a deficit of something in life. However, accessible solutions in the here-and-now do not always mean that they are the ultimate or adequate responses. The 'sense judgement' that operates in the physiological and psychosocial states, trigger the system to act on an emotional pull toward or away from an object based on whether it is considered desirable or not. 'Reflective judgement', conversely, stimulates a person to transcend from emotional to rational wanting. Despite the sense judgement's attraction to satisfy a need with immediacy, the reflective inspires a discernment on whether the consumption of such an attraction would be harmful or damaging. The latter provides humanity with the potential to transcend the concept of self, enabling the journey from the structured actual self towards the ideal structure of self.[209] This is the perpetual journey of spiritual companionship. This is the perpetual journey of wounded healing.

207. Luigi Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation: A Psycho-Social Perspective* (Roma: Editrice Pont. Universitá Gregoriana; Chicago: Loyola University Press, 2003), 26-35.

208. Ibid., 30.

209. Ibid., 30-35.

Lonergan categorises this ongoing journey of oscillating between these self-structures as the 'already transcended self' and the 'transcending self'. The latter is composed of virtues and attitudes longed to be attained according to one's beliefs and role expectations constructed by the societal system. On the other hand, the 'already transcended' has the capacity to either resist growth or mature.[210] Maturation, a virtue infinite in nature, draws one closer to wholeness. Viktor Frankyl says that humanity is never satisfied with its searching for meaning and any person within help-oriented ministries who misses the encountered others' need to embark on this relentless journey of exploration would further fuel restlessness. Physiological goals like happiness and pleasure are merely by-product responses that flourish from greater ambitions, infinite in nature.

3.4.3.2 Towards Perfection

St Gregory of Nyssa refers to this same process as 'perfection', to which Moses has been identified by this Church Father as "our example… to know the perfect life for men."[211] "*The Life of Moses*" is in fact a treatise with which Gregory tried to answer a spiritual friend seeking to attain a perfect life. Such a quest was raised at the times of the Alexandrian school, which immersed students in "the beauty of the style of Plato."[212] The perception of Ancient Greece at that time used to consider perfection as immoveable. Yet Gregory, in order to best answer his question, came up with a novel interpretation of perfection: that of being "not marked off by limits,"[213] moving "from glory to glory" (1 Cor 3:18). This concept of everlasting ascent is broadly known as Gregory of Nyssa's theory of *epektasis/epekteinomenos*,

210. Bernard Lonergan. *Method Theology* (London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd., 1972), 237-244; "Self-Transcendence", in *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 131-134.

211. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 33.

212. Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, "Intellectual Life," in *The Times of Saint Gregory of Nyssa as Reflected in the Letters and the Contra Eunomium* (The Catholic University of America Press: Washingtom, D. C., 1947), 115.

213. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 31.

a Greek derived word that Pope Benedict XVI describes as the stretching out of oneself towards that which is better.[214]

Gregory continues to state that this kind of perfection is unattainable and that it is beyond his power to encompass such a subject with both words and deeds. God's perfect nature is goodness and "the one limit of virtue is the absence of a limit."[215] It is because of this that participants in this virtue must embark on this journey towards perfection. The unattainability should not be a discouraging factor. Conversely, it must hearten one to "acquire as much [perfection] as possible."[216] The Church Father urges the faithful to live up to their 'Christian' identity if they dare share the "dignity"[217] of his name: by imitating him, orienting themselves toward him, and uniting with him.[218] This echoes Jesus' commandment to "be perfect, just as [our] heavenly father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Naturally, the question that follows is 'how can one imitate God and as much as possible attain this unattainable virtue?' It is here that Gregory redirects the directee's gaze upon the life of Moses: "Scripture… guides [us] again to the harbour of the divine will."[219] He explains that one needs the "subtlety of understanding and keenness of vision to discern from the history how, by removing ourselves from… the Egyptians… we shall embark on the blessed life."[220]

214. Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily during the General Audience Mass, Rome*, 9 September 2007.

215. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 31.

216. Ibid.

217. Mary Emily Keenan, "De Professione Christiana and De Perfectione: A Study of the Ascetical Doctrine of Saint Gregory of Nyssa*" Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 5, (1950): 183.

218. Stephen M. Meawad, "Spiritual Struggle and Gregory of Nyssa's Theory of Perpetual Ascent: An Orthodox Christian Virtue Ethic" (Electronic Doctoral Dissertation, Duquesne Scholarship Collection, Duquesne University, 2019) 103.

219. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 32.

220. Ibid., 33.

Spiritual seekers should face their Egypt and all the traits inherited outside the Egyptian parameters in their journey towards the Promised Land. Exodus from Egypt, the Desert, and the Sinai experiences are not merely outside journeys, but rather internal ones. Through inward journeys one can "come to know that being alive means being loved."[221] Companionship should not revolve around the removal of discomfort, rather it should provide a space in which directees stop running from wounds and accept them "as an expression of the basic human condition."[222] Here is where wounded healing reaches its objective, of being a source of healing, in the awareness of shared pain. For the process to reach this stage, companions must withdraw from themselves "to make room for the other" just as Moses had to withdraw himself from selfish desires. In withdrawing, creation comes to being. God, through a withdrawal process, created something that was not himself and the other was born. "On the human level, withdrawal of myself aids the other to come into being."[223] Common wounds lead to common hopes and shared explorations, resulting in a place where communities can be built. Communal voyages do not promise painless paths, yet aspire to bring about the consciousness of God-with-us (Immanuel).[224] Companions should challenge themselves not to continue hardening their hearts in their own experiences of desert (Meribah and Massah). Moreover, they should direct their gaze to the works of the Lord. In quoting Psalm 95:7, Nouwen says that ultimately wounded healing is the ever-living proclamation that the coming of the Lord is not found in complete healing, in the past or the future, but in the present.[225] Similarly, Pope Francis reflects

221. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Societies*, 98.

222. Ibid., 99.

223. Ibid., 97.

224. André Louf, *Grace Can Do More: Spiritual Accompaniment and Spiritual Growth*, 38.

225. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Societies*, 102.

that the Church available to the service of others, is representative of God's presence at present.[226]

3.5 Synopsis

Chapter three has touched on the remaining significant experiences of Exodus, mainly dealing with trying times in the desert and Mount Sinai. Moses' attempts of mediation between God and the people have been studied. Such mediation was not without failures and frailties. A reflection on elements from the book of Deuteronomy has helped to better delve into these vulnerabilities, which enabled a growing awareness of Moses' humanity. Resonating with these experiences, this chapter has elicited spiritual companionship insights of transference and countertransference, as well as the perpetual journey of wounded healing. The latter comprises of a relentless voyage between the already-transcended towards the not-yet-transcended concept of self, to which the Pentateuchal character of Moses had ample lessons to teach readers to make the most of their present times so as to better serve their surrounding communities.

226. Pope Francis, *Closing Mass for the 43th World Youth Day*, Panama, 27 January 2019.

Summary and Conclusion

Pope Benedict XVI, on his visit to Mount Nebo where it is believed that Moses had been shown the promised land, said that the journey of Exodus from slavery towards freedom takes place every day in the life of the Christian seeker, for the temptations to spiritual regression are equally enduring.[227] It is because of this that the Church ceaselessly needs the sacrifice of mediators between God and the rest of the people. Just like the experience of Hebrews out of Egypt, Christians are still not always "able to understand the mystery of an invisible God, and therefore produce a comprehensible god, which corresponds to their ideas and their projects."[228] Through the role of Moses, the gift of God's mercy is once again manifested to the people, "revealing that God's desire is always salvation."[229] This requires the mediating people to accept taking on Moses' role to be both truthful and hopeful: 1) truthful to admitting spiritual compromises that hinder the journey to transcend towards perfection, and 2) hopeful to offer the unyielding possibility to return to God's grace after such hinderances.[230] This kind of merciful love reaches its culmination of expression in the last chapters of Exodus (34:7) with the attribution of the word *'Hesed'* to God. It reveals commitment to loyalty to both natural kinship (Gen 24:49; 47:29) and covenant relationship (Gen 21:23; 1 Sam 20:8). Even though it elicits expectation of reciprocal loyalty (Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8), God never tires of keeping his loving covenant without fail with his children (Deut 7:9). This is indeed "foundational to the New Testament doctrine of grace."[231]

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227. Pope Benedict XVI, *Pilgrimage of His Holiness Benedict XVI To the Holy Land (8-15 May 2009)*, Mount Nebo, 9 May 2009.

228. Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily during the General Audience Mass,* Rome, 1 June 2011.

229. Ibid.

230. Ibid.

231. Scott W. Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: EXODUS*, 62.

"Moses was in human terms a failure."[232] He lacked self-worth and at times, he was violent and fearful of injustice. Pope Francis encourages any person with these traits to realise that they share the same frailties of Moses. The Holy Father adds that everyone should seek to imitate Moses in his outstretched hand towards God, the bridge between heaven and earth, in the awareness that the world, "despite all its frailties… still belongs to God."[233] Through these inadequate yet interceding individuals who take on the role of Moses, "the world lives and thrives."[234]

Both mentioned Papal reflections summarise what I attempted to discover about Wounded Healing aspects in the figure of Moses whilst drawing out insights that are relevant to the Church today, particularly through the role of spiritual companionship.

Chapter 1 commenced the argumentation by emphasising the importance of getting to know the environment within which spiritual companionship takes place. In secular psychosocial help-oriented sessions, individuals are perceived as 'persons-in-environment'. This outlook aids the helper to make sense of the encountered person by carefully taking into consideration the "interdependence of phenomena in affecting, changing, and sustaining" oneself.[235] I propose that this is equally important to take into account in the spiritual companionship ministry. As a reaction to this, insights related to active listening were studied. The director's response to God's calling were then reflected upon. Just as Moses reacted in front of the Burning Bush, the companion's responses may also be impulsive and doubtful. In view of this, this dissertation stressed the importance for spiritual companions to understand

232. Pope Francis, *Homily during the General Audience Mass,* Library of the Apostolic Palace, 17 June 2020.

233. Ibid.

234. Ibid.

235. David Green and Fiona McDermott, "Social Work from Inside and Between Complex Systems: Perspectives on Person-in-Environment for Today's Social Work," *The British Journal of Social Work* 40, no. 8 (2010): 2416.

and address their pain, through which they can get to know their unconscious biases towards helping others. This teaches companions that the motives towards taking on help-oriented roles are often triggered by rather imperfect objectives. I propose that these motives should not discourage spiritual companions, but rather they must do their utmost to be aware of how their biases and experiences can impinge on their service. It is because of this that I highlighted the importance of activities promoting self-care, among which the value of supervision was prioritised.

Chapter 2 delved into incomprehensible realities that directees encounter from time to time and the importance of a companion who remains present in the midst of unbearable painful experiences. Harmful experiences either come about unexpectedly or as a result of mistaken decisions. It was further argued that the principle of self-determination must be highly valued by spiritual companions in their directees. Here the sustaining presence of companions is equally important if guidance is still sought in freedom. It was reflected that this might be a humbling and painful journey for the companion. Nevertheless, such humility while waiting for change is the most powerful tool in light of the pain of the other. An important process that both parties in the companioning alliance must endure is questioning. Questions are very often masked by pain and their endurance makes one acknowledge deeper interior wounds. The notion of apologetics is beneficial in other ministries of faith. However, in the spiritual accompaniment journey, such responses as a reaction to questions masked by the directees' pain, might give the impression that the companion would want to divert from the directee's experience of agony. Thus, the companion's role here is to help in the articulation of questions and to progress to the ultimate process of questioning: the living of the questions. The vital function of mediating between God and the people was also reflected upon. Among the mediating tools that were discussed in this dissertation, intercession was mentioned. I found that literature about intercession in relation to spiritual companionship is considerably limited.

This notion of intercession should be given additional importance in spiritual companionship literature due to its vital value to present the directees' needs to the Lord in prayer. By this, companions would be partaking in Jesus' role as the ultimate intercessor who mediates between His beloved Church and the Father.[236]

In Chapter 3 the argumentation progressed to desert experiences: spaces and times in which Christians must foster dependence upon the Lord. They are the common ground in which both the companion and the accompanied unite in their journey towards the Promised Land. These experiences do not do away with discomfort and temptation for both alliance parties, yet they provide them with the word of God in preparation for full communion with Him. It is the journey towards perfection in which spiritual companions are deprived of seeing the Lord's face and, at the same time, they have to unveil their face to the directees. This ever-vulnerable place urges companions to continuously go through a process of self-transcendence by digging deeper into the interior life, so that their wounds remain an available font from which others may find healing. The dissertation reflected on how Deuteronomy sheds light on the honest autobiographical unheard and vulnerable humanity of Moses, and how this became an ever-growing catechesis. Following this realisation, I recommend that more studies should take place to further discover the art of self-disclosure in the spiritual companioning activity, and how this, if used appropriately according to the needs of the directees, can serve to be an indispensable font of inspiration and healing.

"The sacraments of the Old Testament… were types of Christ who was to come."[237] This quote by St Augustine concludes the dissertation, in the realisation that in Moses there are

236. Pope Francis, *Homily during the General Audience Mass, Rome*, 28 May 2014.

237. Augustine, "Against Faustus," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume IV. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 244.

ample lessons also learnt from Jesus, the ultimate spiritual companion[238] and Wounded Healer (1 Pet 2:24).[239] Through the "pattern of beauty [of] the life of the great Moses… perfection was [made] possible." This "highest mount of perfection" as reached by Moses, made it attainable to the rest of humanity. This should indeed hearten Christian seekers and servants to continue embarking on this journey of perfection by imitating Moses in letting themselves being known by and drawn to God, and enter a loving and faithful relationship with the Lord,[240] the ultimate meaning of the Exodus experience (Exod 3:18).

238. Pope Francis, *Homily during the Morning Mass in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, Rome,* 26, April 2020.

239. Richard B. Patterson, *In Search of the Wounded Healer: A Helping Professional's Guide to Inner Resources,* 5.

240. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses (Classics of Western Spirituality)*, 136-137.

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