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Seven Pastoral Principles for a Hospital Chaplain

Mario Attard

Introduction

Hospital chaplaincy is both a challenging and an exciting experience of ministry. In this paper I shall be presenting and explaining seven pastoral principles which my pastoral experience helped me understand formulate, and integrate to consolidate my pastoral identity as a hospital chaplain. I shall support my explanation of these principles with pastoral encounters I had both locally and abroad. In referring to specific pastoral encounters, I have changed the patients and their family names so as to maintain their confidentiality.

1. *Respect*

My first pastoral principle is: *I consider every person to be a child of God and therefore deserves total respect for her/his own individuality, personhood, and decisions.*

Every patient is a unique human being with her/his own life story, family background, belief system, and life values. This sacred and unrepeatable uniqueness of the human person calls for a universal respect for the patient. As a matter of fact, the very first right which the *Declaration on the promotion of the Patients' rights in Europe* states: "everyone has the right to respect of his or her person as a human being".¹ This right is completely endorsed by my Catholic Christian legacy. My faith informs me that every human person is created in God's divine image. Even when we separated ourselves from God, through the person of Jesus Christ not only were we saved, but we were also made sharers of eternal life. Therefore, our own dignity "rests ... on the fact that [we are] called to communion with God."²

1. World Health Organization. *A Declaration on the Promotion of Patients' rights in Europe*. Right 1.1. Retrieved 9 November, 2006, from http://www.who.int/genomics/public/eu_declaration1994.pdf
2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27. Retrieved 9 November, 2006, from <http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p1s1c1.htm#1>

Gerard Egan presents respect as one of the foundational qualities for an effective helper. In Egan's view, competent helpers are those who harbour respect for their clients. In other words, "to be basically "for" them and communicate this in a variety of ways: by working hard with their clients, by maintaining confidentiality, by refraining from manipulation, by respecting their clients' values even when they differ from their own, and by prizing the self-responsibility of those they are helping."³ Thus, respect is the underlying disposition which frees both the helper and the client. The former is freed from the messiah complex, that is "a psychological state in which the individual believes him/herself to be, or is destined to become, the saviour of the particular field, a group, an event, a time period, or in worse case scenario, the world".⁴ In the case of the pastor this may evidence itself in the belief that the pastor knows better what the patient should do. On the other hand, the patient with a messiah complex would perceive that there would be little or no point in sharing with the pastor what is troubling her/him.

My pastoral experience taught me that respect for other people also includes responding sensitively to their present emotional state and respecting their personal choices. A case in point is my visit to Elizabeth. Her diagnosis read that she was suffering from cervical disk herniation. Being a mother of a two-year-old daughter, she told me that she was really missing her daughter as well as her husband. Elizabeth's surgery was the day before my visit. Visiting her I could sense how tired she was. Her silent and pale look helped me to understand that recovery for Elizabeth was still in its early stages. In my interaction with her I felt that she was disappointed that her recovery was not as quick as she had been envisaging before the operation. When a doctor interrupted to carry out more tests on Elizabeth, I calmly excused myself and left. After visiting four patients I went back to her to see how she was doing. Elizabeth with a low yet strong voice told me: "Sorry. I can't talk much. I have a sour taste in my throat from the surgery." At that moment I realised that it was time for me to take my leave and allow her to rest.

From this pastoral visit I learned that whilst it is true that as a pastoral carer I "[must] be open to all people who need [my] care and [my] time, acknowledging that they have the right to [my] services,"⁵ I had also the duty to respect their individual

3. G. Egan, *The Skilled Helper*, Brooks/Cole, Belmont ²1982, 36-37.

4. Wikipedia, *Messianic complex*, Retrieved 9 November, 2006, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messianic_complex.

5. St Vincents & Mater Health Sydney, *Going the extra mile. Annual Review 2005-2006*, 1.

choices. That day Elizabeth taught me how to be for her by not being with her. The experience of visiting Elizabeth helped me comprehend that as a pastoral minister I can best respect other patients when I “befriend [their] true self and discover that it is good and beautiful”.⁶

2. Faithfulness

My second pastoral principle is: *Being available and faithful to my ministry.*

Availability is the healthy balance of being with others and at the same time respecting their space in which they can grow. Robert J. Wicks’ remarkable insight cannot go unnoticed on this matter. Being available to others also means “not endlessly worrying about [them] so that our personal tension rises to the point that we are overloaded and have no energy to care about anything or anyone anymore.”⁷

When I succeeded in finding my pastoral middle way between letting the patients know that I am there for them and concurrently not becoming obsessed in helping them at all costs certainly made my pastoral ministry flowing gently and faithfully. The first episode that comes to my mind are the visits I paid to Julian. This forty-four year old man was suffering from a recurrent brain tumour. Within the space of three weeks I visited Julian eight times. Most of the time I used to find Julian sitting on the armchair watching TV. He preferred to leave it on during our conversations. I respected his preference. Our conversations centred on the shock he felt when he discovered that he had a brain tumour, on how much he was missing his children and the manner by which he was coping with his situation. I was truly amazed by Julian’s courage. Although from time to time he would forget some words, he never gave up on holding a conversation with me. If he missed the word I would supply it for him. Furthermore, I was struck by the number of issues that we shared within a five-minute visit. Within this apparent limited time frame, Julian managed to talk about different topics from his life story. Bit by bit, every visit turned out to be a follow up on the previous one as well as a brief prelude to a new chapter in this long yet interesting emotional and spiritual journey.

6. Nouwen, H., *The Inner Voice of Love, A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom*, Doubleday, New York 1996, 49.

7. Wicks, R. J. *Availability ... The problem and the Gift*, Paulist Press, Mahwah 1986, 42.

Reflecting back on the way I ministered to this patient I learned that through my empathic responses Julian not only became aware of “[his] freedom to choose an attitude toward his life situation”,⁸ but also to nurture and let it grow within him.

Visiting a patient for a long time is not always a pleasant journey. There are times when it is really difficult to keep journeying with the person. This may occur due to a multiplicity of factors that the person concerned does not have any control over. A tangible example is that of Peter who was diagnosed with Lumbar occlusion. In the nine visits I paid to him I noticed how many different hardships this patient was experiencing. Besides the physical discomfort of his back, Peter had to put up with huge emotional instability. He felt he had been given false reassurances that he would be going home soon. Coming from the country, Peter had no family in the city. He just came here for treatment. Peter used to pass his days practically isolated in his own room. Visiting him I could feel his enormous loneliness and isolation. He helped me realise that “when a person is sick ...[s/]he is absorbed into a new inner strange personal land of mystery, lostness, isolation and dependence.”⁹ Peter allowed me to reach out to him as a friend. While sharing with me about how he was feeling he became interested in my pastoral work. Without compromising my pastoral integrity, I orientated my pastoral relationship with him in terms of “reciprocity of care, encouragement, love, ... support, ... [and] trust.”¹⁰

Exciting as it can be, I learned that a faithful pastoral availability is solely possible when it leaves the patient with the full control of the situation. Given the nature of long-term visits, it is easy for these visits to develop into a friendship. It is essentially important for me as a pastor to be aware of the delicate nature of these visits. The best way I can minister to people like Peter is to keep a constant eye on such relationships by taking them to pastoral supervision. This will save me as well as the patient I serve from any ambiguities while assuring “that the visits continue to be pastoral.”¹¹

8. Gerald R. Niklas and Charlotte Stefanics, *Ministry to the Hospitalized*, Paulist Press, New York 1975, 17.
9. N. Autton, *A Handbook of Sick Visiting*, Mowbray, Oxford 1981, 17.
10. N. J. Ramsay, *Pastoral diagnosis. A resource for ministries of care and counselling*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1998, 122.
11. Glen Kofler *et al.*, *Handbook For Ministers of Care*, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago²1997, 41.

3. Compassionate companion

My third pastoral principle is: *Being a compassionate companion to the person through open and attentive listening and presence.*

Listening is foundational within the pastoral relationship. It builds a warming and trusting rapport between the pastoral carer and the person in distress. By using the reflective empathic listening skill, the pastoral person tries to “listen to *feelings* (as well as words) including feelings that are between the lines, too painful to trust to words.”¹² From its nature the pastoral encounter calls for a verbal and/or nonverbal response, depending on the situation involved. The pastor gives her/his response to what was being communicated before by the person/s in crisis. The spiritual carer listens intently so as to facilitate the person’s self-disclosure of thoughts and feelings. By “reflecting on the person’s feelings or thoughts [the pastoral carer] helps [her/] him to gain insight into [herself/] himself and how s/[he] is ... cop[ing] with [her/] his situation realistically”.¹³

Feedback from patients has taught me that when unconditional positive regard¹⁴ is coupled with intent listening and empathic responses, people experience me as a compassionate presence to them.

The first story I want to present in this regard is that of Brian and Susan. After many attempts, Susan managed to have a child, Patrick, through artificial insemination. Everything seemed to fare well during the pregnancy until the devastating news that Patrick was born with severe internal malfunctions. Consultants told Brian and Susan that it would be a miracle if Patrick survived more than six months. One can only imagine the anger, frustration and grief this couple went through. Two days after I baptised Patrick, I went to visit Brian and Susan in the Post-Natal ward. Susan was located in the very last room of the ward.

12. H. Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling*. Abingdon Press, Nashville 1984, 75.

13. Gerald R. Niklas and Charlotte Stefanics. *Ministry to the Hospitalized*, 11.

14. For Carl Rogers unconditional positive regard occurs when “the therapist communicates to his client a deep and genuine caring for him as a person with potentialities, a caring uncontaminated by evaluations of his thoughts, feelings, or behaviours.”C/R. Rodgers(ed.), *The Therapeutic relationship and its impact*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1967, 102.

It was an extremely emotional pastoral visit. The couple were grieving the loss of Patrick in different ways. Brian cried a lot during the visit. He was very much in touch with his own feelings of deprivation, unfairness, frustration, disappointment, anger, guilt, uncertainty, and hopelessness. He was grieving his lost opportunity to be a father of a healthy child.

With Brian I worked by picking up these feelings and reflecting them back to him through empathic responses. The underlying message that I was conveying to him was to “let [him] know that [I was] *trying* to understand [his] inner world of meanings and feelings.”¹⁵ I sense that Brian felt that I was with him during the conversation, in that he was not only able to express his feelings but to also encourage Susan to speak as well.

This pastoral visit taught me that grief has its process to undergo. Important as they can be, empathic responses are not the exclusive mode of ministering to people living through tough times. I learned this hard lesson when I tried to minister to Susan. Since “grief is a complex emotion,”¹⁶ it was very hard for her to articulate her shock, frustration, grief, anger and fear. I was hoping that my empathic responses would “lance [Susan’s] psychic wound, permitting the poison of [her] pent-up feelings to drain off.”¹⁷ But healing cannot be rushed. It just needs to take its time. This is when it is important to be with the persons, wherever they are, and not to assume to know what they might be feeling. Thus, this challenging pastoral encounter taught me that “the gift of time, and presence and shared agony is the best support.”¹⁸ I could offer to Brian and Susan during their life crisis.

4. Making spiritual assessment

My fourth pastoral principle is: *Making available spiritual resources, which best support and respect the religious and spiritual sensitivities of the person in distress.*

Irrespective of her/his own belief system, every person is engaged consciously

15. Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 76.

16. Jackson, E. N. *The Many Faces of Grief*, Abingdon, Nashville 1977, 11.

17. Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 76.

18. R. A Steward, ‘When the Patient Is a Woman’, in S.E. Cheston & R.J. Wicks(eds.), *Essentials For Chaplains*, Paulist Press, Mahwah 1993, 133.

or unconsciously in a life long journey of searching for “the meaning of [her/] his own existence.”¹⁹ For that matter, s/he “has the right to have his or her ... religious and philosophical convictions respected.”²⁰ As a pastoral companion I am called to accompany the people I encounter in my ministry by helping them tap into their spiritual resources or traditions in order for them to find meaning, to unite and assimilate challenging experiencing of illness, suffering and death. Spiritual assessment is a solid means through which I can better assist people in crisis to discover their own life answers or understandings. Spiritual assessment “is a ... careful review of the spiritual needs and resources of a person.”²¹ Anthony’s story illustrates how useful the spiritual assessment tool has been to my ministry.

During the four lengthy visits I paid to Anthony, the patient spoke a lot about his own spirituality. Being a genuine seeker, Anthony told me that he spent hours reading and reflecting about God. For Anthony there must be a God who is keeping the created world and its people going. The great prophets of the past, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed etc, were simply pointers to this holy and mysterious God. Anthony felt scandalised by his belief that the great religions of the world advocated the killing of people in God’s name. In Anthony’s perspective, God is harmony, peace and contentment not hatred, wars and destruction. Therefore Anthony could not align himself with any world religion. For him, world religions gave a very distorted idea of the divine.

Anthony’s experience of the holy made him “feel [spiritually] resourced”²² and socially responsible. The more the patient continued to “shar[e] a wealth of material about [himself]”²³ the more I apprehended that God is not an ethereal principle for Anthony. God is met in sound moral values that should govern humanity’s morality.

19. Vatican II: Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 41. Retrieved 11 November, 2006, from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

20. World Health Organization, *A Declaration on the Promotion of Patients’ rights in Europe*. Right 1.5. Retrieved 9 November, 2006, from http://www.who.int/genomics/public/eu_declaration1994.pdf.

21. Peter Fitchett, *The 7 x 7 Model For Spiritual Assessment: A Brief Introduction and Bibliography*. Retrieved 16 November, 2006, from <http://www.rushu.rushu.edu/rhvh/docs/intro%20v%204.pdf>

22. Lucas, A. M. ‘Introduction to The Discipline for pastoral care giving’ in L. VandeCreek & A. M. Lucas(eds.), *The Discipline for Pastoral Care Giving: Foundations for Outcome Oriented Chaplaincy*. The Haworth Pastoral Press, New York 2001, 11.

23. *Ibid.*, 9.

In Anthony's view, a firm morality is one that incorporates the following three tenets: (i) "Whatever you wish that [people] would do to you, do so to them" (Mt 7,12) (2) Take care of creation; and (3) Use your talents for the common good.

Anthony's comprehension of his relationship with a harmonious, creating and loving God gave him a meaning and a sense of vocation in life. Modelling his life on a creating God, Anthony understood that his vocation in life was that of preserving and developing what has been created by God's working hands. On the other hand, the patient was very much aware of his dependent rapport with the created natural world. Anthony's response to the ruthless manner by which the environment was being exploited, was to be responsible for his use of natural resources. He wanted to extend his caring responsibility even after his death. In fact, in his will he explicitly expressed his wish to be buried in the soil. He was convinced that his corpse would be of great benefit to the ground.

Anthony became very distressed when he realised that he would not sail in time to return to his family in New Caledonia. This meant that he and his wife's pension would be reduced by forty percent. Anthony noticed that he was running out of time. His immediate hope was that his medical tests would be finished in time for his return. His long-term hope was to regain his health. Since Anthony's hope had "its locus [in his personal] responsibility"²⁴ for his own health and well-being, he decided that it was wise to wait and get the results of his test.

Family was a foundational value for Anthony. In his perception, marriage was a "community of love"²⁵ which perfected and perpetuated life through the generation of children. He mentioned his wife quite often. He said that she used to visit him everyday. I imagined that she must have been giving him a lot of support. I sensed that since Anthony "trust[ed] in [the] relationship"²⁶ he had with her, he was more open to take risks in his situation.

In ministering to Anthony my "desired contributing outcome[...]"²⁷ of caring was that amid the uncertainty, frustration, fear and anger he was in, Anthony could see

24. *Ibid.*, 15.

25. Vatican II: Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 47, retrieved, 17 November, 2006, from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

26. *Ibid.*, 17.

27. *Ibid.*, 18.

in me a faithful, compassionate and effective God person. I hoped that my pastoral presence was helping him “deepen[] and extend[]”²⁸ his self while simultaneously enabling him to feel that “someone [was] car[ing] about [him], and that [he] [was] truly heard and supported”.²⁹

In order to alleviate Anthony’s emotional pain I formulated the following plan: (i) offering the patient the opportunity to talk about his views on spirituality; (ii) being a safe haven where his emotions are held and related with; (iii) encouraging him to find his own way of coping; and (iv) offering support for his wife.

My pastoral intervention with Anthony mainly consisted of “active listening to [his] personal sharing”.³⁰ Anthony welcomed my “nonjudgmental relationship”³¹ with him. He continued “to be open to [my] presence.”³² He made himself available to talk and expressed what was really relevant for him. The more I accepted him unconditionally, showed him hospitality, and validated his views, the more Anthony could explore his spirituality and start expressing his concerns regarding his illness and present life situation.

As his profile started to unfold, he realised that he had enough innate resources that would give him hope, meaning and adequate ways of coping. From time to time I would get feedback on my ministry from Anthony by asking him how the spiritual resources he had were truly helping him to give the best response he could to his current issues. Anthony always told me that he was feeling calmer about the whole matter.

Even if the plan did not work out thoroughly because I never got a chance to meet his wife, I felt that Anthony’s change would also have helped her, lessening her stress and giving her some hope too. The difference in Anthony’s life had undoubtedly been happening. Anthony’s personal comments to me just before leaving the hospital assured me of the effectiveness of my pastoral plan with him: “Thank you very much for everything you did for me. You have been such a help

28. N. J. Ramsay, *Pastoral diagnosis. A resource for ministries of care and counselling*, 122.

29. Lucas, ‘Introduction to The Discipline for pastoral care giving’, 20.

30. *Ibid.*, 24.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, 22.

to me". I was happy because I could see that my visits achieved their intended outcome: to be with Anthony in a caring and affirming way in order that he could draw his support from his spirituality and a supportive wife. The secret of my pastoral efficacy was in recognising that pastoral care was about the balanced continuum of "attending to the patient [and] 'doing something'",³³ that is a continuous, informing, challenging and supporting dialogue between action and reflection.

As my experience has demonstrated, assessing how to tap into the patient's spirituality and offer it back to her/him as a caring, respectful and loving invitation is vital for one's own entire healing. I also noticed that the relevance of my spiritual assessment remained useful if I kept checking with the patient the destination of the visits, that is to say, by being open, warming and available to Anthony. After all, "[my] 'person' [was my] primary 'tool' in both [my] intervening and assessing".³⁴

5. Working collaboratively

My fifth pastoral principle is: *Working collaboratively by making appropriate referrals to local religious leaders and faith communities and to other health professionals.*

One of the basic professional duties of pastoral care is our "commitment to the [patients'] best interest".³⁵ Through my pastoral experience I have found that the most productive approach in addressing the needs of people in crisis is by working with other health professionals. It is impossible for one profession alone to cater for the patient holistically. It must necessarily seek the helping hand and the insights of other specialised sciences. If pastoral care intends to live up to its ideal of "mak[ing] caring specific,"³⁶ collaboration is the attitude it must embrace and foster. As a Christian I strongly believe that each profession actively participates and renders present in our times a saving aspect of Jesus Christ. Pastoral care is salvific when it purifies its action through reflection. Pastoral care is "contemplative ... in

33. *Ibid.*, 29.

34. *Ibid.*, 28-29.

35. R. M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, Paulist Press, Mahwah 1994, 60

36. J.Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context. An introduction to Pastoral Care*, John Knox Press, Kentucky 1993, 138.

action”³⁷ when it not only detects what it can do but also by having the courage of identifying what it cannot do. It becomes authentically a servant when it empties itself from any imaginary presumption and control and humbly refers the person to those who can best respond to the person’s needs. In this way, pastoral care acts as one of “God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3, 9), ascertaining that every person’s right to receive the best available care.

The first time I worked hand in hand with other professionals was when I was journeying with Brian and Susan. From my very first visit I sensed that their story was too complicated for me to tackle on my own. When I talked to one of my fellow chaplains, he referred me to Joan, the Bereavement Midwife. She concurred with me that it made much more sense that both of us work together. We could enlighten each other’s work. For four months Joan and I met periodically to discuss, inspire and sustain each other in the journey we were undertaking with Brian and Susan. The feedback which Joan gave me helped me to better focus my pastoral intervention on Brian and Susan’s spiritual needs. The benefit which Joan received from my pastoral input was that she could better understand the complexity of Brian and Susan’s situation. Thanks to our collaboration, Joan and I had a better and a clearer “vision with concrete objectives”³⁸ to accomplish.

The second story is that of John. He was a seventy five-year-old English man who was in Malta for a holiday. I met John at the Coronary Care Unit ward. The patient was an Anglican. I informed him of the possibility of having a visit from the Anglican priest. Being a practising High Anglican, John accepted my invitation. He explicitly asked me to notify the Anglican priest and request him to visit. After the visit I contacted Canon Tom Mendel of St Paul’s Pro-Cathedral and let him know that one of his parishioners wanted to see him. Both Canon Tom and John were pleased. Besides serving as a bridge between the patient and his faith community, this pastoral visit taught me how pastoral care can be instrumental in promoting “the ecumenical spirit [through] practis[ing] ecumenical cooperation.”³⁹

37. Au, W. ‘A Spirituality for Collaborative Ministry’ in R.J.Wicks(ed.), *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, Paulist Press, New York 1995, 401.

38. L.Sofield, and C. Juliano. *Collaborative Ministry Skills and Guidelines*, Ave Maria Press, Indiana 1987, 72.

39. Pontifical Council For Promoting Christian Unity. *Directory For the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 204. Retrieved 13 November, 2006, from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_25031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html

The third experience I had of collaborative ministry occurred at the Dialysis unit. In one of my routine visits I met Doreen. She told me how concerned she was about Roger, another patient at the dialysis unit. Last time Doreen saw him, he said he wanted to die. He could not take it anymore. Doreen urged me to go to see him. Roger had been admitted to a ward. Following my visit I went to check who from Pastoral Care was visiting this ward. I found that my CPE colleague Donald was the pastoral person. I went up to the ward, found Donald and shared with him what Doreen had told me. Donald appreciated very much that I referred Roger to him. From the way Donald responded to me I could feel that my feedback had proved enlightening. He gained a clearer idea of how he could better minister to Roger. As a result of my feedback, Donald decided to revisit Roger. I went to the Pastoral Care Department very comforted knowing that I had referred Roger to Donald, that Donald felt illumined and supported in the journey he was undertaking with Roger and that Roger would get the care he needed.

These three experiences have made me more aware that the authenticity and relevance of pastoral care rests if it “create[s] a community in which [different professionals] collaborate with gentleness as a sign that [they] value one another’s”⁴⁰ personalities and contributions.

6. My pastoral and personal integrity

My sixth pastoral principle is: *Promoting and maintaining my pastoral and personal integrity by respecting boundaries and confidentiality.*

Every professional pastoral carer should seriously be convinced that within or outside the pastoral relationship s/he has “the greater burden of responsibility [because s/he is] the one with the greater power.”⁴¹ Conscious of the unfortunate possibility that I can hurt and damage people under my care, I made it a point in my ministry “to keep [my] boundaries clear”⁴² by maintaining a separate sense of self from those whom I serve.

When I started working in St Luke’s one of my fellow chaplains emphasised with me on the importance of being prudent and constantly watching my boundaries

40. St Vincents & Mater Health Sydney: *Going the extra mile. Annual Review 2005-2006*, 1.

41. R. M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, Paulist Press, Mahwah 1994, 105.

42. *Ibid.*, 81.

while visiting patients, especially when visiting women and children. Because my lifestyle represents “God’s presence in loving acceptance, healing or judgment,”⁴³ the amount of personal and professional responsibility that is expected from me is huge. Mindful of the Pauline principle of “put[ting] no obstacle in any one’s way so that no fault may be found with [my] ministry” (2 Cor 6, 3), I started to minister to God’s sons and daughters with utmost care and vigilance.

The first pastoral experience where my pastoral and personal integrity was put to the test was when I visited Sabrina, a twenty seven-year-old patient who had just been diagnosed with Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia. Sabrina had a three-week-old daughter. She was confined to her hospital room. Visitors had to put on masks when visiting her as her Immune System was weak. Sabrina desperately needed someone who simply gave her time to talk. She was feeling shocked, isolated, sad, uncertain and angry about her situation. The thought of being separated from her little one filled her with anxiety and frustration.

Sabrina appreciated my visit. For the first time during her hospitalization she was allowed to cry and express her innermost feelings about her current life story. By “establishing a warm accepting relationship with [her, Sabrina started] ... feel[ing] her worth.”⁴⁴ Although I felt comfortable talking with her, I felt that the patient’s needs were partly met. From a family systems perspective, Alexander, Sabrina’s husband, also needed pastoral support. If he neglected the need that a third party would listen to his story, his marital relationship with Sabrina would have been at greater risk. After reflecting on what happened in my first pastoral visit, in my next visit to Sabrina I suggested to her if it was okay for me to meet both her and Alexander together. Sabrina accepted. When I met the couple I could feel that both of them needed my pastoral support. I took the opportunity to introduce myself to Alexander, let him know why I visited his wife and express my wish of wanting to visit them as a couple. Even though I kept visiting the couple regularly, there were instances when I sensed that it was not appropriate for me to visit. There were moments where the couple just wanted to be left alone, to enjoy each other’s company within their comfort zone. My ministerial integrity informed me to respect their sacred space by not visiting them that day.

My visits to Sabrina and Alexander enriched my ministry in two ways. First, they

43. *Ibid.*, 12.

44. Gerald R. Niklas and Charlotte Stefanics. *Ministry to the Hospitalized*, 66.

made me more responsible to “respect their physical and emotional boundaries.”⁴⁵ Second, they made me aware that I truly foster and safeguard my pastoral and personal integrity when I “respect the freedom of others.”⁴⁶

Confidentiality is “hold[ing] in trust what [vulnerable persons] do not want disclosed further without their permission.”⁴⁷ Except in circumstances where withholding information from other health professionals would result in serious harm to the patients or others, for example when a patient speaks about feeling suicidal, confidentiality is to be strictly observed in all pastoral encounters. Holding in confidence what patients reveal to us does justice to the three values of personal dignity, fidelity and the pastoral relationship. When one’s secrets are kept that person’s personal dignity is preserved because s/he has some control over others’ perception of her/him. Normally a person is ready to disclose personal information only if s/he senses the trustworthiness of the other.

I saw these three values at work in the story of Stephen. This little boy suffered a serious head injury when he was playing with a friend. In my fourth visit Stephen was recuperating after his third head operation in the Intensive Care Unit. By his bedside was Elsie, his grandmother, whom I had known since I was a child. Elsie recounted to me how she and her husband Stanley were on the brink of a marital breakdown. Her son Matthew, who deeply believes in the value of the family, did not like the mess his mother was in. For four months he did not contact her in the hope that she would stop her extramarital affair and return to her husband. Fortunately the story ended with a reconciliation. When Stephen’s parents came to see him twenty minutes later I was very diligent in not divulging any information that would undermine Elsie’s dignity, trust and her ongoing commitment to her faithful husband. Moreover, as a priest I am also duty bound, under the penalty of excommunication, to be completely silent after a penitent’s confession. This is so because “the sacramental seal is inviolable.”⁴⁸

My personal and pastoral vocation as a minister of compassion urges me to be more committed in “reproducing the image of Christ and in particular in following

45. R. M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, 146.

46. *Ibid.*, 86.

47. *Ibid.*, 119.

48. *Code of Canon Law. Can. 983 §1*. Retrieved 15 November, 2006, from http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P3G.HTM

his example both in [my] personal and ...[my] apostolic life.”⁴⁹ The more I respect boundaries and confidentiality the more I believe Jesus’ compassion continues to heal and strengthen others, myself and the ministry I was called to embrace.

7. Commitment to my ongoing professional formation

My seventh pastoral principle is: *Undertaking and being committed to my professional, spiritual and human development through pastoral supervision, spiritual accompaniment, personal study, retreats, debriefing, taking holidays etc...*

Unfortunately for a good number of ministers, “ministry ... does not require continuing education, consultation or supervision.”⁵⁰ One way of enhancing the effectiveness of my ministry and drastically reducing the risk of harming people, is to regularly go to pastoral supervision. Supervision is a privileged place where pastoral wisdom and monitoring is imparted within a personal periodic encounter with a supervisor. This “eternal learn[ing]”⁵¹ experience continually shows me the humbling truth that: “ministers of care are human beings, and by definition, human beings are imperfect.”⁵² Couched within the action reflection model, the verbatim account which I present in every supervisory meeting gives me ample opportunity to reflect with my supervisor on my pastoral ministry.

One of the greatest benefits of this reflective journey is that of encouraging me to put myself into the suffering person’s shoes. The crucial question with which my pastoral supervisor, Ms Jenny Washington, keeps challenging me is “how is it like to be this patient?” My pastoral practice and reflection consistently shows me how such a question is indeed decisive in my mode of being with patients. The pertinence of this timely pastoral check lies in its informing, focusing and adjusting my ministry. Because “individuality is found in feeling,”⁵³ role playing the patient’s part not only assists me to detect the main issues or themes the person I visited was struggling with, but it also offers me different relevant pastoral ways to respond.

49. Pope Paul VI. Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, 31. Retrieved 15 November, 2006, from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis_en.html.

50. Sofield, L. and C. Juliano. *Collaborative Ministry Skills and Guidelines*, 100.

51. Gerald R. Niklas, *The making of a Pastoral Person*, Alba House, New York 1980, 20

52. Kofler Glen *et al. Handbook For Ministers of Care*, 55.

53. R.Bolton, *People Skills*, Simon and Schuster, Brookvale NSW 1987, 53.

Speaking from my own experience, supervision is an effective accountability exercise to God, the institution I work in, as well as to the people whom I serve. Thanks to my supervisor's objective feedback, while ministering to someone, I ask myself from time to time the following question: "whose needs are being met [in this relationship]?"⁵⁴ The value of this question lies in protecting and purifying my ministerial integrity from every thing that may potentially erode its trustworthiness. In this respect a constant check on how I am dealing with boundaries and transference⁵⁵ issues is making my ministry safer and more effective.

Another element, which is making me flourish as a pastoral minister is my continuing education. By subscribing to international journals of pastoral care, reading specialised material on different topics, attending seminars abroad, holding conversations with my fellow chaplains, giving talks as well as writing on certain topics in the newspapers and in the Malta Nursing and Midwifery Journal *Il-Musbieh*, my ministry is all the time being refreshed by "intellectual insight".⁵⁶ My pastoral experience tells me that ongoing study is another means of genuinely caring for people who face life crisis.

To be a competent pastoral minister it is not enough for me to be "refined [by] professional skills and knowledge."⁵⁷ One of my pastoral ministry's foundations is the spiritual companionship that the Lord is giving me through my spiritual director. My spiritual companion highly encourages and challenges me to better fulfil my existential goal of being Christ in everything I am, do and think. Spiritual companionship is inviting me to integrate my experience with the mystical written experiences of other people. While empowering me in my strengths and pinpointing the weaknesses that impede me from further development, this lifelong spiritual companion is opening up for me areas in which I need to grow as a person and a pastor. I am addressing these new avenues of growth by proposing actions that can bring about a holistic change process of different levels of my being. Amid the

54. Gula, R. M., *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, 79.

55. Edward P. Shafranske defines transference as "the universal tendency to experience present relationships under the sway of past relational experience and conflict. Modes of perceiving, conceiving, and relating with a person are influenced by the effects of other, past, significant relationships, particularly those in which unresolved conflict exists," in 'The Contributions of Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy to Pastoral Psychotherapy' in R.J. Wicks & R.D. Parsons (eds.), *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counselling*, 2 vol., Paulist Press, Mahwah 1993, 117.

56. N. Autton, *A Handbook of Sick Visiting*, 135.

57. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, 48.

dark nights that obscure my spiritual path, prayer, asking questions to my spiritual companion and “holding fast [to] what is good” (Rom 12, 9) are yielding for me a plentiful harvest.

Working with people in distress is making me more responsive for my being available to myself. The greatest advantage that emanates from such a habit is that “[my] relationships can flow out of a healthy attitude and a clear awareness of [my] motivations.”⁵⁸ One of the most productive ways of ministering to myself is by endorsing “a certain contemplative distance from [my] busy activities in order to maintain perspective and to process [my] experience of work...”⁵⁹ Spending leisure times with my fraternity and friends, taking holidays, doing physical exercise and pursue hobbies are essential components of my personal and pastoral health. Vacations revivify my continuing ministry, invigorate my mind, my soul and my spirit and “set [me] out into the deep.”⁶⁰

Conclusion

Biblically speaking, these seven pastoral principles of respect, faithfulness, compassionate companionship, making spiritual assessments, working collaboratively, maintaining pastoral and personal integrity and commitment to my ongoing professional formation which flow from my pastoral experience, “denote[] [my] completeness, [my] perfection, [and my] consummation”⁶¹ both as an individual as well as a ministering person. Blessed am I if I adhere to them faithfully and teach them to others!

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58. Wicks, R.J. *Availability ... The problem and the Gift*, 3.

59. Au, W. ‘A Spirituality for Collaborative Ministry’, 400.

60. Pope John Paul II. Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 1. Retrieved 16 November, 2006, from, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae_en.html

61. M.H. Pope, ‘Seven, Seventh, Seventy’. In G.A., Buttrick(ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 4, Abingdon Press, New York 1962, 295.

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A Liturgical Approach to Scripture and Tradition

James Swetnam

Professor Donfried, as scholars go, is blue-chip all the way, by reason of the professors under whom he studied (e.g., Paul Tillich, John Knox, Günther Bornkamm, Karl Barth), the institutions at which he studied (e.g., Harvard, Union Theological, Heidelberg), the institution where he taught for decades as a distinguished professor (Smith College), the places where he has been visiting professor (e.g., Yale, Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and his participation in ecumenical dialogue (member of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic New Testament panel). Above all, he has presided in liturgical services as a Lutheran minister in the Christ Church Cathedral in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts.

All of this makes Professor Donfried's recent book, *Who Owns the Bible?*¹ of more than passing interest, especially in view of the fact that despite its modest length (165 pages of text) it seeks to address some of the most fundamental issues in the contemporary interpretation of the Bible. Because of Professor Donfried's well-deserved stature and because of the obvious integrity behind every word he writes, this book deserves careful scrutiny by anyone who takes Biblical exegesis seriously. The present note will concentrate on Donfried's goal of recovering a Christian hermeneutic, which he makes, understandably, as a member of the Lutheran Church (but within an ecumenical context). The approach of the present writer, by contrast, will be as a member of the Roman Catholic Church, and will attempt to treat the restricted hermeneutical area of Scripture and Tradition from a liturgical perspective.

But first, listing of the book's contents will indicate the book's riches, which are much broader than the restricted one which constitutes the focus of this note: Chapter One: "The Bible and the Church: The Problem of Alien Hermeneutics"; Chapter Two: "The Bible and the Church: Christian Presuppositions"; Chapter

1. Karl Paul Donfried, *Who Owns the Bible? Toward the Recovery of a Christian Hermeneutic, Companions to the New Testament*, Herder & Herder, New York 2006.

Three: “The Bible and the Church: Scripture as School of the Word”; Chapter Four: “The Bible and the Church: Faith and the Moral Life”; Chapter Five: “The Bible and the Church: Toward the Application of a Trinitarian Hermeneutic”; Chapter Six: “The Bible and the Church: Hermeneutics Once Again”.

These titles hide a considerable, not to say an immense, amount of erudition based on a lifetime of conscientious ministering, teaching, discussion, and writing. To have this lifetime summarized in a clearly-written, modestly-sized book is something which merits the gratitude of all those who are interested in the Bible. It would take a good-sized article merely to summarize adequately the views expressed. The present review must be content to select what seems to the reviewer to be a key stance of Professor Donfried, to examine its underlying presuppositions, and to draw a contrast between this stance and the reviewer’s own stance based on an understanding of his Roman Catholic faith. The purpose is to attempt neither ratification nor refutation of Donfried’s views but clarification of these views through contrast with the reviewer’s.

Donfried answers the book’s title by quoting Tertullian from the third century: “This property belongs to me; I have always possessed it, I have possessed it prior to you and have reliable title deeds from the original owners of the estate. I am the heir of the apostles” (pp. 2, 163). Well and good. But how is one to judge today who is the heir of the apostles? Presumably the heir involves the Church in some sense, given the titles of the Professor Donfried’s chapters. And, also presumably, the heir involves a search for a proper hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible, given the book’s sub-title.

Donfried speaks of “the Church Catholic” (pp. 3-5, 14, 17-18, etc.), by which he seems implicitly to envision a Church based on ecumenical inclusiveness (including the Catholic Church). In the index to the book, Donfried’s Church Catholic is described as the Body of Christ, a Community in Christ, a Community of Discipline, a Community of Love, a *corpus mixtum*. But the fundamental formative principle for the Church Catholic would seem to be a “Trinitarian hermeneutic” (cf. Topical Index under “Hermeneutics, Trinitarian”, for ample references about the nature of this hermeneutic). This Trinitarian hermeneutic assumes a kind of mystical importance in Donfried’s thinking:

The continued presence of the risen Jesus through the Spirit in the community that worships him leads to the affirmation of a Trinitarian

theology of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the most adequate manner in which to understand the revelation of God in creation, in the history of Israel, in Jesus, and in the church. Because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8), a Trinitarian hermeneutic must of necessity be a hermeneutic of consistency and coherence (p. 8).

What Donfried seems to this reviewer to be doing here, though without his necessarily intending to do so, is to establish a Tradition (under the name of “a Trinitarian hermeneutic”) to serve as a guide for the Church Catholic in interpreting Scripture. He would seem to feel justified in doing this because of the widespread acceptance which the first four ecumenical councils meet with and the undoubted legitimacy of the councils themselves. This agreement and this legitimacy generate the justification which would seem to lie implicitly under Professor Donfried’s method.

But perhaps an even more compelling reason for Professor Donfried’s method in invoking the first four ecumenical councils is the plausibility of the hermeneutic which results from his analysis. For a Christian of faith, this hermeneutic seems to provide an excellent guide for understanding the text of the New Testament.

All this in the reviewer’s opinion would seem to be the opposite of what the council fathers did: they worked from a given Tradition on the basis of their presumed authority. They did not try to prove their authority, they simply acted on it. In any event it was not something which they could have “proved”. This authority was an object of their faith and the faith of others, a given which they and others had accepted according to the customs regulating legitimacy at the time. This authority was crucial for the fathers, however, for their way of believing it assured them of the guidance of the Spirit who was part and parcel of legitimacy. They were the heirs of Christ’s Spirit and heirs of the Tradition which the Spirit used as they gave an authoritative interpretation of Scripture with, as they believed, the Spirit’s guidance. They intended to define Christian belief in terms of contemporary challenges to that belief, and this they did in ways which serve Christians still, as Professor Donfried’s use of their decisions make plain.

Donfried does not go into such detail, but simply takes the norms which he infers from the decisions of the council fathers (taking their authority for granted) as norms which for him provide “consistency and coherence”. In other words, to

the reviewer's way of thinking, if the council fathers used Tradition to provide hermeneutical norms, Donfried uses those norms to constitute a Tradition. And in so doing he would seem, to the reviewer at least, to be entirely within his rights.

This Tradition, once established, serves as a guide to what Donfried's Church is. (The relation between biblical hermeneutics and Church as an intrinsic given is implicit in the choice of the sub-title of the book.) At the risk of putting words in Professor Donfried's mouth, the reviewer would say that in the light of this approach, Donfried's Church is essentially a Church produced by a (Trinitarian) hermeneutical confrontation with Scripture. In other words, Professor Donfried's Church turns out to be, not surprisingly, the Lutheran Church. All of which, obviously, is fair enough.

But how does this go about establishing Donfried's Church as the heir of the apostles? Perhaps Professor Donfried could reply that Tertullian was using the same Tradition which guided the council fathers in their deliberations, and hence the hermeneutical norms which Donfried has worked out from these council fathers are really the Tradition of the early Church. Thus he establishes a union between his Church Catholic and Tertullian. This seems to be a legitimate inference from Donfried's words and it would prove his point. All he needs to do is spell out his ecclesiological reasoning in detail.

Further, if the reviewer is correct in his surmises about the underlying dynamics of Donfried's thought, there would still be a sticking point where Donfried's faith commitment is non-negotiable and non-provable: faith in Scripture. Scripture is that which grounds his Church Catholic. Scripture is the ecclesiological bottom-line, and accepting Scripture as such is a matter of faith. That there should be such a bottom line involving faith is, of course, entirely to be expected and entirely in order: at some point in any discussions of faith, one is faced with something non-negotiable and non-provable.

The reviewer would like to present a contrasting view of Church in order to give his own view of what it means to be the heir of the apostles. And it is a view in which Tradition is that something non-negotiable and non-provable. For the reviewer, Tradition is the ecclesiological bottom line. For him, that is to say, Tradition is the centre of his faith and as such is non-negotiable and non-provable. And so, instead of working from Scripture to Tradition, the reviewer will work from Tradition to Scripture.

Orthodox members of the Catholic Church the world over focus their faith on the Eucharist. For them it is a given, something fixed. They accept what the Church teaches them about the Eucharist, particularly as regards the Mass, even though what the Church teaches is improbable, naturally speaking. The liturgy of the Mass is the centre of an orthodox Catholic's life. Life in God without the Eucharistic Christ is no more imaginable to the orthodox Catholic than life without air. It is the basic given which is at the core of his life as a Catholic. (Donfried's book, strangely but perhaps significantly, has almost nothing to say about the Eucharist, despite the Eucharist's prominent place in the New Testament).

But what the average orthodox Catholic does not always recognize is that the Eucharist is at the basis of the Catholic Church. As the Catholic Church's own authoritative catechism states, "The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §766). This is not to say that other aspects of the Catholic Church are not essential for the fullness of her existence. But it is to say that the Eucharist as fulfilled on the cross (and what the cross historically implies, i.e., the resurrection) in such a way as to give rise to the Catholic Church. The Eucharist, above all else, is the prism through which the Catholic Church views the death and resurrection of her Lord and thus her own *ratio essendi*.

The reviewer would like to draw an inference from this authoritatively-stated theological truth about the Eucharist as the foundational source of his Church's existence. Since this basis for the Catholic Church has come to the believers of all times and places as the words of consecration uttered by the priests who have celebrated the Eucharist for these believers, this verbal Tradition is the principal ecclesiological way in which the reviewer believes that he and his fellow Catholics of all ages have been in contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this Tradition, since it grounds the existence of the Catholic Church, was never absent from the Church. There was a time when the Church existed without its New Testament Scripture. But there never was a time when the Church existed without her Tradition.

The words of consecration handed on in memory of Christ at his command clearly do constitute a Tradition, an oral Tradition, and it is at the very core of the Tradition of the Catholic Church. This core Tradition developed in time into something more all-embracing, for many things besides the Eucharist are necessary for the integral existence of the Catholic Church (e.g., the other sacraments, the hierarchy – in the sense that these further elements were prior preparations, not

subsequent inventions). But the core Tradition, responsible as it is for the existence of the Eucharist, is the non-negotiable and non-provable centre of the Church. It is a given, to be accepted or not accepted. And the Church, precisely insofar as it is dependent on this Tradition, shares in these traits: it is to be accepted or not accepted as a reality in which the cross and resurrection are seen through the Eucharist. Acceptance of this reality depends entirely on God's free gift, but an acceptance viewed in the context of God's Providential care for all mankind, believers and non-believers alike.

The Tradition of the Catholic Church, then, is a given to be accepted or not, just as Professor Donfried's Scripture (if the reviewer understands the implications of his book aright) are to be accepted or not, depending on who is doing the accepting. But where does that leave Scripture in the Catholic Church? It leaves Scripture exactly where it has always been, as the subsequent official explanation of how the prior core Tradition which constitutes the Catholic Church came to be. In the order of constitutive causality the words of consecration of the Eucharist uttered by Christ at the Last Supper are supreme. But in the order in which this constitutive causality of the words of consecration is explained, Scripture is supreme. That is to say, each of these twin ways providing contact between the Catholic Church and the one Source of revelation, Jesus Christ, is supreme in its own order. But in relation to each other, Tradition of necessity is superior because that which causes a reality is intrinsically superior to that which records this causality. Being, by the nature of things, is prior to a report about that being.

It may be objected (though probably not by Donfried) that such a hermeneutic, ultimately based on faith, is an exercise in fideism. But the Catholic Church does not understand herself as a victim of fideism, and neither does the reviewer (*CCC*, §36-38). Faith is a gift of God, in no way merited. The reviewer cannot prove his faith; he can only accept it as it is, focussed on the Eucharist and the Christ-initiated Tradition which enables the Eucharist to exist. But this faith intrinsically calls for a further understanding of what it involves because in itself it is a matter of acceptance or non-acceptance based on a bare minimum of understanding of what is accepted or not. This further understanding is called Scripture, the way in which the Catholic Church officially offers an explanation of how she came to be, and of those who accepted this being. And by its very nature Scripture is subject to rational critique the way in which the Tradition of the Catholic Church is not, because the very nature of Scripture is to provide something to be understood, i.e., to be critiqued.

Critiqued, but not patronized. If Scripture is to be understood as an explanation of faith-based Tradition, it itself must be understood in the context of faith: a biblical hermeneutic according to the perspective of the Catholic Church, would seem to demand an approach explicitly based on that Church's Tradition, i.e., focussed on the cross and resurrection as realities not just to be lived according to the Preached Word but according to the Eucharistic Word. Such a hermeneutic would of necessity involve the faith-based use of Scripture in order to understand better the bare minimum of what is believed. But it is the use of Scripture as explanatory of the Church's existence, not as constitutive. And ultimately, any explanation based on Scripture would be no more "probative" than the acceptance of the Tradition which Scripture seeks to explain.

Other decisions about the ownership of the Bible are, of course, possible. For example, if the Bible is taken as literature, all who are interested in literature own it insofar and precisely insofar as it is a literary classic. If the Bible is taken in an ecumenical context, all the member Churches own it insofar and precisely insofar as it is a unifying ecumenical element. If the Bible is taken as a unique treasure-trove of philological, geographical and historical information, any scholar of the world owns it insofar and precisely insofar as it is a source of scholarship in which he has a legitimate interest. The ownership of the Bible, in other words, is in function of how the Bible is viewed. Thus, for one who believes that the Bible is the divinely-inspired account of how the Catholic Church came to be and is accordingly to be interpreted in the light of that Church, the Catholic Church is the one who owns the Bible, insofar and precisely insofar as it is the official explanation of what constitutes the Catholic Church. The reviewer's belief that the Catholic Church owns the Bible as the official report on her own constitutive Tradition is, obviously, true insofar and precisely insofar as it is an explanation (not a proof) of this belief. And with regard to that Tradition is no more subject to proof (or negotiation) than that belief itself, though with regard to its nature as Scripture it may offer explanations more or less plausible.

Thus the reviewer offers a view which contrasts with the view of Donfried on the basic supposition underlying Professor Donfried's argumentation. It would seem that an attempt to answer the question "Who owns the Bible?", if based on Tertullian's understanding of the answer, has to confront the challenge of how the heirs to the apostles are to be identified. And this means, how one understands what constitutes the Church. Donfried would doubtless agree, but, of course, in terms of his own core belief. And as to what this core belief implies in ecclesiological

terms more explicitly developed than given in his book, Professor Donfried must obviously have the final word on what Professor Donfried thinks.

When all is said and done, however, only God owns the Bible in an absolute way, just as he owns Tradition, the Bible's twin. But he makes both available to the world on permanent loan.

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A Historical Sketch of the Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Direction by Means of Letters – A Representative Selection

Kathleen Bonello

2.1 Introduction

Throughout the years many Christians while looking at their Christian lives as the way in which they were following Jesus Christ (the “sequela Christi”), understood that this was only possible because of the help of the Holy Spirit within them. They let him be active within them by cooperating with his grace in many ways. One of the most prominent and important among these ways was and still is, spiritual direction. Here, I shall trace spiritual direction by means of letters in the Catholic Tradition. I can say from the outset that this way of imparting spiritual direction was widely spread throughout all the years, throughout all the times of the history of the Catholic Church. Here, I intend to present just a bird’s eye view of the most prominent people of the Catholic Church who imparted spiritual direction by the means of letters.

2.2 Saint Paul

Saint Paul was a preacher of the word, an itinerant missionary in the very early years of Christianity.¹ Nevertheless, Paul felt a continuing responsibility for those whom he had ‘begotten’ or ‘initiated’ into the Christian life, a direct involvement in their subsequent struggles. He applied the maternal image of child-bearing when he wrote to the Galatians: “My children, I am going through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you” (4, 19). As a spiritual parent with paternal and maternal feelings, he went on caring and suffering for them in the long process of development during which Christ was being ‘formed’ within them.²

1. 2 Cor 11, 16-33.

2. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR, *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, viii.

When addressing his audience in letters, Paul discussed the meaning of Christian Initiation. The neophyte has been baptized into Christ, to die and be buried with him so as to be raised from the death with him.³ Death in Christ leads to the new life of the resurrection! There is a future dimension to this eschatological promise: the resurrection of the body and the fullness of eternal life still await the faithful. But there is also a very real present dimension to this Christological union.⁴

Pauline letters share features of the contemporary Greco-Roman and Semitic letters – the opening formula, thanksgiving and the actual message. Reflecting early Christian preaching, which often joined an ethical exhortation to its doctrinal exposé, “the body of the Pauline letter is usually divided into two parts – one *doctrinal*, presenting truths of the Christian message, the other *hortatory*, giving instructions for Christian conduct.”⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmayer, quotes another author, Diesmann, and says:

Deissmann classed Paul’s writings as letters, not literary epistles... Paul’s writings are fundamentally “letters,” composed for an occasion, often produced in haste, and mostly written in complete independence of each other. Philemon is a private letter sent to an individual; Galatians a letter addressed to a group of local churches and imbued with Paul’s personal concern for his converts. Similarly, 1 Co, 1 Th, Ph, despite all the great truths they discuss, are basically “letters” handling concrete issues in the churches addressed.⁶

In so doing, Deissmann reminds us that Paul rarely wrote his letters as a private individual; they are instead the product of him being an apostle, a missionary, and a preacher. His letters were sent to communities and individuals to express his apostolic presence and authority in building up Christian churches. Paul made sure that the use of the letter-form served him to spread his understanding of the Christian gospel and especially of applying it to the concrete problems that arose in areas that he could not then visit personally.⁷ Because his letters are the only New

3. Rm 6, 3-4.

4. 1 Cor 15, 42-57.

5. *Ibid.*, 770.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.* Here Fitzmayer continues that “part of his [Paul’s] genius was to adopt a manageable form of writing for his evangelistic purposes. His writings are then best characterised as ‘apostolic letters.’ Though Paul is often called the first Christian theologian, he did not write with the precision of one presenting systematic theology, conciliar definition, or canonical legislation. More simply, he was casting his apostolic teaching in letter form.”

Testament documents addressed to shepherds or “pastors” of Christian communities and because they deal with church life and practice (i.e., with “pastoral” theology), 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus since the eighteenth century, have been called the “Pastoral Letters”.⁸ All “Pauline” letters are later cited by all those who seek to give spiritual direction to the ones seeking it from them. Paul always remains as a reference point of direction.

In his correspondence to individuals and communities, Paul, as a caring parent, wanted to empathize with the communities’ burdens, making their joys and sorrows his own: ‘If anyone is weak, do I not share his weakness? If anyone is made to stumble, does not my heart blaze with indignation?’ (2 Co 11, 29) As such he helped his “children in Christ”, by becoming one with them, identifying his own life with theirs. This can also be said of the spiritual father at a later date.⁹

2.3 *The Patristic Age*

2.3.1 *The Desert Fathers*

The Desert Fathers in Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the fourth and fifth centuries indicate for us the first sign of spiritual direction within the Christian tradition on any sizeable scale. In the spirituality of the Desert Fathers “the first teacher of the monk was God; the second was his cell. Within the cell, the monk had one sure guide and often it was the same guide that began his conversion – the scriptures.”¹⁰ For the desert monk, the scriptures, being his main guide, had the value of a sacrament – an external and visible instrument, this being the book of Scripture, by means of which certain graces – divine invisible gifts - are conferred on those reading and reflecting upon the Scriptures. They are a free gift of God and the bread of life in the wilderness, even for one who was not yet baptized.¹¹ Besides this, the monk was invited to learn from the words of a father, a spiritual father, who for him was

8. ROBERT A. WILD, *The Pastoral Letters*, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown - Joseph A. Fitzmayer - Roland E. Murphy, London 1993, 891. There is a very serious discussion on the author of the “pastoral” letters. Most scholars today agree that they were not written by Paul although they reflect his thought.

9. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, viii, ix.

10. BENEDICTA WARD, *Spiritual direction in the desert fathers in Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990, 8.

11. *Ibid.*, 9.

another channel to salvation. The father or the mother was a charismatic holy man or woman who lived in the wilderness. The words of such people contained the answers to many problems and difficulties that the monks had to face in their daily lives. For this reason, the *abbas* and *ammās*¹² of the desert were the holy men and women from whom disciples would seek the advice and guidance. Disciples would look to them more for holiness and purity of heart rather than for teaching, and the central concept was that of spiritual fatherhood.¹³

Direction of the soul was frequently sought from one monk to another requesting to ‘speak a word to me’. As such they would be asking, as with the scriptures, for a sacrament. The ‘word’ was not to be discussed or analysed or disputed in any way. Many a time, “it was not even understood; but it was to be memorized and absorbed into life, as a sure way towards God.”¹⁴ In such a way, the spiritual director was not simply someone who taught a spiritual technique. He was a father who helped to shape the inner life of his children through his prayer, concern and pastoral care.¹⁵

The Desert Fathers passed on their spiritual thoughts in sayings which could be defined as:

fragments of stories glimpsed through many layers of transmission; sometimes they seem contradictory, sometimes inconclusive, and they should not be given a coherence they do not have . . . some practical ways of learning *metanoia* seem to emerge from the texts, and seem, moreover, to be virtually the same for both the hermits and the cenobites.¹⁶

Their aim was the salvation of one’s soul. So, those who received these sayings had to act – to flee and “go away from what is familiar; then the idea of silence, solitude, aloneness; which is the desert; and the ideal of constant prayer for the whole of life.”¹⁷ The stories of the Desert Fathers abound with illustrations of

12. KENNETH LEECH, *Soul friend*, London² 1994, 37.

13. *Ibid.*

14. BENEDICTA WARD, *Spiritual direction in the desert fathers in Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990,9.

15. KENNETH LEECH, *Soul friend*, London² 1994, 37.

16. BENEDICTA WARD, *Spiritual direction in the desert fathers in Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990, 5.

17. *Ibid.*, 6.

ascetics who went to ridiculous extremes, and became spiritual casualties through lack of such discernment.

2.3.2 *Fathers of the East*

In early Christianity, the Fathers of the Church frequently make reference to the need of spiritual guidance, from a person encompassing the teacher's role. Here "the teacher's role, as understood by Saint Pantaenus,¹⁸ Saint Clement¹⁹ and Origen,²⁰ is by no means limited to instruction in the narrow academic sense, to the bare transmission of facts. The teacher was also a spiritual guide to his pupils, a living model and exemplar, providing them not only with information but with an all-embracing personal relationship."²¹ This is certainly a "directive" model. During the second and third centuries of the Church we find various Church Fathers of the East who did their very best to pass on spiritual direction to others by means of letters.

2.3.2.1 *Barsanuphius²² and John of Gaza²³*

In Palestine and in Syria, there were people who experienced monastic life. Those who aspired to perfection were the ones who felt the need to be guided by a director of conscience. The monastic state has been and will go on to be considered the classic type of this tendency. Those who embrace such a way of life would benefit from it only if guided by people who had the necessary gift and experience. These gifts and experience were found only among those who had progressed in the ways of perfection.²⁴ This can be shown by the correspondence of two sixth-century spiritual fathers in Southern Palestine, Barsanuphius and John of Gaza: the questions put to them and their answers survive in a remarkably detailed form.²⁵

18. He was head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria about 180 and was still alive in 193. As he was succeeded by Clement who left Alexandria about 203, the probable date of his death would be about 200.

19. His date of birth is unknown. He died about the year 215.

20. He was born in 185 and died in 232.

21. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, ix.

22. He was an Egyptian by birth. He lived in the sixth century and died in the year of 563.

23. His place of birth is unknown. During an 18 year period up to his death, he lived near the Elder Barsanuphius.

24. IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR, *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 267.

25. *Erotapokriseis*: Greek text, ed. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountains (reissued S. Schoinas, Volos, 1960); critical ed. and Eng. trans. of Letters 1-124 by D.J. Chitty, *Patrologia Orientalis* 31.3 Paris

The letters of direction of these two saints almost always answered specific questions with the same conciseness as if they were giving direction orally. The edition of Saint Barsanuphius and Saint John by Nicodemus the Hagiorite contains 836 letters (questions and answers).²⁶ Many contain only a line or two, even one word, while others run to a maximum of two pages. Those of Barsanuphius are generally a little longer than John's. What is most admirable in them, along with discernment, is the great variety of feelings, beginning with humour,²⁷ and moving through good-heartedness, graciousness, tenderness, to vehemence, even violence – all this always in the service of souls. The spiritual father, through spiritual direction was to show his brotherly love to the ones he directs.

In one of his letters, addressed to Brother Euthymius, Barsanuphius spoke of the need of counsel in one's life and he did so quoting Scripture. He went on admonishing his directee:

When you were not acting with counsel, but from your will, you were not labouring with your mind. For there is none who does not need a counsellor, except only God, who created wisdom. But when you did seek according to God to cut off your own will and to come to humility and to take me your very little brother for your counsellor, you provoked to envy the demon who hates the good and always has envy towards all men.²⁸

Barsanuphius accused Euthymius of pride for going his way after seeking his director's advice. So, directees were not allowed to act freely according to what they feel in their life of prayer, thus when communicating with the Lord. It was a must for a person seeking holiness to seek the useful advice of the director and in return the director was to be obeyed without question.

Barsanuphius was very clear when he dealt with people who asked many

1966); French translation of the whole collection by L. Regnault and P Lemaire, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza, Correspondence* (Solesmes, 1972) as quoted in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xxviii.

26. These take up 386 pages in 4 volumes.

27. Letters of Barsanuphius, Letter 534, 277, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 236.

28. *Writings on spiritual direction by great Christian masters*, edited by Jerome M. Neufelder and Mary C. Coelho 1982, New York 164.

exaggerated questions. In Letter 60 and 89, he wrote as such to one who asked so many questions:

One should not ask questions about all the thoughts that are [in your mind]; they are fleeting, but [ask] only about the ones that persist and wage war on man. Take a man who is insulted by a whole crowd of people; he scorns injuries and becomes utterly indifferent. But if some one person attacks him and wages war on him, then he lodges a complaint in the presence of the magistrate. Thus it is with this matter [of thoughts].²⁹

2.3.2.2 Saint John Climacus³⁰ and Saint Symeon the Theologian³¹

The letter of Saint John Climacus, abbot of Sinai, entitled *To the Shepherd (Ad Pastorem)*³² and the first letter of Saint Symeon the New Theologian abbot of Saint Mamas in Constantinople, entitled *On Confession*, deal with the matter of what in principle constitutes the essence of spiritual fatherhood. Neither of the works provides a systematic list of characteristics but still, the spiritual father is described by both authors chiefly in five ways. He is seen as doctor, counsellor, intercessor, mediator, and sponsor.³³

The ‘model’ of doctor or healer (*iatros*) as referring to the spiritual father is highly referred to in Climacus and Symeon and in Eastern Christian literature generally from the fourth century onwards. In his treatise *To the Shepherd* Climacus develops the medical analogy at length. The spiritual father is a ‘doctor’, who cares for the ‘sick man’, using plasters, razors, eye-salves, potions, sponges, remedies against nausea, instruments for blood-letting and cauterization, ointments, sleeping

29. Letter 89, 46 in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 227, 228.

30. He was born doubtlessly in Syria, about 525. He died on Mount Sinai, on 30 March, probably in 606.

31. He was born in 949 and died in 1022.

32. Sometimes treated as the thirty-first step in *The ladder of divine ascent*. In this immortal work the Christian is helped to climb thirty-one metaphorical spiritual steps to reach the heights of supreme spiritual perfection. Here we see how one virtue leads to another. The more the Christians climbs these virtual steps the more he reaches that height where there abides the crown of the virtues, which is called “Christian love”.

33. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xii.

draughts, the knife, bandages.³⁴ Furthermore, Climacus exposes the idea that the ‘penance’ (*epitimion*) that ‘the doctor’ imposes is not a punishment but a healing remedy, a ‘cauterization’ that he administers ‘in a compassionate way as an aid to repentance’.³⁵ Furthermore, “the spiritual doctor can only help if the patient is completely honest, ‘bearing his wound with entire trust’.”³⁶

Symeon, in his letter *On Confession*, uses the same medical language. ‘Seek out a compassionate and merciful doctor’, he enjoined.³⁷ Neither in Climacus nor in Symeon – nor in the Eastern Christian tradition in general – are we to understand the confessor or spiritual father primarily as a judge, passing sentence and imposing penalties.³⁸ Symeon referred to the spiritual father’s power to bind and loose, which may be taken to imply a measure of juridical authority. Both in Symeon and in John Climacus, the main model is therapeutic and not legalistic. According to Climacus, the spiritual child reveals to his father not only his sins but more generally his ‘thoughts’ (*logismoi*), long before they have led to outward acts – even those thoughts that are seemingly harmless and innocent.³⁹

Another model is that of a counsellor (*sumboulos*). Accordingly, Climacus, in the letter *To the Shepherd*, described the spiritual father as a ‘teacher’ (*didaskalos*) who heals through his logos – his word, his advice or counsel.⁴⁰ Symeon likewise spoke of the confessor as a ‘teacher’,⁴¹ and a ‘good counsellor who by his shrewd

34. Ibid.

35. JOHN CLIMACUS. *The ladder of divine ascent*, translated by Coln Luibheid and Norman Russell, New York/NY 1982, Step 2, On detachment, 81-84.

36. JOHN CLIMACUS. *The ladder of divine ascent*, translated by Coln Luibheid and Norman Russell, New York/NY 1982, Step 1, On renunciation, 73-80; Step 5, On penitence, 121-131 and Step 7, On mourning, 136-145.

37. Epi 5 114, 21-22 in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xii.

38. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xii/xiii.

39. JOHN CLIMACUS. *The ladder of divine ascent*, translated by Coln Luibheid and Norman Russell, New York/NY 1982, Step 4, On obedience, 91-120 and Symeon, Ep i. 9 (pg 118, 24); i. 17 (p 127, 13-14) in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xiii.

40. JOHN CLIMACUS. *The ladder of divine ascent*, translated by Coln Luibheid and Norman Russell, New York/NY 1982, Step 1, On renunciation, 73-80 and Step 2, On Detachment, 81-84. See also Step 4, On obedience, 91-120.

41. *Cap. i. 55 and 59; Cat. VII. 8; Ep. iii. 647-8, in Christophoridis, 29; Ep. IV. 212-14, in Christophoridis, 25 in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, Foreward, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR Spiritual direction in the early Christian East, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xiii.*

advice suggests in an appropriate manner ways of repentance'.⁴² While healing by his speech, the spiritual father may also heal by his silence, that is, simply by virtue of his presence.

The spiritual father is also able to heal by his prayers.⁴³ In this way, the spiritual director is also an intercessor (*presbeutēs*). The intercessory prayer of the spiritual father for his children is a master-theme constantly recurring in the answers of Barsanuphius and John; 'night and day I am praying for you unceasingly to God.'⁴⁴ Climacus, always faithful to the Gaza tradition, in the definition he gave of the 'shepherd' states: "A shepherd is pre-eminently one who has the power to seek out the lost spiritual sheep and to set them on the right path by means of his guiltlessness, his zeal and his prayer."⁴⁵ Symeon agreed closely with Climacus.⁴⁶

The spiritual father is described by both Climacus and Symeon as an 'intermediary' or '*mediator*' in such a way that besides praying for his children, through his intercession he *reconciles* them to God.⁴⁷ Climacus developed this idea in *To the Shepherd*. The 'superior' or spiritual father is the friend of the king; because he has free access to the royal presence, he can plead with boldness on behalf of others:

No one can be a true elder at second hand; he needs to speak of what he has seen and felt for himself. If he is to be an instrument of reconciliation on behalf of others, he must first have reconciled God to himself.⁴⁸

42. *Ep. i. 7* (p. 117, 1-2) in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xiii.

43. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xiv.

44. *Erotap. 17*; cf. 27, 144 (regnault, 217), 208 (regnault, 113), 507 in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xii.

45. JOHN CLIMACUS. *The ladder of divine ascent*, translated by Coln Luibheid and Norman Russell, NewYork/NY 1982, Step 14, *On renunciation of life*, 73-80.

46. *Ep. i. 7* (p. 117, 3-5) in KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xv.

47. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, xv.

48. JOHN CLIMACUS. *The ladder of divine ascent*, translated by Coln Luibheid and Norman Russell, NewYork/NY 1982, Step 11, *On talkativeness and silence*, 158-159.

Both Symeon and Climacus considered the spiritual father as *anadochos*, somebody who assumes responsibility or provides security for another, standing surety for his obligations. Climacus insisted that it is the elder's vocation, 'to take upon himself the burden of the one under obedience to him'.⁴⁹ Here, many of the responsibility of the actions of the person receiving spiritual direction is shouldered upon the director. Besides this compassionate and sacrificial love such responsibility is considered as an essential characteristic of the true sponsor – the true elder.

2.3.2.3 *St. Nilus*⁵⁰

Saint Nilus addressed many of his letters to lay people.⁵¹ In his letters he was not afraid of recalling the last events: death, judgement, heaven and hell. He was convinced that lay people will show prudence and uprightness when they live as well as they can in the way monks should live; or if in moments of temptation they behave as the great masters of monasticism have taught they should. An example of this is the letter he wrote *To the Young Count Pierios*. The letter opens by stating that one should not confuse *erōs* and *agapē*, 'as this virtuous friend of God' did. This somewhat tremulous concern with safeguarding innocence was justified by an experience frequently referred to by Saint Nilus: the difficulty of correcting a habit.⁵² Saint Nilus is said to have been a disciple of St John Chrysostom.⁵³ Both of them know how difficult it is to correct an inveterate habit. This is why Nilus gave detailed precautions to the people in the world who confided in him.⁵⁴

According to Nilus, one of the most dangerous disorders which he condemned mercilessly was visiting the theatre.⁵⁵ Count Constantinus had objected that going to the theatre or the hippodrome was simply recreation for the soul. Nevertheless, Nilus replied, 'It is supreme destruction, a most terrible damage to the soul.' The

49. *Ibid.*, Step 2, On detachment, 81-84.

50. His date of birth is unknown. He died in 430.

51. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 312.

52. *Ibid.*, 315 .

53. He is a Doctor of the Church. He was born at Antioch, around 347 and died at Commana in Pontius, on 14 September, 407.

54. KALLISTOS WARE, BISHOP, *Foreward*, in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 316.

55. *Epistol.* II. 286, col. 341B in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 316.

rest of the letter clearly gives us a sense of the spiritual direction Saint Nilus gave to lay people. At the root of such counsels, we find Nilus' line of thought:

since monks have chosen the surest path to salvation, everyone should therefore come as close to it as possible. Yet it should be noted that neither Saint Nilus, nor perhaps any other monastic founder or superior, seems to have been preoccupied with provoking monastic vocations.⁵⁶

When young men had written to him, Nilus merely advised them against evil and guided them to ways of practising virtue, depending on each young man's situation, and in conformity with his own ideas on perfection.⁵⁷ Even to those who were amongst the most beloved of his spiritual children, Nilus, the great director, only recommended exercises of the interior life similar to those performed by monks, and although Nilus never asked the young man to become one of them, he was to visit them. According to Nilus, one acquires noble crowns not only by pursuing those who practice virtue but also by praise.⁵⁸

He also gave importance to spiritual reading,

since from this, at the right moment, follows all right action... People find great profit in reading the inspired Scriptures. If therefore you want to keep the eye of the soul ... and maintain its keenness, so as to be led to what is best ..., do not be sluggish in reading Scripture.⁵⁹

Prayer has a special place in the direction Nilus gives to others. Prayer is of utmost importance to overcome temptations, to be freed from the passions that cause them, to become detached from apparent goods, to obtain forgiveness of sin and, finally, salvation.⁶⁰ We find Nilus corresponding to a priest, explaining to

56. IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 317.

57. *Ibid.*, 318.

58. *Homilia in Martyrem Julittam*, n.2., col. 237AB in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 318.

59. NILUS, *Epistolarum Liber II*. 16, *Theodosiae Moniali*; PG 79: 249D in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 319.

60. *Historia Lusiace*, 34 in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 319.

him: 'One must prefer prayer to Christ above all other things, and invoke the help and protection of the Holy Spirit. For there is no way to be freed from the power of corruption unless divine power holds power over us.'⁶¹

All the other monastic practices are sometimes recommended for people in the world concerned about their souls. Worldly practices are similarly recommended to be avoided for the benefit of the soul: 'Excessive pleasure, boundless joy, the soul's insolence inspired by repeated success, let us restrain these by sorrow and silence.'⁶²

2.3.2.4 Saint Basil the Great⁶³

Saint Basil in his Letter XXIII goes very much to the point as to what concerns the need of a guide in our lives.⁶⁴ He was adamant about the fact that the new monk must be given the spiritual *aleiptēn* (trainer) whom he may ask for. In the mentioned Letter he told the new monk that once he had left the world,

do not throw yourself away like a worthless vessel. On the contrary, with exceeding care and intelligence, find someone who walks before you unerringly on the path of your profession, one who is able to lead those who are on their way to God, who is adorned with virtues, who through his own works witnesses to the love of God, who has knowledge of the divine Scriptures; someone who is not drawn hither and yon by distractions, who does not love money, does not meddle, is peaceful, a friend of God and of the humble, someone who is not angry or resentful, without vanity or pride, insensitive to flattery, not subject to inconstancy, and someone who puts nothing above God. If you find such a person, surrender yourself to him, spewing out your

61. *Epistolarum Liber II*, 48; PG 99:1297A in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 320.

62. IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 54.

63. He was Bishop of Caesarea, and one of the most distinguished Doctors of the Church. He was born probably in 329 and died on 1 January, 379.

64. *Epistola XXIII*; PG 32: 296B in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 191.

65. *Sermo de renuntiatione saeculi* n. 2-3 in IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 191-192.

66. IRÉNÉE HAUSHERR *Spiritual direction in the early Christian East*, Kalamazoo/MI 1990, 192.

67. Probably he was born in 340 and died in 397.

own will and casting it far from you . . . This is the second struggle against the opponent of our salvation. The lessons of good masters are good; those of evil masters are altogether evil. If our adversary cannot persuade us to remain in the agitation and the ruin of the world, he tries to get us not to devote ourselves to a regular life, or to surrender not to a person who condemns all our faults to correct them, but to one of those who crave glory and who, on the pretence of condescending to their companions, exhibit their own vices so that imperceptibly we become subjected once more to a thousand vices and become fettered by his own chains, which are those of sin. *If you surrender to a man of great virtue, you will inherit the inward possessions he owns, and be worthy of being called blessed before God and man.* If, out of concern for the body you seek a master who is able to condescend to your passions, or, to say it better, to tumble down with you, in vain will you have endured the struggle to a dissolute life by taking a blind guide who will push you into the *pit*? And if one blind man leads another, both will fall into a pit. It is enough for the disciple that he should grow to be like his teacher; this is a divine word, and it does not fail.⁶⁵

These observations show us that Basil was afraid that the new monk may choose a guide according to his desires. In this he agrees with all the Fathers. It is to be noted that in Basilian monasteries, a novice could make a choice for his spiritual father but only among 'elders' recognized by competent authorities as being able to direct.⁶⁶ In such a method the directee is not free to choose his master and teacher. Besides this, the master is perceived as quite a perfect man and spiritual direction as a rigid procedure.

2.3.3 Fathers of the West

During the fourth century, at the time when Christianity was made legal by the Roman Empire, the Church Fathers such as Ambrose,⁶⁷ Jerome,⁶⁸ and Augustine,⁶⁹ were deepening their understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, eradicating dangerous heresies like Pelagianism and Arianism. At the same time, they were giving their share in the spiritual formation of those who sought their help.

68. Probably he was born either in 340 or in 342 and died in 420.

69. His life stretched from 354 to 430.

2.3.3.1 *St. Ambrose*

St. Ambrose of Milan was the one to open the series of the great spiritual directors of the West. As such, “the qualities which make him an excellent director are his family origins, his education, his practical involvement in life’s matters, questions and problems. Also, one has to add, his fine intelligence and his refined moral sense.”⁷⁰ Ambrose borrowed the language of Stoicism and, in a certain measure, Stoic precepts as well. Ambrose spoke and wrote as a bishop, completely faithful to the teachings of Scripture and of the Church. His qualities as a director are seen above all in his treatises and letters.⁷¹ Ambrose’s letters vary a great deal in their content:⁷²

- a. Some of his letters are addressed to new bishops. Ambrose speaks to Virgilius, bishop of Trent and to Costantius, bishop of Claterna about the burdens, duties and responsibilities of the episcopate. He also speaks about *the Arian problem*.⁷³
- b. There are letters of consolation, like Letter 39 to Faustinus who, after the death of his sister, wanted to retire into solitude.
- c. Some other letters, like Letters 37 and 38 to Simplicius, envisage philosophical problems and blend curiously the Stoic paradoxes with the lessons of the Gospel and of the Apostle.
- d. Others, which are numerous and varied, are addressed to a priest of Milan, Orontianus, who was ordained by Saint Ambrose. Here, among other things, he expressed that the soul is heavenly substance; that it is the Spirit who intercedes for us by ineffable moaning.
- e. Other letters, of the same kind, are written to a certain Irenaeus who is unknown.

70. The French version is: Il trouve dans ses origins familiales, son education, sa pratique des affaires et, il faut l’ajouter, dans son intelligence déliée et l’affinement de sons sens moral, les qualités auxquelles se reconnaît un excellent directeur, in GUSTAVE BARDY, *En Occident : A. Jusq’au 11^e Siècle, Direction Spirituelle en Occident*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité. Ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*, edited by M. Viller, F. Cavallera, J. De Guibert, Paris, 1062.

71. Ibid.

72. The Letters of Ambrose are found online at http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/ambrose_letters_00_intro.htm

73. Ambrose deals with this matter in other letters, amongst which we find Letters 10, 11 and 12 which are addressed to the Emperors Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius respectively; Letter 20 which is addressed to his sister, Marcellina, keeping her abreast of the continuous engagements with the Arians; and Letter 21 which is addressed to Valentinian II concerning the same topic.

While revealing the religious and political situation of his time, all letters reveal a simple Ambrose, kind, obliging, and always concerned to raise souls towards God. He was surely preoccupied with the life of the church and the life of the followers of Christ.⁷⁴ In spite of the subjects which seem abstract, these last letters are personal enough to deserve to be considered among the letters giving direction.⁷⁵

2.3.3.2 *St. Jerome*⁷⁶

St Jerome advised his friend Rusticus not to set out on an unknown way without a guide, and Jerome himself wrote a number of letters of direction which are of particular interest.

Jerome's letters vary a great deal. He wrote some 150 letters to various people. Jerome's correspondence received quite a good attention and has been most widely read. This correspondence has been passed down through diverse manuscript traditions. The most famous letters are those regarding virginity⁷⁷, widowhood,⁷⁸ monastic life⁷⁹ and the clerical state,⁸⁰ and the education of young girls.⁸¹ Jerome addressed the most famous of all his letters to Eustochium, giving the reasons for a life of consecrated virginity.⁸² Jerome praised Paula⁸³ for her humility and

74. JOHANNES QUASTEN, *Ambrose of Milan, Amrosiaster and Nicetas*, in *Patrology*, IV, Allen/TX 1949, 176.

75. GUSTAVE BARDY, *En Occident : A. Jusq'au 11^e Siècle, Direction Spirituelle en Occident*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité. Ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*, edited by M. Viller, F. Cavallera, J. De Guibert, Paris, 1063.

76. LOUIS SALTET, *St Jerome in The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol 8, (1910) (on-line): <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08341a.htm> [8 June 2007]

77. Jerome's letters can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001023.htm>. Letter 22 is addressed to Estochium. It was written in Rome in 384. Letter 130 is addressed to Demetrias, and dated 414.

78. Letter 46 was written in Bethlehem in the year 386 and is addressed to Paula and Estochium. Letter 79 is addressed to Salvina.

79. Letter 14 is addressed to Heliodorus, monk and was written in the year 373 or 374. Letter 58 is addressed to Paulinus and Letter 122 is addressed to Augustine.

80. Letter 52 is addressed to Nepotian.

81. Letter 107 is addressed to Laeta and Letter 128 is addressed to Gaudentius and was written in 413.

82. An example of such letters is Letter 108.

83. Paula gave so freely to anyone in need that she had no earthly inheritance for her children. She insisted that the legacy of Christ is more precious. Paula and Eustochium were Jerome's closest confidantes and assistants. Paula died in 404 and Eustochium in 419.

generosity.⁸⁴ In Letter 22, he exhorts Eustochium to “avoid with special care the traps set for you by a desire for vainglory. Jesus says: ‘How can ye believe, who receive glory one from another?’” He also encourages Eustochium to give alms and to let God alone see him. While fasting, she should keep a cheerful face. Here, Jerome also put great emphasis on prayer without ceasing since saints were very slumber in praying and “we ought to have fixed hours for prayer, that if we are detained by work, the time may remind us of our duty.”⁸⁵

In Letter 66, addressed to Pammachius, Jerome spoke to this person who, in spite of his high rank and position, had become a monk and was now living a life of severe self-denial. In this letter, Jerome showed that he ranked chastity and virginity quite high. He also encouraged Pammachius to purchase food for the needy and to lead a spiritual life: “If thou wilt be perfect,” the Lord says, “go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor ... and come and follow me. If thou wilt be perfect. Great enterprises are always left to the free choice of those who hear of them”. He also insisted that it is not enough for the disciple to despise wealth unless he follows Christ as well. Only he who follows Christ forsakes his sins and walks hand in hand with virtue. Christ, the wisdom, is the treasure which in the scriptures a man finds in his field. Jerome was very much aware that the battle with impurity is a harder one than that with covetousness: “It is easy to cast off what clings to us from without, but a war within our borders involves far greater peril.”⁸⁶

There was also some correspondence going on between Jerome and Augustine.⁸⁷

2.3.3.3 *St. Augustine*

St. Augustine was the one who emphasized that ‘no one can walk without a guide’.⁸⁸ Augustine was not content to strive only for his own holiness. So he directed groups of clergymen, monks, and religious persons, as well as men and women living in the world. The following are amongst his correspondents:

84. In Letter 30, which St Jerome wrote in Rome, in 384.

85. Letter 22.

86. Letter 66.

87. Examples of Letters which Augustine sent to Jerome are Letters 66, 101, 131 and 132. Examples of Letters sent from Jerome to Augustine are Letters 102, 105, 112, and 142.

88. KENNETH LEECH, *Soul Friend*, London² 1994, 37.

- a. Aurelius of Carthage, Alipius of Thagaster, Erodus of Uzala, and Severus of Milève: these are Augustine's most loved bishops. They wrote to him and he to them:
- i. Aurelius of Carthage was the metropolitan respected as much as loved. With him Augustine treated, above all, some Church affairs, and when he gave him some advice he did so in a way that he kept a perfect sense of distance.
 - ii. Alipius, Bishop of Thagaster was the witness of Augustine's last struggles before his conversion, his companion at Milan and Cassiciacum. Although the two of them do not always agree on matters of detail, these divergences do not weaken their mutual affection.
 - iii. Erodus, Bishop of Azala remains a curious (or inquisitive) man who posed to Augustine the most extraordinary problems. He was interested in miracles and, after the discovery of the remains of Saint Stephen, became the most ardent promotor of his cult.
 - iv. The most loved bishop [of Augustine] was Severus of Milève: with him Augustine became very tender and confiding.
- b. Some lay persons:
- i. Dioscurus was a young Greek man who went to study at Carthage and who asked Augustine about the *Dialogues* of Cicero; Augustine answered him by inviting him to appreciate the true wisdom of the Gospels.⁸⁹
 - ii. Consentius would like some clarifications on the Trinity. Augustine sent him the clarifications asked for and showed him how Christian doctrine, though surpassing reason, does not contradict it.⁹⁰
 - iii. Laetus who had entered into ascetic life, was tempted to give in to the enticements of the world.⁹¹
 - iv. A young woman, Florentina, was put by her parents (or relatives) under the direction of the bishop who promised to lead her in the divine ways.
 - v. Ecdicia, a zealous and prudent woman, made the vow of keeping continent without asking the permission of her husband. She gave out her property as alms without being concerned about the future of

89. [SAINT AUGUSTINE], *A Translation for the 21st. Century*, translated and notes by Roland Teske and edited by Boniface Ramsey, II/2, New York/NY 2003, Letters 117-118, 102-103.

90. *Ibid.*, Letter 119, 125-128 and Letter 120, 129-140.

91. *Ibid.*, Letters 243, 164-170.

her son and was very surprised when her husband practised adultery. Augustine made her learn her true duty.⁹²

Augustine was ready to give his advice to anybody who sought it and his advice was very much heeded. Amongst other persons, he wrote to Italica,⁹³ to Fabiola,⁹⁴ to Juliana to whom he dedicated his treatise *On Widowhood* and to Proba with whom he dealt on how to pray⁹⁵ and to profit from the trials of this world.⁹⁶ Augustine's letters of spiritual direction, together with Ambrose's and Jerome's are very beneficial in the Catholic Tradition. They were adamant about their ideas since they knew well that the spiritual journey involves constant struggles.

2.4 *The Medieval Period*

2.4.1 *The Franciscan Tradition*

2.4.1.1 *Francis of Assisi*⁹⁷

The First version of the Letter to the faithful which Francis addressed to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance⁹⁸ is introduced with these words: "These are words of life and salvation. Whoever reads and follows them will find life and draw from the Lord salvation." It has been more correctly seen as an exhortation given to those first penitents who came to Francis desiring to share in his Gospel for their way of life.⁹⁹ It can also be considered as an open letter which in fact became the basic document for tertiary penitents then as well as now. One of the authors of the life of the Saint and his works states that:

The first appearance of this writing came at an intersection of monumental change for thousands of Franciscan men and women

92. *Ibid.*, Letter 262, 203-208.

93. *Ibid.*, Letters 92, 375.

94. *Ibid.*, Letter 267, 222.

95. *Ibid.*, Letters 130, 183-199.

96. *Ibid.*, Letter 131, 200-220.

97. St. Francis was born in 1181/1182 and died in 1226.

98. [ST.FRANCIS OF ASSISI], *An Earlier Exhortation to the brothers and sisters of penance (the first version of the letter to the faithful – (1209 – 1215)*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short, in *Francis of Assisi: Early documents*, I, New York/NY 1999, 41-44. The earliest manuscript of this writing is located in the Guarnacci Library in the Italian city of Volterra.

99. *Ibid.*

and became a foundation for that change. It stands at the beginning of both pontifically approved rule texts to express a textual and spiritual connection with the earlier Franciscan penitents.¹⁰⁰

Lehmann sees this work as “a contemplative prayer of praise and rejoicing.”¹⁰¹ This rejoicing is, however, balanced by the warning to those who remain in moral blindness. Francis stressed the active, urgent nature of the appeal to “doing” penance through good works. The practices of penance lead to an experience of filial relationship to God.¹⁰²

Francis exhorted those who were willing to please the Lord with their whole bodies, thus condemning sin and vices. Within these persons we find the excellent dwelling place for the Spirit of the Lord:

All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love the neighbour as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make its home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰³

According to Francis, the Spirit of the Lord rests upon the children of the Heavenly Father who are united with Our Lord Jesus Christ: “We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and

100. *Francis of Assisi. History, hagiography and hermeneutics in the early documents*, edited by Jay M. Hammond, London 2004, 91.

101. Leonhard Lehmann, *Exultation and exhortation to penance: A study of the form and content of the first version of the letter to the faithful*, 1990, in *Francis of Assisi. History, hagiography and hermeneutics in the early documents*, edited by Jay M. Hammond, London 2004, 96.

102. *Francis of Assisi. History, hagiography and hermeneutics in the early documents*, edited by Jay M. Hammond, London 2004, 97.

103. [ST.FRANCIS OF ASSISI], *An Earlier Exhortation to the brothers and sisters of penance (the first version of the letter to the faithful – (1209 – 1215)*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short, in *Francis of Assisi: Early documents*, I, New York/NY 1999, 41, 42.

sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine an example before others.”¹⁰⁴

A later admonition and exhortation to “the Brothers and Sisters of Penance” called for adherence to the Church; it spoke also of the Eucharist and the priesthood, the state of penance as a journey to God, the characteristic virtues of the penitent, the relationship of penance/*metanoia* to the identity of the Third Order.¹⁰⁵

We also find a letter of Francis addressed to St. Anthony of Padua. A former Augustinian religious, Anthony entered the Franciscan Order impressed by the joyful and simple life led by the Franciscans at Olivalis, near his Augustinian monastery. He was even impressed by the heroic death of the Franciscan missionaries sent to Morocco to convert the king to the Christian faith. Entering the Franciscan Order, Anthony accepted the responsibility of teaching the brothers. Francis wrote to him that he can do so as long as in the words of the Rule he will not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion with study of such a kind.

In a Letter to Brother Leo, Francis did not hesitate to admonish him. In the Letter to all Clerics, Francis reiterated the reaction of the Lateran Council IV against the abuses with legislation. Francis, following the directives of the Church, wrote his own exhortation.

We cannot ignore a Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples. After sending his wishes of health and peace to all of them, he reminds them of their hour of death, so as not to abandon the Lord’s commandments because of earthly cares and preoccupations. Otherwise, they will be condemned to endure punishments in hell. He firmly advised them to receive the most holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. They should set the example to the people they are responsible for or otherwise they will be judged for their lack of observance of the Law of the Lord.

2.4.1.2 Claire of Assisi¹⁰⁶

Shortly after Claire’s conversion in 1212, Francis brought her and her sister Agnes to the church of San Damiano, outside Assisi’s walls, a small church

104. *Ibid.*, 42.

105. *Francis of Assisi. History, hagiography and hermeneutics in the early documents*, edited by Jay M. Hammond, London 2004, 96.

106. She was born in 1194 and died in 1253.

which he had earlier repaired. Other women soon joined them to form the first community of Franciscan women. Earlier, in 1209, Pope Innocent III granted permission to itinerant friars to have their abode at San Damiano while preaching. They lived supported by alms. Oral directions from Francis, including his promise of perpetual care and spiritual exhortations were the foundation of their religious life. Nevertheless, sometime before 1217, Francis wrote out a brief “form of life” for Claire and her sisters to follow. For more stability, Claire started writing her own Rule for which she then tried to get papal approval, which she did just two days before her death.

Claire is undoubtedly to be considered as a great figure in the religious female world of the Middle Ages. However, she is not a solitary figure.¹⁰⁷ Such women belonged to a group of women who wanted to be and felt themselves to be subjects and not objects in the life of the Church.¹⁰⁸ These women wrote, gave advice, suggested guidelines and sought to settle clerical matters, even through the foundation of a movement for women. Besides writing the Rule as a “form of life”, Claire also wrote letters. We have her letter to Ermentrude of Bruges and four letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague, the daughter of the King of Bohemia and the Queen of Hungary.

Ermentrude of Bruges was encouraged by Claire to remain faithful until death to Christ, to whom she had promised to be solely his. She would definitely be repaid by him for this. The fact that after carrying our cross we will enter the glory of heaven is to encourage Ermentrude to be steadfast to her way of life in Christ. Love of God and Christ are to direct her path. She was encouraged to “pray and be always vigilant” and to fulfil her ministry through poverty and sincere humility.¹⁰⁹

Agnes of Prague had rejected the marriage proposal of Emperor Frederick II and established a monastery where she and other women could live like the Poor Sisters

107. Among other women we find Eloise (1101–1164), Hildegard di Bingen (who died in 1179), Maria d’Oignies, Beatrice di Tienen, Mtilde di Magdeburgo, Matilde di Hackeborn, Hadewijch and Gertrude di Helfta. These are mentioned in FREDERIC RAURELL, *Introduzione. Verso il femminile delle fonti francescane in Chiara. Francescanesimo al femminile*, edited by David Covi – Dino Dozzi, Rome/Italy² 1992, 16-18.

108. FREDERIC RAURELL, *Introduzione. Verso il femminile delle fonti francescane in Chiara. Francescanesimo al femminile*, edited by David Covi – Dino Dozzi, Rome/Italy² 1992, 15.

109. [CLARE OF ASSISI], *Clare’s letter to Ermentrude of Bruges*, http://www.fransiscanfriator/stf_st_clare_of_assisi_writings.htm [9 June 2007].

at San Damiano. Claire encouraged Agnes that by doing this, she “took a spouse of a more noble stock, who will keep your virginity ever unspotted and unsullied.”¹¹⁰ She would remain a virgin because Christ was her spouse who would watch over her to keep her virginity always immaculate. In the First letter she encouraged her: “Be strengthened in the holy service which you have undertaken out of an ardent desire for the Poor Crucified.” She blessed Agnes for embracing wholeheartedly the blessed and holy poverty. As such she was to rejoice and be glad.¹¹¹

Together with virginity, Claire esteemed poverty very highly. She included it even in her theology and in her way of life – poverty concentrated on God. Internal poverty keeps us free to be endorsed in the profound mystery of God and his Kingdom.¹¹²

2.4.2 The Dominican Tradition

With the Dominicans, spiritual direction became directed more towards the laity, though at first they tried to avoid long-term commitments in the care of individuals. However, they directed their preaching and teaching to the new urban classes and, in Germany in particular, to sectarian groups such as the Beguines, Beghards and Fraticelli. By the thirteenth century, laymen were themselves acting as directors as in the early monastic movement.

2.4.2.1 Saint Dominic¹¹³ and Saint Peter Martyr¹¹⁴

Saint Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers, did not leave many of his writings. Even in Dominic spirituality we find spiritual direction by means of

110. *The lady: Clare of Assisi: early Documents*, translations and editing by Regis J. Armstrong. NY 2006, 43-44. Claire is also specific about the life of Agnes – she is the virgin bride of Christ. (First letter to Agnes (1Lag) 7, Fonti Francescane (FF) 2859; Second letter to Agnes (2Lag) 18, Fonti Francescane 2878 and Third Letter to Agnes (3Lag) 25, Fonti Francescane 2893 in FREDERIC RAURELL, *Introduzione. Verso il femminile delle fonti francescane in Chiara. Francescanesimo al femminile*, edited by David Covi – Dino Dozzi, Rome/Italy² 1992, 137.)

111. First letter to Agnes in FREDERIC RAURELL, *Introduzione. Verso il femminile delle fonti francescane in Chiara. Francescanesimo al femminile*, edited by David Covi – Dino Dozzi, Rome/Italy² 1992

112. FREDERIC RAURELL, *Introduzione. Verso il femminile delle fonti francescane in Chiara. Francescanesimo al femminile*, edited by David Covi – Dino Dozzi, Rome/Italy² 1992, 413.

113. He was born in Castile in about 1170. He died on 6 August 1221.

114. This Saint was born at Verona in 1206 and died near Milan on 6 April 1252.

letter-writing. In May 1220, Saint Dominic himself wrote an open letter to the sisters. He addressed the letter to the dear prioress of Madrid and all the nuns in the community. In this letter the Saint expressed his delight in knowing that all members of the religious community were following the holy way of life. He encouraged the community to fast so that they will be able to enjoy the crown of glory. He also encouraged silence in their buildings and to observe the Rule and obedience to the prioress.¹¹⁵

We also find a letter of Saint Peter Martyr to the prioress of Saint Peter's in Campo Santo, Milan. He expressed his delight in knowing that the prioress was able to acquire strength in living the monastic life. Sacrifice was needed on her side to reach this end. He instructed her to pray for him so that he would be able to acquire perfection in the eyes of God. He instructed her:

Abandon all that is vain and strive to fulfil your ministry by your way of life, and clothe yourself in holiness, so that you can pay your due service to him who is the Holy of Holies. Be upright in your riches, I beg you, modest in your speech, discerning in what you command, eager to help others, reliable in your advice, circumspect in the answers you give people, and inclined always towards patience. Show devotion to the older sisters, gentleness to the younger ones, and kindness to your equals; show yourself stern to the proud, kind to the humble, merciful to the penitent, unyielding to the obstinate.¹¹⁶

Here, we can see the encouragement for the living of the perfect life.

2.4.2.2 Saint Catherine of Siena¹¹⁷

Saint Catherine of Siena will always remain an outstanding personality in the life of the Church for her zeal for the salvation of souls and for the benefit of the Church founded by Christ. As a theologian and Doctor of the Church,¹¹⁸ Catherine

115. [SAINT DOMINIC], *Early Dominicans. Selected Writings*. edited with an introduction by Simon Tugwell, New York/NY 1982, 394.

116. [SAINT PETER MARTYR], *Early Dominicans. Selected Writings*. edited with an introduction by Simon Tugwell, New York/NY 1982, 410.

117. She was born in 1347 and died in 1380.

118. On 4 October 1970, Pope Paul VI declared Catherine of Siena Doctor Ecclesiae, Doctor of the Church. This title has been conferred on relatively few Christian saints and on no woman before

of Siena drew on her experience of God's transforming love to create an original body of Christian doctrine, prayer, and counsel.¹¹⁹ St Catherine of Siena became spiritual director to a circle of friends, her *bella brigada*, and she wrote numerous letters of guidance.¹²⁰ The essential characteristic of the mystical knowledge which we meet in such letters is its affective dimension. Such knowledge is rooted in love which leads the person to know God and divine things through the awareness of union with God experienced within oneself.¹²¹ She was well aware of this. In fact, in a letter to Raymond of Capua, she explains that the gift of writing was given to her so that "when I came down from the heights I should have some way to pour out my heart so that it would not burst."¹²²

Her teaching, even in correspondence, displays a rich knowledge of Scripture together with a certain familiarity with patristic and medieval theology. Certainly there is evidence in her writings of some acquaintance with patristic literature. There is evidence of her familiarity with St. Augustine. This is not surprising, for Augustinian theological thought was the most prevalent in the Church of the fourteenth century. However, the Dominicans, with whom Catherine had so much contact, were beginning to adopt Thomistic teaching. The result is that Catherine's message and that of Scripture fuse into one.¹²³

Catherine's theological output is not extensive. It consists of three works: the *Dialogue*, her *Letters*, and her *Prayers*.¹²⁴ Catherine's Letters treat the same theological topics as in *Dialogue*, but often in a more easily digestible manner, because in them she usually confines these to a few, or simply one, of her themes

1970. It places Catherine among the Church's major theologians and recognizes the relevance of her teaching for the whole Church and for all time. The Pope declared that Catherine was able to communicate to others "the word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" for her own benefit and for the benefit of the whole body of the Church. As such she was able to grasp what is essential in the Christian life and thus she was able to explore the depths of insight into the central Christian mystery of God's love for humanity in Jesus Christ. MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the Theologian* in *Spirituality Today* 40/1 (1988) 4-5.

119. MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian* in *Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 4.

120. KENNETH LEECH, *Soul Friend*, London² 1994, 51.

121. MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian* in *Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 5.

122. *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena* edited by P. Misciattelli, Giunti, 1940, 272 in MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian* in *Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 6.

123. G. Cavallini, "Fonte neotestamentarie degli scritte cateriniani," *ATTI*, 44-69 in MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian* in *Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 11.

124. Each of these belongs to a different literary genre. In her literature Catherine goes through the trouble of applying images which she used to observe in the life around her: light filtering through a dark passage, a building in the course of construction, the kitchen fire eagerly consuming the

and presents her thought in a lively, forceful style. Almost four hundred of her letters have been preserved. Catherine addressed her letters to people from all walks of life: members of her family, her friends and acquaintances, and public figures in church and state. Her correspondents can be said to represent the famous and the infamous, as well as the ordinary woman and man of her day. She was able to deal with the different temperaments, needs and circumstances of the persons to whom she wrote.¹²⁵ She was able to do this because she could perfectly understand that human existence is limited, incomplete and imperfect. Nevertheless, such an anthropological premise has to be taken seriously.

When she wrote to Pope Gregory XI,¹²⁶ she addressed him as her most holy and most revered father in Jesus Christ. She spoke to him in the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary. As a poor unworthy daughter, servant and slave of the servants of Christ, she really desired to see him a good shepherd. She encouraged him to learn from the Crucified Christ to love his flock just as Christ did and to give himself unto them. Nevertheless, she considered this man as created on the image and likeness of God and it was by love that his father and mother gave him substance, conceiving and bearing a son. It is for this reason that God has given His Son to man, who takes our humanity to make a great peace through his death on the cross. So, by his death He destroyed our death:

And if He commended the love which gives one's life for one's friend, what then shall we say of that most burning and perfect love which gave its life for its foe? For we through sin had become foes of God. Oh, sweet and loving Word, who with love hast found Thy flock once more, and with love hast given Thy life for them, and hast brought them back to Thy fold, restoring to them the Grace which they had lost!

wood thrown onto it, a tall tree laden with fruit, the bridge across the Arno in Florence, a Tuscan vineyard, the mirror in which she sees her own reflection, the vast ocean with its peaceful surface. All of these images, as well as many more, draw her beyond their physical reality to a further spiritual reality.

125. See MARY O'DRISCOLL, "Catherine the Letter-Writer," *Dominican Ashram* 3, 3 (1984) 107-13. Besides their theological value, her Letters are important because they provide interesting autobiographical and historical facts. When we consider them as literature, then they rank Catherine among the great Italian letterwriters of the fourteenth century. See also G. PAPINI, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (Firenze, 1937), I, 407-32, in MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian in Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 9.

126. See *Le Lettere* 371, V, 274, in MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian in Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 8-9.

Thus, she went on asking Pope Gregory XI:

I pray you therefore, in the name of Christ crucified, and I will that you do me this grace, to overcome their malice with your benignity. . . . For they have breathed the stench of the lives of many rulers whom you know yourself to be incarnate demons, and fallen into terrible fears, so that they did like Pilate, who not to lose his authority killed Christ; so did they, for not to lose their state, they maltreated you. I ask you then, father, to show them mercy.

She assured him that by so doing, he will lead them to “lay their heads on your bosom. Then you will rejoice, and we shall rejoice, because by love you have restored the sheep to the fold of Holy Church.”¹²⁷

Although her life may include some extraordinary phenomena, her doctrine deals with the ordinary path of holiness open to all Christians: the way of faith, hope, and love. She wrote to Francesco, a tailor in Florence: “The way has been made. It is the doctrine of the Christ crucified. Whoever walks along this way . . . reaches the most perfect light.”¹²⁸ All her teaching is concerned with this way. She follows its every turn from its fearful, faltering beginning to its last stage of loving union. For this reason her theology can be described broadly as a self-understanding that becomes a God-understanding, which in turn leads to further self-understanding.

2.5 *The Modern Period*

2.5.1 *The Carmelite Tradition*

In the teaching of the great Carmelite saints, St Teresa of Avila¹²⁹ and St John of the Cross,¹³⁰ the spiritual director assumes a central role and the need of competent spiritual guidance is seen to be essential.¹³¹

127. *Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena*, translated by Vida D. Scudder 1906 in MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the Theologian in Spirituality Today* 40/1 (1988) 12.

128. See *Le Lettere* 249, IV, 61 in MARY O'DRISCOLL, *Catherine the theologian in Spirituality today* 40/1 (1988) 4-17.

129. She was born at Avila, Old Castile, on 28 March, 1515 and died at Alba de Tormes, on 4 October, 1582.

130. She was founder (with St. Teresa) of the Discalced Carmelites. She is doctor of mystic theology. She was born at Hontoveros, Old Castile, on 24 June, 1542 and died at Ubeda, Andalusia, on 14 December, 1591.

131. KENNETH LEECH, *Soul Friend*, London² 1994, 61.

2.5.1.1 St. Teresa of Avila

In 1492, that is, less than twenty years before Teresa was born, Columbus opened up the Western Hemisphere to European colonialization. In 1517 Luther started the Protestant Reformation. Out of all this change, Teresa came out pointing the way from outer turmoil to inner peace!

The need for sound theological training and experience of advanced prayer in spiritual directors was firmly insisted upon by St. Teresa of Avila, one of the greatest spiritual masters of all time.¹³² Teresa herself suffered much at the hands of half-learned directors. They knew enough to think they knew it all. Some of them had no personal knowledge of advanced prayer, and thus assumed that Teresa was being proud and presumptuous when she related some of the favours that the Lord was bestowing on her. St. Teresa was fully in accord with the biblical idea that it is foolish to trust (solely) in oneself in the area of spiritual experiences, since it is easy to be deluded.

Nevertheless it is St. Teresa herself who listed the qualities she would look for in a spiritual director. She insisted that he should be living a deep and experienced prayerful life. He should also be endowed with theological knowledge, especially in regard to the spiritual life. Spiritual depth entails knowing advanced prayer such as the prayer of quiet or maybe even the prayer of union and beyond. St. Teresa lamented the fact that many spiritual directors of her day knew the prayer of quiet only from their study books, if even that much. However, if a person is experiencing the prayer of quiet for the first time and can't find anyone who possesses first-hand knowledge of this stage of prayer, it would still be helpful to consult someone who truly knows from studying, such as a college professor in the area of Christian spirituality.

St. Teresa advised that we should consult people who have studied spirituality,

132. "From the point of view of spiritual guidance, St Teresa's most important cry was for good and wise directors for her nuns. She herself had suffered much from the unlearned and the unwise, and she was emphatic about the need for discerning, wise and proper direction for those seeking to make progress in the spiritual life. She was not prepared to accept holy men if they did not know what they were talking about or dealing with in terms of experience along the spiritual path. Her own works were written at the request of others and they provide a guide in themselves to correct spiritual awareness of the variety of developments which can occur to the soul on its journey to the Lord of all." MICHAEL BRUNDELL, *Themes in Carmelite spiritual direction in Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990, 70.

unless of course we have already studied it ourselves. Another quality which the director should possess is to have a balanced view about unusual experiences in prayer. He or she should be aware that deception is possible in prayer, but also that God can and really often does deal with individual people in the life of prayer. The balanced director should realize that not every claim to hear the Spirit is really what it purports to be. On the other hand, there should be awareness that not all grace is unperceived. She was fully aware that many a time we tend to seek a director just because he or she is likely to agree with us regarding our pet theories and will approve of all our plans – spiritual and otherwise. This should not be the case if we are truly interested to advance in our spiritual life. Teresa greatly held that a genuine spiritual director should have a genuine interest in the well-being of the directee. He or she should take a holistic approach and think of the consequences of spiritual advice on the whole structure of the individual directee's life.

Her correspondence was most extensive, including letters to bishops, archbishops, kings, ladies of rank, gentlemen of the world, abbots, priors, nuncios, her confessors, her brothers and sisters, rectors of colleges, father provincials of the Society of Jesus, nuns and superiors of her convents and monasteries, learned doctors of different religious orders, and even most eminent saints, such as St Peter of Alcantara, St. Francis Borgia, St John of the Cross and others.¹³³

The letters picture the Saint as a possessor of “common sense” in a most remarkable manner. She was endowed with a solidity of judgement, and a prudence and sweetness in all her actions. She watched against melancholy and *never* allowed anyone to enter the Order who seemed to be even remotely affected by it.

In her so-called Second letter to her brother SeDor Lorenzo de Cepeda,¹³⁴ which she wrote about 1577 from Toledo, she encouraged him: “It is a great favour from God, that what gives rest to others tires you. But you must not on this account give up your business; for we must serve God not as *we* wish, but as He wishes.” She even wrote to him Letters XXXII and XXXIII, where she gave him some spiritual advice.

133. Translator's Preface – translated from the Spanish by the Rev. John Dalton, London, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/teresa/letters/letters.html>.

134. [ST. TERESA], *The Letters of St. Teresa*, translated from the Spanish by John Dalton (1902), in <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/teresa/letters/letters.html> [9 June 2007], Letter XII.

She was so able to express herself regarding the greatness as well as the humility of God. In her Letter XIII, to Don Alonso Valasquez, Bishop of Osma, she expressed herself as such:

Consider, in the first place, the divine nature of the Eternal Word, of the Father united with the human nature, which of itself had no being till God gave it one. Consider also the ineffable love and profound humility with which God annihilated Himself, man becoming God, and God becoming man. Consider that magnificence and bounty with which He exercised His power, by manifesting Himself to men, and making them partakers of His glory, His power, and His greatness.

To the most Illustrious Lord, Don Sancho D'Avila, afterwards Bishop of Jaen, then confessor to the Saint, she addressed Letter XVI, dated 1580. In this letter she consoles him on the death of his mother, and gives him some instruction how to act in regard to certain scruples which troubled him.

Letter XXV, dated 1577 and addressed to the Reverend Geronimo Gracian de la Madre de Dios, is conspicuous for its spirituality and the beautiful instructions it contains on the interior life. In this letter, St Teresa wrote: "I wish to have no other prayer, but that which shall give me an increase in virtues". Her Letter XLVII is addressed to the Carmelites of St. Joseph's Convent at Seville. The Saint encourages and consoles them on account of a violent persecution which had been raised against them and the reform. She disapproves of the conduct of some of the sisters.

Letter LV – to Mother Maria de San Joseph, Prioress of Seville – was written at the time when the persecution was still raging at Seville. The Saint exhorts the prioress to patience, and speaks on several other topics which are crucial for one to get on well with others when governing others as prioress.

2.5.1.2 St. John of the Cross

The qualities of genuineness, empathy and understanding are the very qualities that appear in the spiritual direction of Saint John of the Cross,¹³⁵ one of the world's

135. "St John of the Cross (1542-1591), associated with St Teresa in the reform of Carmel, with his poetic soul has given to the Church a depth of understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ the true shepherd and guide. . . But his works, while theologically complex, are still

most reliable spiritual guides, as we can see from his letters. We have today only 33 letters, either whole or in part, from the pen of John of the Cross.¹³⁶

Ironically, the people who benefited the most from his spiritual guidance destroyed his other letters. St. Teresa of Jesus, for example, following a familiar practice, routinely destroyed letters after she answered them. That John wrote to Teresa may be seen in his July 6, 1581 letter to Catalina de Jesús, a discalced Carmelite nun in Palencia. This letter, the first in our present collection, was apparently included with another letter that John wrote to Teresa, for he says: “I write these lines trusting that our Madre [Teresa] will send them on to you if you are not with her”.¹³⁷ Teresa highly regarded John’s skill as a director, stating that “our Lord has given him special grace for that purpose.”¹³⁸ In fact, he guided her own soul during a crucial period in her spiritual journey when they were both in Avila from 1572 to 1574. Forever after, she regarded him as “the father of my soul.”¹³⁹ It is a lamentable loss to the history of spiritual direction that the correspondence between these great spiritual teachers has not survived.¹⁴⁰

comprehensible to those who really take the journey of the spiritual seriously. Poetry must be savoured meditatively; his maxims are pithy, relevant and very much down to earth; his letters are replete with practical guidance for the individual and related to the concrete situation. The commentaries explain for the soul wandering the paths of darkness to light the different phases of transforming union and the activity of grace on nature. Applications may vary, but the essential is the same. John of the Cross realized that sometimes written guides are needed in the absence of good and holy learned directors.” MICHAEL BRUNDELL, *Themes in Carmelite spiritual direction in Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990, 72.

136. All quotations from John of the Cross are taken from *The Collected Works of John of the Cross*, rev. ed., trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991). The letters appear on pages 736-764 of this new edition, and will be cited both by letter and by page number. Thus, “Letter 4, 738” refers the reader to John’s Letter N. 4, on page 738 of the new revised edition.
137. Letter 1, 736.
138. KEVIN CULLIGAN, *Qualities of a guide: spiritual direction in John of the Cross’s letters* (2000) (on-line) : http://www.icspublications.org/archives/others/cs6_7.html [20 December 2005].
139. Letter of Teresa of Jesus to Ana de Jesús, December, 1578 (#261), in *The Letters of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers, 2 vols. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1950) 2: 625.
140. More tragically still, is that the communities of Carmelite nuns in Granada, Málaga, and Sevilla, for whom John was a spiritual guide, burned his letters to protect against their falling into the hands of one of his fellow Discalced Carmelite friar, Fray Diego Evangelista. When John was his religious superior, Diego, retaliating for reprimands received years earlier, was determined to drive him out of the Order during the last year of John’s life on the grounds of indiscreet relationships with the Carmelite nuns. See FEDERICO RUIZ, et al., *God Speaks in the Night: The Life, Times, and Teaching of St. John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, Washington/DC 1991, 297, 343, 362-364.

The letters that remain, have been written during the last ten years of John's life when he was at the height of his effectiveness as a spiritual director; some twenty of these can be considered letters of spiritual direction. They were written to Carmelite friars and nuns (both individuals and communities) and some lay persons. These letters reveal John's genuineness, care, and understanding.

Madre Leonor de San Gabriel was a Carmelite nun in the convent of Cordoba who felt deeply misunderstood by her Father Provincial. John writes to her in the summer of 1590 from Madrid. While understanding her affliction and grieving over the situation because of the harm it can inflict on her spirit and health, he stresses that he firmly believes that it was a temptation of the devil, in order to deflect their energy from doing God's things. He encourages her (calling her, my daughter) to give herself greatly to prayer, for after all we have no other good or security or comfort than God: "... it is right that we not long for support or comfort in anything but God".¹⁴¹ Here, John, projecting himself as a spiritual father, empathically understands her affliction and expresses his care in the grief he feels over the potential harm it can do to her. At the same time, he genuinely shares his assessment of the situation, urging her to have courage in her commitment to God, reminding her that she lives for God, and not for the provincial.

In his letters to Doña Juana de Pedraza,¹⁴² we can deduct that she was undergoing prolonged periods of spiritual darkness and had complained that he was too far away and his letters too infrequent to help her, and she wanted the help of other spiritual directors to whom she might have more ready access. He told her: "I have felt your grief, afflictions and loneliness. These, in silence, ever tell me so much that the pen cannot declare it."¹⁴³

Then, in the body of the letter, John speaks genuinely to her concerns:

In what concern the soul, it is safest not to lean on anything or desire anything. A soul should find its support wholly and entirely in its director, for not to do so would amount to no longer wanting a

141. Letter 22, 757-758.

142. She was a single woman in her early thirties, living in Granada, John had been her spiritual director when he was stationed there from 1582 to 1588. In June 1588, John was transferred hundreds of miles to the north to Segovia, but continued to guide her through the mail. We do not have Juana's letters to John, but we have two of his to her.

143. On January 28, 1589, John wrote from Segovia to Juana in Granada.

director. And when one director is sufficient and suitable, all others are useless or a hindrance. Let not the soul be attached to anything, for since prayer is not wanting, God will take care of its possessions; they belong to no other owner, nor should they.¹⁴⁴

Juana continued through most of 1589 writing to John, complaining that her darkness was not lifting and accusing him of forgetting her because she had not received any letters from him. On October 12, 1589, John again wrote to her from Segovia. Again his letter is marked with genuineness and care:

Jesus be in your soul and thanks to Him that he has enabled me not to forget the poor, as you say, or be idle, as you say. For it greatly vexes me to think you believe what you say; this would be very bad after so many kindnesses on your part when I least deserved them. That's all I need now is to forget you! Look, how could this be so in the case of one who is in my soul, as you are?¹⁴⁵

The passage thus indicates John's ability to express strong emotion to his directee when he judged it appropriate to do so. Yet, at the same time the very next line conveys how he truly cherished her. After a prolonged exhortation to walk in her "darknesses and voids of spiritual poverty" with trust in God, John concluded his letter, as he began it, with genuineness and care:

Desire no other path than this and adjust your soul to it (for it is a good one) and receive Communion as usual. Go to confession when you have something definite; you don't have to discuss these things with anyone. Should you have some problem, write to me about it. Write soon, and more frequently. Commend me also to God, my daughter in the Lord.¹⁴⁶

Madre Leonor Bautista, a Carmelite nun in Beas, was quite upset because her community did not re-elect her as their prioress. He wrote to her as such:

144. Letter 11, 744-745.

145. Letter 22, 757-758.

146. From Segovia, October 12, 1589. Fray John of the Cross (Letter 19, 754-55).

... in remembering that since God called you to live an apostolic life, which is a life of contempt, he is leading you along its road, I am consoled. . . For it is God himself who wishes to be their riches, comfort, and delightful glory.¹⁴⁷

John demonstrated genuineness and caring in a letter to Madre Ana de Jesús Jimena, distraught over his transfer from Segovia where he had been her director for three years. He wrote to Ana:

Now, until God gives us this good in heaven, pass the time in the virtues of mortification and patience, desiring to resemble somewhat in suffering this great God of ours, humbled and crucified. This life is not good if it is not an imitation of his life. May His Majesty preserve you and augment his love in you as his holy beloved. Amen.¹⁴⁸

One recipient of his letters, a Carmelite nun in Toledo, testified that a letter from him had the same effect as hearing him speak.¹⁴⁹

At the same time, his letters suggest that John was capable of pursuing his own agenda rather than responding directly to the person's expressed issues and needs. One example is a letter to Ana de Jesús and the Carmelite sisters at Beas, where John defended the long absence of his letters with an eloquent statement on the value of "silence and work" over "writing or speaking".¹⁵⁰

On another occasion, he wrote to a young Castilian lady who desired to be a Carmelite nun. He gives apparently unsought advice about sin, the Lord's passion, and seeking true glory, ending the letter with a prayer that God will grant her his spirit.

His learning may be seen in his combined use of Sacred Scripture, the theology of divine transcendence, and the psychology of attachment or addiction

147. Letter 9, 742-3.

148. On July 6, 1591, from Madrid. Letter 25, 759-60.

149. See *Collected Works*, rev. ed., 735.

150. Letter 8, 741-742.

to challenge persons in the journey towards God, not by pleasant feelings, but in deep faith, concerned only with living in union with the divine will. To one of his fellow Carmelite friars who sought his advice on how to occupy one's will in God alone "by loving God above all things", John replied:

It is worth knowing, then, that the appetite is the mouth of the will. It is opened wide when it is not encumbered or occupied with any mouthful of pleasure. When the appetite is centred on something, it becomes narrow by that very fact, since outside of God everything is narrow.¹⁵¹

John's discretion is expressed in words that imply practical and natural judgment of internal realities and the virtue which moderates external behaviour in his letter to his dear friend, benefactor, and directee, Doña Ana de Mercado y Peñalosa, the "very noble and devout" lay woman for whom he wrote his masterful poem and commentary, *The Living Flame of Love*.¹⁵² Writing to Doña Ana, then a widow in Granada, from the "holy solitude"¹⁵³ in La Peñuela, on August 19, 1591, four short months before his death, John advises: "Take care of your soul and do not confess scruples or first movements or imaginings in which the soul does not desire to be detained. Look after your health, and do not fail to pray when you can."¹⁵⁴ Doña Ana's condition at the time of this letter is unknown; but there appears to have been a health problem, possibly a lingering depression related to the successive deaths of her husband and daughter, together with other family misfortunes over the previous ten years. As a general rule, John would have been the first to insist on continuous prayer; in particular cases, he also knew that illness can adversely affect one's ability to pray.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, with this particular woman at this time in her life he counsels her to take care of her health first and pray when she is able. Evidently, Doña Ana was also prone to scruples, a neurotic and often very painful obsession with religious and/or moralistic ideas. Because these obsessive thoughts (e.g., images or "first movements" of attraction or revulsion toward objects) are not voluntary, there is no sin in such mental activity, regardless of its content. Therefore John directs Doña Ana not to confess them in sacramental penance.

151. Letter 13, 748-749.

152. Prologue, 1.

153. Letter 31, 763.

154. Letter 28, 761.

155. See Letters 1-9, where John acknowledges the disturbing effects of «bodily indisposition,» «bad humor,» and «melancholia» in one's prayer life.

He gives the same counsel to a discalced Carmelite nun suffering from scruples to whom he wrote a year or so earlier, shortly before Pentecost: "If you could put an end to your scruples, I think it would be better for your quietude of soul not to confess during these days."¹⁵⁶ After acknowledging with empathic understanding how difficult it is to break the obsessional process, John recommends some practices to help her do just that. The first is not to allow her obsessional thoughts of sin or unworthiness keep her from the communion rail. "Receive communion on Pentecost in addition to those days on which you usually receive." Next, he recommends the practice of silence: "When something distasteful or unpleasant comes your way, remember Christ crucified and be silent. Live in faith and hope, even though you are in darkness, because it is in this darkness that God protects the soul." Finally, he directs her to practice trust in God: "Read, pray, rejoice in God, both your good and your salvation. May He grant you this good and this salvation and conserve it all until the day of eternity. Amen, Amen."¹⁵⁷

We see clearly John's approach in spiritual direction. He counselled persons to let go of inordinate emotional attachment to specific desires, thoughts, memories, images, and interior movements, no matter how religious or spiritual, and instead to centre their mental energies on the incomprehensibly good God present in the depths of their being.

John maintained, above all, that the Holy Spirit is a person's primary and ultimate guide. As such the human director is merely the Holy Spirit's instrument in this guidance. John firmly believed that the Christian spiritual journey itself is one of personal transformation through dark faith and self-transcending love. John similarly cautioned the Carmelite community at Beas de Segura where he served as both confessor and spiritual director following his first assignment to Andalusia in 1578:

The waters of inward delights do not spring from the earth. One must open toward heaven the mouth of desire, empty of all other fullness, that thus it may not be reduced or restricted by some mouthful of another pleasure, but truly empty and open toward God who says: Open your mouth wide and I will fill it [Ps 81, 11].

Serve God, my beloved daughters in Christ, following in his footsteps

156. Letter 4.

157. Letter 20, 755-756.

of mortification, in utter patience, in total silence, and with every desire to suffer, becoming executioners of your own satisfactions, mortifying yourselves, if perhaps something remains that must die and something still impedes the inner resurrection of the Spirit who dwells within your souls. Amen.¹⁵⁹

2.5.2 St. Ignatius of Loyola¹⁵⁹

When the Jesuit community was in the process of growing over four continents, Ignatius felt the need to strengthen the bonds that held the Society together through mail, even though sixteenth century mail was so slow. Though the reality that the Jesuit community was ever growing in number was a very happy one, it brought about with it the other hard reality of separation. The community originated from a very closely knit group of university friends. Now it was only mail and correspondence that could allow for an exchange of news about different men and their apostolates, and ensure that the same plan and manner of living was kept intact by all, while keeping affective bonds. As a consequence, Ignatius urged his followers to write letters not as a hobby but as an obligation for them so that they would strengthen each other and inform each other with each other's news. He himself accepted the responsibility of answering all the letters he received and of carrying on a never-ending worldwide correspondence.¹⁶⁰

Although his *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* bring brilliantly out his personality, in his letters the abstract becomes more personal – both on the part of the writer and the addressee – his method and his rule take on a here-and-now meaning.¹⁶¹ We have approximately seven thousand of his letters, some long, some short. He wrote more than these. He was a man who took great pains at writing carefully worded letters. Like all Basques, he had a respect for the word, to the word pronounced and expressed, and a kind of veneration for the word that was written. In each word he expressed, there was the full intention of what it meant. As such each word was rendered rich in its expressive density.¹⁶²

158. Letter 7, 740-741.

159. He was born in 1491 at the castle of Loyola above Azpeitia in Guipuscoa and died at Rome, on 31 July, 1556.

160. IDIGORAS J. IGNACIO TELLECHEA, *Ignatius of Loyola. The pilgrim saint*, translated from Spanish, edited and with a preface by Cornelius Michael Buckley, Chicago/IL 1994², 494.

161. *Ibid.*, 495.

162. *Ibid.*

His letters narrate, counsel, exhort and give orders. They also set out plans for the undertaking of a crusade against the Turks. Mail suited Ignatius quite well. The correspondence shows that he reaffirmed principles, directed business affairs, solved problems and brought the best out of given circumstances. He also revealed “his top priorities in these pieces of correspondence; his aspirations and his ideals, his worries, his mettle before adversity and in the face of confrontation; his sentiments of affection, gratitude, and patience, and even a certain dissimulated irony sometimes shows up.”¹⁶³

He corresponded with Charles V, Philip II, John III of Portugal, with members of his own family, with Gouveia, with one of the Barcelona women who once looked after him, and with some particular nuns, cardinals, bishops, his companions, novices, high-placed ladies, ordinary women. He was never afraid of any of his correspondents and thus he faced each and every one of them squarely in all types of circumstances. He was indifferent towards the accepted social conventions of his time. His correspondence addressed each pleasantly and with grave courtesy, giving him or her a small light that may illuminate truth in a singular, personal way. A word of parting coming with affection and pointing toward transcendence was always present: “May it please God that we may know His most holy will and fulfil it”.

It is to be reminded that the original reason of Ignatius’ letters was that while dealing with the members of his evolving society individually, he was to safeguard the union and uniformity of the whole group.¹⁶⁴ It was he himself who sent his followers away from where he was. He was ready to sacrifice the community spirit. The letters reached their objective because they gave the Society life and gradually, over a period of time, they gave birth to the living entity well before the rules came into existence. Some of these letters already contained a nearly complete set of rules because they indicated the patterns that the Society was later to adopt.¹⁶⁵

However, he wanted to know the news about the men he sent and wanted them to know the news about one another. So he encouraged them to write to him their news. Being a man of insight, Ignatius soon came to realize that:

163. Ibid.

164. Ibid., 496.

165. Ibid.

apart from their importance for the members of the Society, these letters should be shared with others, non-Jesuits, who were true friends of ‘the least Society’ and who were in some ways involved with its mission. The letters provided an insight into the lives his men were leading and into the work they were doing, but they were generally scribbled out quickly and at random and were not meant to be broadcast.¹⁶⁶

Non-Jesuits who were friends of the Society, were fully aware that the founder was receiving mail from all over the continents. However, he was “very much ashamed” to share them with them. So he imposed on all Jesuits the norm that they should write a well-structured “principal letter” that could be shown to others, and therefore edifying in content, in addition to a second letter whose style would be less formal, and whose content could be written out of the abundance of the heart and without order.¹⁶⁷

In his letter to Father Pierre Favre, received by Pierre on January 25, 1543, (the day of the feast of the conversion of St. Paul), Ignatius instructed him about the care to be given in of letter-writing: “They should devote this letter to a description of their spiritual activities, and are to leave the more mundane, but interesting, news items for additional enclosures.” Since Ignatius found that all were deficient in this regard, he sent a copy of his letter to everyone.¹⁶⁸

Obedience was of crucial importance for Ignatius. To Father Giovanni Battista Viola, and to many other people, including to Father Giovanni Francesco Araldo, he wrote on obedience. To Father Viola,¹⁶⁹ Ignatius advised him that, since he would be arriving several months after the school year had begun, it would be good for him to spend his first months brushing up on his Latin. When he did not succeed, he wrote to Ignatius. Thus, Ignatius replied while emphasizing on blind obedience: “You yourself can judge whether you are seeking to obey, or whether you are submitting your judgement to whatever decision I make. If you so abound

166. *Ibid.*, 497.

167. Letter 7.

168. <http://www8.georgetoen.edu/centers/woodstock/ignatius.htm>.

169. Father Viola entered the Society as a priest in February 1540. He was among the first Italians to enter the Society. In 1541 he was sent to Paris by Ignatius for further studies and to be, at the same time, superior of the young Jesuits attending the university.

in judgement of your own and are convinced that you are wasting your time, where is the submission of your judgement?" Closing: "I close asking our Lord in His infinite goodness to give us the fullness of his perfect grace, so that we may know His most holy will and perfectly fulfil it".

To the Scholastics at Alcalá, he wrote on maturing spirituality. He gave them counsels which are meant to shape a youthful scholastic into the mature Jesuit; they will eventually evolve into "rules for Scholastics". He mentioned purity of heart, to speak only out of necessity, to love with a tender charity. He admonished them to do nothing which could not be done in the presence of God and his creatures. He also encouraged them to behold the person of Christ in our superiors. Perseverance in the vocation to which God calls us is also important.

Ignatius wrote to the Fathers and brothers studying at Coimbra as regards perfection. He learned of certain "holy follies" practiced by these young Jesuits at the College of Coimbra. Ignatius tells them of the need to restrain their fervour. He suggested to them ways of exercising zeal during years of study, thus they should offer their studies to God, they should seek to grow in virtue, a necessary requirement for the Apostolate, to give good example and to have holy Desires. They should also find time to pray.

Ignatius spoke of prayer and penance in various circumstances. We have a letter addressed to Francisco de Borja, Duke of GandDa who secretly pronounced his vows in the Society on February 1, 1548. Since his wife's death, in May 1546, he lived a vibrant spiritual life, and now in 1548 he was making plans to resign his title so that he could fully live as a Jesuit.

Saint Ignatius, through his letters, strengthened others and shed light on the will of God for the people he met and who sought his advice. All that he narrated, instructed and exhorted, reveal his own spiritual maturity. His desires and attitudes show a great man, who together with other great men and women, helped others in the path to holiness and will remain persons for all seasons.

2.5.3 Salesian Spirituality

In Salesian spirituality, spiritual direction is seen as a process of intuitive response practiced between two persons – the director and the directee. The director is seen as the one who lives authentically the vocation of the Christian so as to

become a model for the directee. This style was firmly rooted in the cultural context of early seventeenth century Catholics.

2.5.3.1 *St. Francis of Sales*¹⁷⁰

The writings of Francis de Sales clearly insist on the necessity of direction. This is especially evident in his famous book, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*. St Francis did not restrict direction to the spoken word, but he himself wrote many letters, all with his own hand. In one of these, he defines his method as gentle, and allowed spiritual exercises to have their own gradual effect on souls. But, in one of his letters he commented upon the shortage of competent directors:

It is difficult ... to find people of all-around discernment who can see clearly to an equal in all matters: nor is it essential to have people of this kind so as to be well directed, and there is no harm, it seems to me, in gathering from many flowers the honey which we cannot find in one alone.¹⁷¹

Those who knew him best, either through ties of friendship or because they had taken his spiritual advice, realised that in a very special way this man understood rightly the heart of the matter where real religion - the personal link between man and God - was concerned. He considered God to be all-loving, infinitely wishing well to human persons. What man is called upon to do, is to return this love in even greater knowledge and service to God. He understood the human limitations of all those that came in contact with him, one way or another. "I am nothing, if not a man" he was to confess many years later, thus showing his character and the greatness of his ultimate sanctity.¹⁷²

He always spoke of God as a lover. It was always by the love of God that he caught souls. As such he was an innovation for his epoch.¹⁷³ He knew, for example,

170. He was born in 1567 and died in 1622. In the time when Francis de Sales was born, Christendom was in the midst of great religious trouble. Europe was about to start its thirty years' war of religion. Mary Tudor had come to the throne six years earlier and Elizabeth I started reigning the year before. It was the time when England was governed by a Catholic Queen and a Protestant one.

171. Letter 107 in *St Francis de Sales: Selected Letters* translated by Elizabeth Stopp, 1960, 263 in KENNETH LEECH, *Soul Friend*, London² 1994, 60.

172. MICHAEL DE LA BEDOYERE, *François de Sales*, London 1960, 15.

173. MARGARET TROUNCER. *The Gentleman Saint. St. Francois de Sales and his Times 1567-1622*, London 1963, 51.

that the Council of Trent had laid it down that “the first and principal duty of the bishop is to preach.”¹⁷⁴

However, he was able to write to whoever was in need of his written word. Even his mother was in such need. He wrote to her (*his mother*) letters full of affection and respect and went to see her as often as possible. Smilingly he excused her maternal possessiveness, for he understood and forgave it. He tried to meet her demands, and when he knew that God did not want her to enter Heaven in melancholy, he made the last month of her life very happy. He had then become her spiritual director. She stayed with him in his Bishop’s house at Annecy and he surrounded her with much kindness and tenderness.¹⁷⁵

The friendship that grew between Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, two saints, was a Jesus-centred, affectionate one.¹⁷⁶ The way they addressed the letters to one another, “Live Jesus”, shows that they both had the name of Jesus engraved in their hearts. The contact between the two grew into a providential, immensely fruitful contact, holding a spiritual intimacy that placed both of them apart and made them unique in the ranks of the saints. Jean would teach him truly to know himself

174. Francis once wrote to a friend who was about to be raised to the episcopate: “Never allow any excuse to turn you away from this order of Trent . . . Do not preach in order to become a great preacher, but simply because it is your duty and God wills it. A fatherly sermon of a bishop is worth more than all the artifice of any elaborated sermon of other preachers. A bishop needs little to preach well, for his sermons should deal with necessary and useful subjects, not far-fetched ones. His words should be simple and not affected, his mode fatherly and natural without art or over-care. However short his sermon may be and whatever the subject, it always means much that he preaches.” Letter XII in MICHAEL DE LA BEDOYERE, *François de Sales*, London 1960, 102.

175. MARGARET TROUNCER. *The Gentleman Saint. St. Francois de Sales and his Times 1567-1622*, London 1963, 79.

176. One day, Francis de Sales was preaching in Sainte-Chapelle of Dijon, when he noticed near his pulpit a lady dressed as a widow, listening so attentively. Her figure seemed to recall the vision he had before leaving Annecy. On her side, Jane, the widow, saw in this priest the figure which appeared to her with a call to choose him as her director. Jane, let herself be guided so as to look at the temptations of the devil, prayer and penance in their own right perspective. Deep within her, she knew that the spiritual director she had before Francis was all wrong and had no understanding of such matters. But still she obeyed. It was during the loneliness of her widowhood and during his rise to public service and visibility that Jane and Francis met. He became her director and began the process of enabling her to achieve spiritual liberty, that inner freedom that allows one to perceive and then to respond to the deepening layers of awareness of God’s constant and challenging presence. See *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah, NJ 1988.

as he would teach her how best to apply her spiritual vocation and genius. Between them, they would map out the way of spiritual perfection in its application to men and women of every kind according to the nature of their spiritual calling. Much later, he confessed to Jane de Chantal: “God, whose will I looked to directly, so drew my soul towards that blessed journey that nothing could have stopped me.”¹⁷⁷ The love of God revealed in Jesus Christ pervades every line of the letters they both wrote.¹⁷⁸ “They have been given to each other as spiritual friends, to enjoy each other’s spiritual gifts, to support each other in their commitment to faithfulness, to be of mutual help in their search for perfection and to give shape to a new spiritual family in the Church.”¹⁷⁹ God’s strength was manifest in their mutual openness, sharing, confession and forgiveness, and a mutual knowing and being known.

To Madame de Chantal, he explained that the reason persons are in the world, is: “... to receive and carry the gentle Jesus: on our tongue by proclaiming Him; in our arms by doing good works; on our shoulders by supporting the yoke of dryness and sterility in both the interior and exterior senses...”¹⁸⁰ All men and women are to be encouraged to become authentic Christians, to realize the gospel in their lives. One means by which this was to be done was through spiritual direction. He encouraged others to direct and to seek direction.¹⁸¹

To Mlle de Soulfour, whose father was an acquaintance to Francis, the saint admonished her to be aware of the vanity of the human mind because it is so easy that it becomes confused and wrapped up in itself.¹⁸² He also spoke to her to be

177. Letter XIII, 142, in MICHAEL DE LA BEDOYERE, *François de Sales*, London 1960, 117.

178. *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 3.

179. *Ibid.*

180. *Oeuvres*, XIV, 211: Letter DLV in *Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales, Evêque de Genève et Docteur de l'Église, Edition Complète* d'après les autographes et les éditions originales... publiée... par les soins des Religieuses de la Visitation de l' Monastère d'Annecy, 27 vols. (Annecy: J. Niérat et al., 1892-1964), in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 15.

181. An example of those who came to Francis' direction we find Madame de Charmois, wife of a courtier at the decadent French court. This young woman sought to live out her religious desires to realize a greater love of God and to live in accordance with that love. *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 24.

182. *Oeuvres*, XII, 202-206; Letter CXC dated July 22, 1603 in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 96.

patient since “patience is the one virtue which gives greatest assurance of our reaching perfection and, while we must have patience with others, we must also have it with ourselves.”¹⁸³

A recurring theme in his letters is the grandeur and immensity of God. In the same letter just quoted, the Saint writes:

... anyone who reflects on the grandeur of God and the immensity of His goodness and dignity can never go to excess in making grand and glorious preparations of the heart for Him. It prepares for Him a body that is mortified and not rebellious, an attention to prayer that is not distracted, gentle conversation free of rancour, and a humility in which there are no bursts of vanity.¹⁸⁴

Francis encouraged Madame Brûlart, a married woman from Burgundy, to go on living according to her saintly desire – to reach Christian perfection: “Nurture it and help it grow every day.... For you, Madam, who are married, the means is to unite yourself closely to God and to your neighbour, as well as to all that concerns them”.¹⁸⁵

In another letter,¹⁸⁶ he suggested to her to remain with the beginners’ method of prayer a little longer. He also encouraged her to bear her crosses as patiently as possible: “Believe me, this is the most important and the least understood point in the spiritual life. We all love what is according to our taste; few people like what is according to their duty or to God’s liking”.¹⁸⁷

It has been noted that Francis de Sales felt himself particularly called to the direction of women. He had a special genius for this work.¹⁸⁸ There were many women with whom Francis corresponded in order to give them spiritual direction.

183. *Ibid.*

184. *Ibid.*, 97.

185. *Oeuvres*, XII, 267-271: Letter CCXVII in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 102.

186. *Oeuvres*, XIII, 289-292: Letter CD in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 112.

187. *Ibid.*

188. *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 66.

A letter which the saint addressed to a gentleman whom he did not know personally, shows that the saint-director had the same personal and pastoral caring to all, even to those not considered to be his close friends. With this correspondent, Francis empathized with his depressed situation with which he had to struggle in Paris years before:

Neither do we always have to *feel* strong and courageous; it is enough to hope that we will have strength and courage when and where we need them. We don't have to have a sign that these virtues will be ours; it is enough if we hope that God will help us.¹⁸⁹

Francis wrote also to Mme de Cornillon, his own younger sister, who was also his directee and “daughter”: “Let us all belong to God, my daughter, in the midst of so much busyness brought on by the diversity of worldly things.”¹⁹⁰ Amongst the themes with which he dealt in his letters we find: perfection pleasing to God, vanity,¹⁹¹ patience,¹⁹² the grandeur of God and the immensity of his goodness.¹⁹³

2.5.3.2 *St. Jane Frances de Chantal*¹⁹⁴

Jane's letters reflect an understanding of spiritual enterprise. For such a reason, like Francis, she wrote to her correspondents amid the routine of her own day at the

189. *Oeuvres*, XXI, 11-14: Letter MCMLXXIV in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 181.

190. *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 45.

191. *Oeuvres*, XII, 202-206: Letter CLXXXI in *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 95.

192. *Ibid.*

193. *Ibid.*, 97.

194. Jean Frances was born at Dijon, France on 28 January 1572. She died at the Visitation Convent in Moulins on the 13 December, 1641. After eight years of marriage she was left a widow with four children. In her prayers she asked God to send her a guide and God, in a vision showed her the spiritual director he held in reserve for her. At Annecy, God called her to found the Congregation of the Visitation. Its aim was to receive young girls and even widows who wished to advance in their spiritual life. They were to do so through austere ascetical practices in force in all the religious orders at that time. St. Frances de Sales was especially desirous of seeing the realization of his cherished method of attaining perfection through the realization of the Divine will and in seeking always to do what is pleasing to God. RAPHAEL PERNIN, *St. Jane Frances de Chantal* (1910), in *New Advent* (on-line): <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08282c.htm>.

Visitation.¹⁹⁵ Jane, with the help of a secretary, penned her hasty letters, especially the formal correspondence. Letters of direction were generally written in her own hand, jumbling together bits of news, requests, informal advice, with what might be called more formal spiritual counsel. After Francis' death she went on excelling as a religious spiritual mother.¹⁹⁶ Her major concern was to stay close to the very Salesian spirit of beginning right where one is and with the facts at hand. She sought, thus, to bring out the practical implementations of the spiritual principles within the ordinary context of ordinary lives, an exercise which both Francis and Jane excelled in.

Jane was demanding with the superiors of the Visitandines. From them she expected an attitude of motherly attentiveness toward all the Visitandines, that care and solicitude for each entrant that a mother might show towards her own child. It was important for her that faults were to be noted and that advancement in virtue is cultivated. As such no guidance was to be judgemental and so cause discouragement or intimidation. ... Jane de Chantal had a genius for spiritual direction which made that continuing work a viable and commendable one.¹⁹⁷

To Mother Marie-Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons, Annecy, 9 February 1616, after the usual opening of "Live + Jesus" she encourages her: "I can see that God, by His grace and fatherly care, is leading you by the hand and that all you have to do is trust in Him, cling to Him, and, under His protection, journey on as humbly and simply as possible." She called her: "my very dearest daughter."¹⁹⁸

She sought to guide Sister Péronne-Marie de Châtel at Lyons, to acknowledge Christ as her Saviour and her all:

Once in a while, if you feel particularly weak, without courage, without confidence, force yourself to make affirmations which are the opposite of your feelings. Say with conviction: "My Saviour, my All, despite my feelings of misery and distrust, I place all my confidence in You."¹⁹⁹

195. *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of spiritual direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright and Joseph F. Power and translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, Mahwah/NJ 1988, 29.

196. *Ibid.*, 32.

197. JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 300.

198. 1986, 296.

199. *Ibid.*, 298.

She encouraged her in being a superior:

So look beyond your timid, fearful hesitations, Trample them underfoot, my dearest daughter, and keep your eye on God's good pleasure and His eternal plan for you. Surrender all the remaining days of your life to Him and let Him use them for such activities and services as please Him, and not yourself.²⁰⁰

In her more mature years Jane counselled superiors and Sisters with the same affection – although sometimes there is less spontaneity in its expression – understanding and firmness. She guided Sister Anne-Marie Rosset, Assistant and Novice Mistress at Dijon, in the way she was to react to the actions of the people around her: “To be sure, I am convinced, and experience has taught me, that nothing so wins souls as gentleness and cordiality. I beg you, dearest, follow this method, for it is the spirit of our blessed Father.”²⁰¹

We find such themes that she dealt with in her letters of spiritual direction: humility,²⁰² the spirit of God,²⁰³ purity and uprightness of intention,²⁰⁴ imitation of the Lord,²⁰⁵ observance of the Rule of the institute,²⁰⁶ dealing with temptations,²⁰⁷ true happiness²⁰⁸ and an authentic helping of souls.²⁰⁹

200. Letter to a Superior, *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, VII, 556-57: Letter MDCCCLXXII with no date in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 311.
201. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, V, 175-77: Letter CDLXIX dated 1623 in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 301.
202. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, V, 513-14: Letter DCLXXII dated 1625 in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 302.
203. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, V, 546-47: Letter DCXCI dated 12 December 1626, in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 303.
204. *Ibid.*
205. *Ibid.*, 304.
206. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, VI, 47-49: Letter DCCLXXXIV dated after 1623 in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 305, 306.
207. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, VI, 49-51: Letter DCCLXXXV dated 1627 in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 307.
208. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, VIII, 432-34: Letter MDCCXC with no date in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters*

2.5.4 Abbot John Chapman²¹⁰ – a Benedict Monk

St Benedict,²¹¹ in Chapter 73 of his Rule, refers his readers to sacred scripture and to the tradition preserved in the writings of the ancient monks.²¹² The Saint emphasised in some rather brief passages, about the relations the monk must have with one or two other persons concerning his progress to God. Nevertheless he did not treat these in as much detail. Other authors before him presented as though personal guidance had lost something of the importance it enjoyed in the lives of those who lived alone, now that the way of God is pursued in the common life.²¹³

In Chapter 46 of the Rule of St Benedict, we find instructions for those who manifest their guilt to the Abbot or ‘the spiritual seniors who know how to deal with their own wounds and not to disclose or publish those of others’. This regulation had nothing to do with sacramental confession, but rather with a relationship of a disciple to a master.²¹⁴

During the twentieth century we find several great abbots who remain famous on account of their spiritual teaching. Dom Columba Marmion, the Irishman who became Abbot of Maredsous in Belgium, and who died in 1923, is an example *par excellence*. In his work on Christ, the ideal of the monk, he said nothing about direction. He claimed that he was not a ‘great partisan of a large amount of direction’. Nevertheless his biographer and admirer, R. Thibaut, was able to present him as an ‘eminent spiritual director’, above all on account of his vast correspondence, even while insisting that ‘no director was less like a tyrant or an oracle’. Above all else Marmion recommended ‘great fidelity to movements of the Holy Spirit’.²¹⁵

of spiritual direction, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 308.

209. *Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, VIII, 452-54: Letter MDCCCIV dated 26 June 1641 in JANE DE CHANTAL, *Letters of spiritual direction*, in *Women's spirituality. Resources for Christian development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn, Mahwah/NJ 1986, 309.

210. He was born at ashfield, Suffolk, on 25 April, 1865. He died on November 7, 1936.

211. Saint Benedict was the founder of monasticism. He was born in Nursia, c. 480, and died at Monte Cassino in 543.

212. JEAN LECLERCQ *Spiritual Direction in the Benedictine Tradition*, in *Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990, 16.

213. *Ibid.*, Pg 17.

214. KENNETH LEECH, *Soul Friend*, London² 1994, 46.

215. R. THIBAUT, *L'union à Dieu dans le Christ d'après les lettres de direction de Dom Marmion*, Paris 1941, xiii in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, 25.

Later on we find Dom John Chapman, Abbot of Downside, who died in 1936, who could claim: 'I have been my own director, and that is very hard'.²¹⁶ He did not refuse to direct others as his *Spiritual letters* testify, though with two reservations. First, of all, he said: 'I am not inclined to assume the role of a professional "director" to anyone'.²¹⁷ As well, he thought of direction as leading to the moment when it would no longer be necessary. "A good director must be a nurse, no more. He should confine himself to the task of teaching his penitent how to walk alone and unaided", he wrote.²¹⁸

John Chapman's advice was inclined to send people towards a contemplative and characteristically simple form of prayer. He intentionally quoted St Ignatius, St Francis de Sales and particularly St John of the Cross and in this was very revealing. He wanted to strengthen his arguments for the perfection of others. The Benedictine tradition has always been able to draw from the full spectrum of experts on prayer.²¹⁹

He addressed his letters to lay people, to religious persons and also to a Jesuit. All along he insisted on interior peace. To one living in the world, he wrote: "... there is another interior peace, which consists in simply willing what God wills, even though it seems to be just the unpleasant distraction and exteriorizing which one supposes to be bad for one."²²⁰ People pass through various kinds of moments in their lives. Whatever that may be, we have to see situations as God's will: "Then you take that as His Will, and do the best you can in darkness and humility."²²¹

We find whole passages regarding prayer, even contemplative prayer. He could

216. [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 23.

217. Letter XXVI, a letter addressed to an unmarried lady, dated Easter Tuesday, 14 April 1925 in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 84.

218. [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 23.

219. JEAN LECLERCQ *Spiritual Direction in the Benedictine Tradition*, in *Traditions of spiritual guidance*, collected and edited by Lavinia Byrne, London 1990, 25-26.

220. Letter I, a letter addressed to a lay living in the world dated August 29, 1916, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 33.

221. Letter XXXVIII, a letter addressed to a lady living in the world dated 4 September 1932 in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 109.

see the importance of prayer in the life of the true follower of Christ: "... give yourself to prayer, when you can, and trust in God that He will lead you, without your choosing your path."²²² To the same, he said:

on the other hand, the only way to pray is to pray; and the way to pray well is to pray much. If one has no time for this, then one must at least pray regularly.... You say very naturally that you do not know what to do if you have a quarter of an hour alone in Church. Yes, I suspect the only thing to do is to shut out the Church and everything else, and just give yourself to God and beg Him to have mercy on you, and offer him all your distractions.²²³

Spiritual life is concerned with the daily struggle of our sins. Fighting sins makes the faithful to acknowledge even more one's sins. To the same he says: "When you become a saint, you will believe yourself to be the *greatest* of sinners – that is real fervour, when combined with the determination still to go on fighting."²²⁴

He also suggested some reading, like *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Caussade and St John of the Cross and De Sales. Familiarity with these authors makes us become more aware of our way to God. We are not alone walking this path towards God.²²⁵ He insists on the will of God and on obedience.²²⁶

As regards direction to religious, he spoke to them about prayer as he does to his directee in Letter XLIII.²²⁷ To the same, he explained himself as such:

The great danger is that people love God for His gifts, and are always on the look out for them, and think all is lost when they have a little

222. Letter II, a letter dated Aug 29, 1916 in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 35.

223. Letter XII, a letter addressed to the same, dated April 11, 1927, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 53.

224. Letter V, a letter addressed to the same dated 17 July 1917 in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 43.

225. Letter XXVII, a letter addressed to an unmarried lady addressed dated 27 April 1935, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 85, 86, 92.

226. Letter XXVIII, a letter addressed to a lady living in the world dated Sept 27, 1920, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 95.

227. Letter XLIII, a letter addressed to a canoness regular of the Lateran dated 2 April 1913 in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 118.

aridity; it is hard for them to learn to love aridity, to desire nothing so much as to be perennially dissatisfied with themselves, and full of an entire vague and unsatisfactory longing for something unknown and unknowable.²²⁸

He gave these guidelines: “All progress in virtue is progress in humility, - knowledge of our own wretchedness”,²²⁹ “Meanwhile, thank God for all the trials you have to bear,”²³⁰ and “Do not think that the right way to bear a trial – or many trials together – is to love God so much that you can bear the trial with joy; so that it ceases to be a trial. On the contrary, it is obvious that the essence of suffering of any kind is that we suffer from it!”²³¹

2.5.5 *Baron F. Von Hugel*²³²

Baron Friedrech Von Hugel was a layman. By the time he reached adulthood, he was fluent in four modern languages, and well-versed in Latin, Greek and Hebrew; he was Roman Catholic familiar with the Protestant mind. By the letters he wrote to his niece he wanted to strengthen her character. In her introduction to the letters which she received from him, she quotes him saying: ‘I want to prepare you, to organize you for life, for illness, crisis, and death’. The essence of his advice might be synthesized in his own words: ‘Live all you can – as complete and full a life as you can find- do as much as you can for others. Read, work, enjoy – love and help as many souls – do all this. Yes – but remember: Be alone, be remote, be away from the world, be desolate. Then you will be near God!’²³³ His niece spoke very highly of her uncle: “... a great theologian... a true member of the Roman

228. Letter XLIV, a letter addressed to the same dated 7 June 1913, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 125.

229. Letter LXI, a letter addressed to a Benedictine nun dated 8 November 1927, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 153.

230. Letter LXIII, a letter addressed to the same dated 28 February 1929, in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 155.

231. Letter LXIII, a letter addressed to the same dated 28 February 1929 in [ABBOT CHAPMAN], *Spiritual Letters*, with an introduction by Sebastian Moore, London 2003, 157.

232. Baron F. Von Hugel was born in 1852 in Florence, the son of an elderly Austrian diplomat and his young Scottish wife. Then in 1866, when Friedrich was fourteen, his father retired, and the family moved to Torquay in England, where a Quaker geologist was hired as tutor in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain 1995, 4.

233. BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995 4.

Catholic Church. He lives so deeply in his Church's life that I cannot think of him as without her. His whole life and practice were inspired by her teaching and doctrine. He lived within all her boundaries; his mind was knit to, and his soul fed by, her soul."²³⁴

He wanted her to read a great deal "to be a deeply spiritual woman: I want to feed your mind and soul; to make you a sober, persevering, balanced, genial, historical Christian."²³⁵ He was so glad when he got to know through her that she was reading and working on the *Imitation*. "It is the only way to read it which is really worthy of what itself is so intensely alive."²³⁶

Friedrich esteemed suffering very highly as a means for perfection. For this reason he spoke to his niece many a time regarding this subject. Once he told her: "Suffering is the greatest teacher; the consecrated suffering of one soul teaches another. I think we have got all our values wrong, and suffering is the crown of life. Suffering and expansion, what rich combination!"²³⁷ He continued: "Do not be greedy of consolation. ... Suffering teaches: life teaches. Don't weaken love; never violate it. Love and joy are your way."²³⁸ He asked of his niece to go that extra mile. As regards Lenten penitence he told her that it consists primarily:

in the ever gently and really dropping of our several over-intensenesses, and as gently and really adaptably as we can, accepting, fitting into, the rubs and jolts, the disappointments and drearinesses which God in his merciful training of us may allow to send us. And we will both add to this central chief thing just one or two little renunciations.²³⁹

Prayer keeps us humble in front of our God. Baron Hugel encourages his niece to be and stay humble. She is to acquire the courage to remain so through prayer: "Be very humble, it's the only thing. That is why I try to keep my little thing always on her knees."²⁴⁰ In turn prayer and humility kept the niece resigned into God's

234. *Ibid.*, 22.

235. *Ibid.*, 4,5.

236. Letter written at 13, Vicarage Gate, Kensington, W8 on 2 January 1920, in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 84.

237. BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 7.

238. *Ibid.*

239. Letter written on 8 February 1921 in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 119.

240. BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 7.

hands.²⁴¹ We cannot go through this life without crisis and that is why we have to keep ourselves united with the will of God: “. . . to turn gently to other things, to maintain a vague, general attitude of resignation – to be very meek, with oneself and with others: the crisis goes by, thus, with great fruit. What is a religion worth if at your disposal, capable of being comfortably elicited when and where you please? It is far, far more God who must hold us, than we who must hold him. And we get trained in these darkneses, into that sense of our impotence without which the very presence of God becomes a snare.”²⁴²

Such resignation brings to us consolation which is followed by desolation. Both are part and parcel of the life of the followers of Christ. All we have to do is to be faithful to our call as Christians:

... And lastly – consolation, Dear, is sooner or later followed by Desolation; and the latter is, when and where God sends it, and we have not ourselves brought it on our selves by laxness and dissipation, as true a way to God, and usually a safer one, than consolation. Day and night, sunshine and storm, union and aloneness – both are necessary, sooner or later, Sweet. But, of course, it is for God, for him alone, to leave and to apportion these vicissitudes to each soul. And certain it is that it is of much help to have some older, more experienced soul handy also, who can and will, if and when we get into Desolation, cheer us on, by the reminder of the former consolation, and still more by the great fact that only through such vicissitudes – through fidelity in them – can we grow strong and deep in God and for him.²⁴³

The Baron recalled what a great soul and mind told him. This person was a noble Dominican. He warned him:

You want to grow in virtue, to serve God, to love Christ? Well, you

241. Letter written on 30 September 1918, in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 33.

242. Letter written on 21 April 1920, in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 93.

243. Letter written on 2 July 1919 in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 64.

will grow in and attain to these things if you will make them a slow and sure, an utterly real, a mountain step-plod and ascent, willing to have to camp for weeks or months in spiritual desolation, darkness an emptiness at different stages in your march and growth.²⁴⁴

He was also well aware that we have to pray for each other as well as suffer for each other:

Nothing is more real than this interconnection – this gracious power put to God himself into the very heart of our infirmities. And, my little Gwen, it is the Church ... which, at its best and deeper, is ... that inter-dependence of all the broken and the meek, all the self-oblivion, all the reaching-out to God and souls.²⁴⁵

We acquire such benefit through the Church. We owe it so much! So he wrote:

I am hoping only to get you gradually to see the huge, unique, irreplaceable good that you, as we all, owe to the Church.²⁴⁶

2.5.6 Carlo Carretto²⁴⁷

Carlo Carretto was a religious. His experience in the Sahara as a hermit helped him to understand the importance of the interior life and prayer, in silence and in work. Such experience nourished the rest of his life and later activity.²⁴⁸ Carlo corresponded a great deal with his sister, Dolcidia. According to Sister Emerenziana, Carlo's and Dolcidia's other sister, Carlo and Dolcidia had always cherished the same ideals and their common care as to love the Lord.²⁴⁹

He felt that it was important for himself to live in the desert where he could

244. Extract from letter dated 23 January 1919, in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 41.

245. Letter dated 7 April 1919 in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 48.

246. Letter dated 5 May 1919, in BARON F. VON HUGEL, *Letters to a Niece*, edited by Gwyen Hugel, Great Britain, 1995, 52.

247. He was born on 2 April 1910.

248. *Ibid.*, 10.

249. *Ibid.*, 15.

empty himself. As such he encouraged his sister to ask Jesus: “Fill me with Your self alone. Isn’t that a grace? Be happy.”²⁵⁰

He acknowledged God as so merciful for having forgiven all his sins and being so merciful to him:

Truly our God is a God of mercy! He loads you with gifts at the very time you’re giving Him no thought, or worse, betraying Him.

He is Father!

And I want to become His son, His real son.

He is Jesus my brother.

And I want to become a genuine brother to Him.

He is the Spirit of Love.

And I want to enrol in His School of Fire and let myself be all burnt up.

What a joy, my dear sister!²⁵¹

Relying simply on God makes us feel what we really are and who the Trinity really is: the All. We can do all things simply through God who strengthens us:

I could do nothing because I am nothing, I have nothing. There is only one Giver: the Father; there is only one Redeemer: Jesus; there is only one Sanctifier: the Holy Spirit. To plunge into this reality, to discover these truths, that is the real stripping, that is becoming like little children, taking pleasure in one’s own nothingness, loving simple, real and genuine things; and getting away from rhetoric.²⁵²

Carlo expressed to his sister the fact that it is very important to express our love to each other and to God. It is important for Carlo that Dolcidea would come to know who this loving God is: “Dolcidea, take account of the being of God.... The other [God] is in love with you and does nothing but love you and gaze at you, and the same thirst for the salvation of the brethren leads Him to a love, from

250. Letter 1, dated 11 December 1956, in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilila and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 20.

251. *Ibid.*, 21.

252. Letter 16, dated 31 July 1956, in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilila and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 60.

which one can never be separated. Which of the two has more truth about him? The calculation is very simple and is just a question of being consistent.²⁵³ We have to express our love personally. God expects our love and expects us to talk to him. So Carlo wrote: “Love is personal and needs personal expression. Dialogue with God is personal too: I-Thou is the model for all dialogues based on love.”²⁵⁴ At the same time he considered prayer very highly. So he encouraged his sister to get involved in this act of love: “Prayer is adoration of God and his will, not a jumble of formulae created for the very purpose of smothering the soul and shutting it into the tentacles of habit and the ready-made. Prayer is breathing, love, freedom, inexhaustible dialogue, and above all it is thinking about God.”²⁵⁵ For this reason Dolcidea is given the advice to read the Works of St Teresa on contemplative prayer, and afterwards those of St John of the Cross.²⁵⁶

For Carlo, humility is very important. This helps us concentrate on our littleness, since we put our will at God’s disposition:

Make yourself little, little, consider yourself ‘nothing’, don’t make spiritual plans but abandon yourself totally to the action of God. All our plans, even on the road to holiness, are perfectly useless: the real plan is in His hand and we need to go to Him like children seeking love.²⁵⁷

The Christ child is the real model of this ‘littleness’, this poverty, this nothingness.²⁵⁸ Our littleness helps us to understand the value of poverty, which

253. Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 49.

254. Letter 38, dated 23 March 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 38. Letter, 9 dated the Feast of St Peter 1955 in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 45 and Letter 36, dated 8 October 1958, 96.

256. Letter 11, dated 25 January 1956 in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 52.

257. Letter 14 dated 29 June 1956 in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 56.

258. Letter 31, dated Christmas 1957, in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 84.

is an understanding of our wretchedness, our nothingness, our being like Jesus in Bethlehem, twigs at the mercy of history, defenceless, powerless and without money in the hands of arrogant masters. In return Dolcidia is encouraged to obey. Obedience can be “a total, unconditional, joyous abandonment to our one King and Master: or it can be a school for cowardice and a priori rejection of the thing that costs a man dearest: personal responsibility. Isn’t that so?”²⁵⁹

The brother is ready to give the secret formula of the Gospel, the way for flying onto the road to holiness:

Here it is:

‘Strive to love.’

I don’t tell you to love, because it’s not an easy thing. To love certain unlikable ‘Sisters’ who are living and getting on alongside us, especially in a big house, is almost impossible. I tell you instead to ‘strive’ to love because translating a precept into action is almost always done *on the Cross*. Nothing which is really good and holy is easy for us. It takes an effort. It is the Cross laid upon our poor hearts and at the touch of it life begins to flow again.²⁶⁰

Although Carlo could feel that sometimes the Lord was cradling his sister in sweetness, there were times when she was taken to Calvary.²⁶¹ This is the suffering which she had to go through:

Suffering is the great treasure of life, especially when it is spiritual suffering, mature and solitary, lightened a little at a time. Everything else is like a preparation, but altogether more superficial, light and unsubstantial. The years of human fullness pass by and we leave no trace, but in the passing of these few minutes we build eternity.²⁶²

259. Letter 40 dated 1 March 1955, in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidia – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 36.

260. Letter 37, dated Christmas 1958 in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidia – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 98.

261. Letter 47, dated 10 January 1961, in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidia – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilìa and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 116.

262. *Ibid.*

Suffering helps us to strip away – the total sacrifice of ourselves, as it is for Jesus in the Mass.²⁶³ At such moments and times we have to press onwards and through suffering we can become great saints.²⁶⁴ Carlo Carretto suffered a lot himself!

2.6 Conclusion

From all that I have discussed in this chapter, we can easily detect that the Holy Spirit was always at work throughout the history of the Church. He never hesitated to choose persons who would be able to direct others spiritually in the ways of the Lord, even through letter-writing. The persons whom I mentioned here were really few when compared to the extensive amount of persons who directed others spiritually through letter-writing. As I was working on this study, I felt that I was doing a disservice to these great people due to the extensive amount of letters that they wrote and the conciseness with which I had to present their works here.

In the light of all that I have exposed in Chapter 1, as regards the main models used in spiritual direction, namely the directive and the contemplative models, it is clear that the predominant model that transpired in the Catholic Tradition of spiritual direction through letter-writing was the directive one: Paul, holding the role of a parent, consoled, rebuked, encouraged and instructed the recipients of his letters; the Desert Fathers prohibited discussion even though they had the opportunity of meeting their directees face-to-face; the Fathers of the East suggested a superior-subordinate relationship in spiritual direction. Even St. Francis and St. Claire held to the directive method. Nevertheless, we do find traces of the contemplative model, as for example, in the correspondence between St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances Chantal, although their method remains mostly directive. Even Carlo Carretto, being a more recent spiritual director, belongs more to the contemplative school.

Spiritual direction always remains a crucial aspect in the life of the Church. Letter-writing served these people a great deal since they accomplished their mission just as well as if they had met personally with the people who sought their advice. However, letter-writing gave them less opportunity to discuss with their directees

263. Letter 54, dated 5 September 1962, in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilila and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 124.

264. Letter 51, dated ~~Holy Sunday~~ Holy Sunday, 1962, 21 April 1962, in Letter 10, dated 25 November 1955 in [CARLO CARRETTO] *Letters to Dolcidea – (1954 – 1983)*, edited by Gian Carlo Sibilila and translated by Michael J. Smith, London 1991, 122.

and hence this method led more to the practice of the classical model – the directive method. At the same time, we have to keep in mind that such people had a long experience in spiritual life and in the solid Christian formation. This experience led them to give clear instructions without hesitation.

In the following chapter we will go through the historical milieu in which Saint George Preca lived and the way he looked at spiritual direction, always keeping in mind that he is also the fruit of his times. This transpires also in the way he does spiritual direction through letter-writing.

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Saydon Translation Studies, 1

Ruth 1,1

Anthony Abela

Preliminaries

In this series of studies we shall concentrate on Mgr Prof Peter Paul Saydon's efforts at translating the text of the Hebrew Bible as found in the Standard Edition of the time, and especially the text of the Book of Ruth which Saydon finished translating on the 7th of April 1931¹ and published for the first time in 1932. Each study in this series will include an in depth reading of the Hebrew text, a redactional history of Saydon's translation,² an analysis of Saydon's rendering of the Hebrew

1. This according to a handwritten note on p. 10 of the manuscript of the translation. Cf. *Inventarju tad-Dokumenti ta' Mons P.P. Saydon* p. 5. This inventory was compiled by the present writer together with Mr Carmel Borg for the Societas Doctrinae Christianae, which now hosts the documents, and Mr Joseph Mifsud who represented the family of the deceased professor. Rev Dr Anthony Abela who wrote the document represented His Grace Mgr Joseph Mercieca, the then Archbishop of Malta, and the Malta Bible Society who took care to bring the manuscripts from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome some years before. This text was then published together with the Book of Judges in 1932 as *Ktieb l-Imħallfin u Ktieb Rut*, Il-Kotba Mqaddsa bil-Malti, 7; The Empire Press, Malta 1932, 43-50.
2. There exist these editions of this translation: a manuscript edition that has been brought from Rome with the permission of the Archbishop of Malta (cf. the Notarial Act at the hands of Dr Gerard Spiteri Maempel LLD Notary Public and Commissioner for Oaths of the 7th January 2002); a first edition in pamphlet format published during the period from the year 1929 till 1959; a second edition of this translation was published as *Bibbja Saydon* by the Societas Doctrinae Christianae in three elegant volumes in 1977.1982.1990. The Book of Ruth was published in the second volume. On this second edition one may consult Carmel Bezzina, *Saydon Bibliista u Studjuż tal-Malti*, Publikazzjoni Preca, Malta2006,315-324. This second edition was presumably done following a list of corrections that Saydon himself is presumed to have prepared (cf. Bezzina, *Saydon*,321 note17). Some of the corrections appear already in the MSS as can now be seen in that of the Book of Ruth. But there exists also what we are calling a 'Third Edition' of Prof Saydon's translation, published again by the Societas Doctrinae Christianae as *Il-Bibbja*. Maqlub mill-ilsna originali minn Monsinjur Professur P.P.Saydon, Malta1995. In the Forward by the Kummissjoni Bibbja Saydon it is said that the text of the translation remained the same as that of the second edition "b'reviżjoni minima ta' xi kelmiet 'l hawn u 'l hinn" [with a minimum of revision of some words here and there] (p.vii). These various editions as they concern the Book of Ruth will be referred to as Saydon MSS, Saydon I(1932), Saydon II(1982), and Saydon III(1995).

text, and the insertion of Saydon's text within the Bible Translation Tradition in Maltese.³An alternative translation will be finally proposed

The Hebrew Text of Ruth 1,1: General Considerations

Ruth 1,1 forms part of what biblical narratologists call the 'exposition'⁴ of the narrative which is the entire Book of Ruth; in our text the exposition is formed of 1,1-5 wherein the narrator describes the life situation before the narrative proper starts. The opening verse consists of an adverbial phrase introduced by verbal וַיְהִי and two *wayyiqtol* clauses. The temporal adverbial phrase וַיְהִי בַיָּמֵי שֹׁפֵט הַשְּׁפִטִים 'and it happened in the days the judges judged' has been described as having 'unique syntax'⁵ when it is taken as ushering in the two *wayyiqtol* clauses as a sequence. A few comments are in order:

- a) Three readings are possible of this adverbial syntactical structure at the beginning of the narrative: the narrator is possibly hinting that the new narrative is the continuation of another book⁶, that of Judges; or that וַיְהִי is meant to signal "that a new scene or episode is subsequent to a previously mentioned scene, and that this scene is part of the mainstream of larger episode or narrative⁷; or, again, that the narrator means to create "a very general time reference."⁸ One should notice that while one Jewish tradition understood this temporal clause as a literal reference to the Book of Judges, and thus set the book of Ruth just next to that of Judges, another tradition opted to understand the above phrase as a general wide time reference, and relegated the Book of Ruth to the *Ketubim* section of the Hebrew canon.⁹

3. For this concept of 'translation tradition' cfr. Carlo Buzzetti, *Traduzione e Tradizione. La via dell'uso-confronto(oltre il biblico 'traduttore traditore')*, Edizioni Messaggero, Padova2001.
4. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield1989, 111-121; Jean Louis Ska, "Our Fathers Have Told Us". *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives*, Subsidia Biblica, 13; Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome 1990,21-25 for this concept coming from biblical narratology.
5. Edward E. Campbell Jr, *Ruth*, AB 7; Doubleday, Garden City, New York 1975, 49.
6. Cf. Paul Joüon, *Ruth. Commentaire Philologique et Exégétique*, Subsidia Biblica, 9; Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome 1924.1993, 31.
7. Christo H.J. van der Merwe & Jackie A. Naudé & Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1999, 332.
8. Campbell, *Ruth*, 49.
9. For discussions on where the Book of Ruth should be in the Hebrew canon cf. Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, SPCK, London 1985, 158-159. 253-256. 304-306.

- b) The verbal cluster **וַיְהִי** has been described by some grammarians as a ‘macrosyntactic sign’¹⁰ meant to mark the beginning of a new narrative.¹¹ At the same time, it is used by the narrator¹² to establish a narrative thread. One should note that the first occurrence of the cluster **וַיְהִי** in verse 1, which is to differentiate from the second occurrence which has **רַעֲב** for subject, has no lexicalized subject.
- c) One may ask whether the adverbial phrase introduced by the first **וַיְהִי** is qualifying only the first wayyiqtol clause or the two clauses of verse 1. Although syntactically the two clauses are on an equal footing, semantically the second clause seems to carry heavier narrative weight. The narrator appears to be mostly interested not so much in the famine that raged in Judah, which with verse 6 we hear of it no longer, but that Elimelech and his family journeyed to the land of Moab and settled there as *gerim*, that is, as protected foreigners. This is borne out by the narrator’s postponing the full identification of the **אִשׁוֹ**’s family to the end of the second clause, “he and his wife and his two sons, all subjects of the verb **וַיֵּלֶךְ**.” These are part of the narrative’s cast; but as the first verse of the chapter does not exhaust the exposition, so the man, his wife, and his two sons, all still without a name, are not the only characters that shall appear in the narrative.

Saydon’s translation of Ruth 1,1 and its Redaction History

- a) The text: “Ġara fi żmien il-hakma tal-imħallfin li kien hemm hemm l-ghaks fil-pajjiż, u mar raġel minn Betlehem ta’ Ġuda jghammar gharib fl-inhawi ta’ Mowab, hu u martu, u ż-żewġ uliedu.”
- b) While in Saydon MSS and Saydon I (1932) the local phrase **בְּשָׂרֵי מוֹאָב** is rendered “fl-inhawi ta’ Mowab” ‘in the territories of Moab’, the translator himself corrected *fl-inhawi ta’ Mowab* into *fir-raba’ ta’ Mowab*, ‘in the fields

10. Bruce K. Waltke & M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Eisenbrauns, Wanona Lake, Indiana 1990, §3:3:4d.

11. Cf. A.E. Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, Clarendon Press, Oxford²1910.1980, §111f-h; Alviero Nicacci, *Lettura Sintattica della Prosa Ebraico-Biblica. Principi e Applicazioni*, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1991, 17.

12. In the narratological sense where the ‘narrator’ is not necessarily the historical writer of the narrative. Cf. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 13-46.

of Moab', a correction that appeared then in the subsequent Saydon 1982 and Saydon 1995. The question that crops up could be as to whether the translator improved his text by resorting to a more literal rendering of the cluster. The present writer believes that Saydon has not improved his 1932 rendering by this correction. We shall proceed with our discussion by stages in both linguistic and translational, as well as exegetical directions of research:

- i) **Basic vocabulary mentioned** The lexeme 'inhawi' in Maltese is the plural of *naha*, a well known and commonly used lexeme in Modern Maltese, its basic meaning being 'side' (*minn naha waħda*, from one side) but by extension it can also mean 'neighbourhood' (*jghix in-naha tagħna*, he lives in our neighbourhood).¹³ On the other hand, the lexeme *raba'*, from radicals R.B.Gh, carries the meanings of 'fields, country, farmland' (*nies tar-raba'* people working in the fields, farmers; *ir-raba' dis-sena m'ghamilx*, 'the fields this year did not yield a good crop').¹⁴
- ii) **The Hebrew cluster** כַּשְׂדִי consists of the preposition כּ with the locative meaning 'in', and the masculine nominal plural שְׂדִים in the construct state of the nominal שָׂדֵה which normally means 'fields, countryside, and pasture' while its feminine plural form שְׂדוֹת signifies 'individual fields, farms, property'.¹⁵ In its plural masculine form the word carries also the meaning of 'territory of a tribe, or of a people' (Gen 32,4; Num 21,20; Rt 2,6; Hos 12,13).¹⁶ The meaning in Ruth 1,1 seems to be 'territory, country of Moab' as in this verse the narrator contrasts the phrase שְׂדֵי מוֹאָב governed by the preposition כּ, 'in', to the phrase בֵּית לַחֶם, Bethlehem, which is being taken as a place name, governed by the preposition מִן, of/from; the two prepositions govern geographical areas and therefore the concept *inhawi* is to be preferred to that that could be represented by the nominal *r-raba'*. Saydon's revision of his text therefore has rendered it more literal but not more precise. Perhaps he opted to follow LXX (ἐν ἀγροῦ Μωαβ) though not the Vulgate (in regione moabitude).
- c) **An evaluation:** This translation of Ruth 1,1 is a literal, formal rendering of the Hebrew text, dynamic in some aspects, quite wooden in others. Some details:

13. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, vol II, Midsea Books, Malta 1990, 882.

14. *Ibid.*, 1168.

15. HAL,III, 1307-1309.

16. *Ibid.*, 1308. Cf. BDB,961.

i) Saydon interprets, together with the majority of exegetes the word chain **וְהָיָה וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְשְׁנֵי בָנָיו** postponed to the end of the second *wayyiqtol* clause, and standing in asyndeton, as being in apposition in the broad sense to the nominal **אִישׁ**, the subject of the clause just as we find, for instance, in Genesis 13,1.¹⁷ The pronoun **הָיָה** plays in Hebrew a resumptive role referring back to the subject **אִישׁ** and is taken to be as necessary as the two other co-subjects, ‘his wife’ and ‘his two sons’ that are included into the narrative’s text by the narrator.¹⁸ The initial pronoun in this word chain is to be considered as somehow marked as it is the furthest away in the clause from the sentence’s predicate **וַיֵּלֶךְ**.¹⁹

The problem for the translator regards the way this markedness will be rendered into the syntax of the receptor language. Translation tradition often resorted either to the replica of the Hebrew syntax onto the receptor language (LXX, Saydon, NRSV, MBS) or to a simple transformation of the Hebrew sentence structure as on the model of the Vulgate and of several modern translations where ‘his wife’ and ‘his two sons’ are raised to the level of **אִישׁ** in the sentence as co-subjects through an ‘*and* of accompaniment’: “... abiitque homo de Bethlehem Iuda ut peregrinaretur in regione moabitide *cum* uxore sua ac duobus liberis”(Vulgate); “Un homme de Beth-Léhem de Juda partit, *avec* sa femme et ses deux fils, pour séjourner en immigré au pays de Moab”(NBS); “... and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, *together with* his wife and the two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab”(NIV); “... a man from Bethlehem in Judah went *with* his wife and two sons to live in Moabite territory”(REB;²⁰ cf. NJPS; BJ). With the exception of NIV and NJPS, in their restructuring, most versions cited maintain the ‘man’ as the sole subject of the verb ‘to go’; but one should notice how in NIV ‘the wife’ and ‘the sons’ are also the grammatical subjects of the verb ‘went’.²¹

17. Cf. Paul Joüon & T.Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Subsidia Biblica 27; Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome 2006, §146c note 2.
18. Ibid., nos 3 & 4; cf. T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew*, The Magnes Press, Jerusalem & Brill, Leiden 1985, 61-66.
19. Cf. van der Werwe et alii, *Reference Grammar*, 324.
20. REB’s rendering ‘and two sons’ gives the impression that Elimelech had other sons besides Mahlon and Chilion unless the phrase is elliptical.
21. “וְהָיָה: L’addition du pronom est nécessaire. Quand à un sujet nominal, on ajoute après un mot faisant separation, un second sujet, il faut un pronom de reprise... *Lui et* about it pratiquement au sens de *avec*,” Joüon, *Ruth*, 32. The author refers to Judg 11,38; 1Kgs 20,12. Cfr. Joüon, *Ruth*, 34.

- ii) מִבֵּית לַחֶם: Is this an adjectival phrase qualifying the nominal אִישׁ which is the explicit subject of the Hebrew clause, or an adverbial cluster qualifying the predicate וַיֵּלֶךְ telling us from where the subject travelled as he journeyed towards the land of Moab? The samples from translation tradition that we have listed above, all parse the phrase מִבֵּית לַחֶם as adjectival, a phrase amassing further information about the subject. And this is syntactically possible as Jdgs 12,8;13, 2; 17,1.7; 1Sam 1,1;9,1;2Sam 23,20.30; Amos 1,1; etc attest.²² But we find in the text two clear indications that for the narrator the phrase is adverbial rather than adjectival: first, the opposition already mentioned between the prepositions מִן in מִבֵּית לַחֶם and בְּ, second, the explicit qualification in verse 2 of the family as ‘Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah’ which would be pointless had the narrator intended מִבֵּית לַחֶם as fulfilling the same narrative function within so short textual extension. Saydon’s rendering of מִבֵּית לַחֶם is to say the least ambiguous just as its Hebrew source text is: *u mar raġel minn Betlehem ta’ Guda* which may be parsed in the same way as the Hebrew original. But this sentence brings us to another issue, a linguistic one. Word order in Standard Maltese is subject initial even if other options are possible.²⁴ Prof Saydon made of his translation a strictly formal equivalent of the source text by copying into his rendering its predicate initial structure even though this feature is not predominant in Standard Maltese.²⁵ The positioning of *u*²⁶ *mar* ‘and he went’ as clause initial is also not a normal syntactic feature

22. Cf. BDB79b.

23. Cf. Marjo Korpel, *The Structure of the Book of Ruth*, Koninklijke Van Gorcum, Assen2001, 54.

24. Cf. Albert Borg, *Ilsienna. Studju Grammatikali*, Malta 1988,114-148.

25. Cf. Anthony Abela, “Word Order in the Narrative Sections in P.P. Saydon’s Bible Translation in Maltese,” *Melita Theologica*, LIII/1-2(2002)3-26.107-131. According to Prof Carmel Sant in his appreciation of Mgr’ Saydon’s contribution to Bible translation in Maltese, this was the ethos in the translator’s days and Saydon could do very little about it: “Mgr P.P. Saydon’s Contribution in the History of Bible Translation in Maltese. An Appreciation” reproduced in Sant1992:148. In Saydon’s days, Bible translation had to be formal though new orientations were in view. Cf. for instance, Eugene Nida & Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Brill, Leiden 1969; Jean-Claude Margot, *Traduire sans Trahir*, Editions L’Age d’Homme, Lausanne 1979.

26. The inclusion of the connecting conjunction *u* just as in Hebrew is also foreign to Maltese as sentence initial. In Hebrew the conjunction ו is not simply a linking feature. The verbal system in Maltese is not a replica of the Hebrew system. As we shall see, Maltese has not the *wayyiqtol* system as Saydon’s construction suggests. On this *wayyiqtol* narrative system of verbal forms one may consult the collection of papers given at the 1996 Tilburg Conference that was gathered and edited by Ellen van Wolde in *Narrative Syntax & the Hebrew Bible*, Brill, Leiden 1997. The reader may also find useful in this regard the monograph of Alviero Nicacci, *Lettura Sintattica della Prosa Ebraica Biblica* (see note 11 of this essay).

of literary Maltese though it may be found in oral performances.²⁷ Putting the predicate *u mar* at the beginning of the clause, Saydon reproduced as well the ambiguity of the Hebrew original in the phrasal *minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda*.

- iii) **לגור בשני** Saydon's translation of this purpose construction made up of the preposition ל, the infinitive construct of the verb גור I,²⁸ and the adverbial phrase of place בשני is precise, economical, and formally equivalent: *jghammar gharib*. The Hebrew syntagma לגור I together with the preposition ב carries the meaning of residing in a place as a resident alien.²⁹ With Waltke & O'Connor we may describe both the Hebrew ב לגור as well as Saydon's translation of the Hebrew construction by *jghammar fi* 'to live in' as "serving the role of verbal complement."³⁰ Saydon's verbal phrase consists of the headword, that is, the verb *jghammar*, 'to dwell', and the rather obsolete nominal *gharib* that means 'stranger, foreigner'.³¹ The adverbial qualification is necessary in Maltese as the verb *jghammar* carries only the meaning 'to reside' but not the technical meaning 'as a protected alien' as with the case of the Hebrew verb גור I. Within the phrasal structure, this lexeme *gharib* plays the role of a qualifying adverbial phrase: 'to live as a foreigner'.³² The 'man' mentioned by the narrator as the

27. Cf. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, Midsea Books, Malta 1990, 1492-1493

28. For this verbal construction cf. Waltke & O'Connor, *Syntax*, §36.2.3d (pp. 606-607).

29. Cf. BDB 157-158; DCH, II, 335-336; HAL, I, 184; D. Kellermann, 'גור' in C. Johannes Botterweck & Helmer Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, II, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1975. 1999, 439-449. For the sociological implications of being a resident alien the reader may consult also Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth. A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist Folklorist Interpretation*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1989, 16.

30. Waltke & O'Connor, *Syntax*, 606.

31. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 977.

32. Very probably here Saydon allowed himself to be influenced either by Hebrew diction so that we find in this phrase a case of what Paul Joüon in his Hebrew grammar called "l'accusatif indirect," *Grammaire de l'Hébreu Biblique*, Institut Biblique Pontifical, Rome 1923, §126, or directly by a Maltese predecessor of Saydon, Carlo Cortis who in 1924 had published a translation of the Book of Ruth: *Il Libro di Ruth*, Trascritto e Tradotto dall'Ebraico, Tipografia Giovanni Muscat, Malta 1924); this gentleman translated the Hebrew verbal phrase ב לגור by *biex ighix ġar fi*, 'to live as a neighbour' (for the term *ġar* as 'neighbour' cf. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, Midsea Books, Malta 1987, 378). Saydon would accept the syntactical structure suggested by Cortis, but avoided his vocabulary because he found it, and correctly so, inadequate to render the Hebrew phrase. In his choice of the vocabulary, Cortis was probably influenced by the fact the Hebrew גור and the Maltese nominal *ġar* (*jār*) carry similar if not perfectly identical phonetics, and for him that probably meant semantic equivalence. Ferdinand de Saussure in

subject of both the main verb לָלַךְ and of the infinitive construct לָלַךְ governed by the preposition לְ travelled to Moab to live there for a while (the time quantum is not defined though it is tacitly taken to be of limited duration (cf. Gen 12,10) as a protected foreigner.³³

The term *gh̄arib* is rather rarely used in modern spoken Maltese, if at all. Aquilina cites two examples of written instances of the word, both coming from Maltese toponymy: *Qabar il-gh̄arib*, ‘the foreigner’s tomb’, indicated by G.F. Abela in his descriptive work *Della Descrizione di Malta, isola nel Mare Siciliano, con le sue Antichità ed altre Notizie*³⁴ as referring to two fortified localities, one in the neighbourhood of *Ghar Hasan*, in the south of the Island, the other near ‘Dragut Point’ in the north. Richard Taylor, author of the first translation of the Psalter in Maltese,³⁵ has another instance of the use of the term *gh̄arib* in the singular: *Ma jkollokx Alla iehor barrani anqas tqimu 'l Alla gh̄arib* (you will not have another God who is foreign nor will you worship a foreign God).³⁶ In the case of the nominal *gh̄arib* we may say that Saydon attempted to give life back to this term, and to popularize it by using it in his translation on several occasions, in both its singular and plural forms (*gh̄arib*, *gh̄orba*) (cf. 1Pt 1,1; Heb 13,2).³⁷ But his attempts seem to have failed as *gh̄arib* remains

his *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Pyot, Paris 1915 would warn us against making such short circuits. The Maltese nominal *ġar* has chosen only the meaning of ‘neighbour’ from the number of semantic components of its Arabic phoneme *jār* which means also refugee, protégé, charge J.M. Cowan (ed.), *The Arabic-English Dictionary*. The Hans Wher Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, Spoken Language Services, Ithaca, New York 1976, 147h. These other meanings make the Hebrew word much closer in semantic range to the Arabic lexeme than to the Maltese word *ġar* meaning ‘neighbour’.

33. “In the OT, the *ger* occupies an intermediate position between a native (*ezrach*) and a foreigner (*nokhrif*). He lives among people who are not his blood relatives, and thus he lacks the protection and the privileges which usually come from blood relationship and place of birth. His status and his privileges are dependent on the hospitality that has played an important role in ancient Near East ever since ancient times...” Kellermann, ‘ גֵר ’, *Theological Dictionary*, 443.
34. Malta 1647, 20.60-61.
35. Cf. Carmel Sant “Guzè Muscat Azzopardi, Translator of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles: 1895-1924” in *Bible Translation and Language*, Melita Theologica Supplementary Series, 2; Malta 1992, 112.
36. Salmi LXX.LXXX stanza 8, in *Ktieb is-Salmi tas-Sultan David u Il-Cantici*. Miġburin fil Lsien Malti, Malta 1846, 189. One should notice here the use by Taylor of parallelism in his translation in order to illustrate the real meaning of obsolete *gh̄arib* which is put in parallel to the more commonly used lexeme *barrani* with the same significance.
37. In Hebrews 13.8 Saydon makes an adjectival use of the nominal: *La tinġibidx minn tagħlim iehor u gh̄arib* (do not be allured by a different and foreign teaching).

perceived by the standard speaker of Maltese as being obsolete or at least as a not well known word, even though the term in its plural morphological form hailed from an ancient Maltese Church text of practical catechesis as shows the phrase *'ilqgħu l-għorba'* (Aquilina): *'Give hospitality/refuge to foreigners'* which probably had the Letter to the Hebrew (13,2) and/or other NT texts as its ultimate source.

2

Saydon versus Cortis

Now has come the moment for evaluating the relationship of Saydon's translation of Ruth 1,1 to that of Carlo Cortis and other translators of the Book of Ruth in Maltese; since Cortis's was chronologically anterior, Cortis had the advantage of time over Saydon especially in the choice of vocabulary, syntax, and literary features; but Saydon had the advantage of better scholarship and translation tools and in Cortis he had a translation model which he could emulate or criticise, and improve. In this evaluation we shall not take account of differences in orthography, in personal names and toponyms, and some other details; we shall concentrate on the translators' contribution to Maltese linguistics and to exegesis.

Saydon could in no way ignore the contribution of Carlo Cortis who published his translation of Ruth in bookform just five years before Saydon published his own translation of Genesis in 1929 thus inaugurating his translation project which was to keep him engaged for over thirty years till 1959 when he published his translation of Revelation; besides, in the title page of his booklet, Cortis presents himself as the previous examiner of Sacred Scripture and of the Hebrew Language at the University of Malta and at the Seminary, the two institutions where Saydon had just started teaching Sacred Scripture and Biblical languages; and then there was the formal and political move by Cortis to publicly dedicating his work to the Archbishop of Malta of the time. This translation could only appear to Saydon and to his contemporaries as a defiant show of force, and he needed somehow to respond if he meant to establish himself as the authority in his fields of expertise.

Text: Cortis: *U ġaragħ, f'jiem għamil il-ħaqq ta' li mħalfin, li waqa' l-ġûħ f' l' art (ta' Israel): u telaq raġel minn Bethlehem taġħ Juda, biex iġhix ġar fin-naħa ta' Moab, hu u martu u ż-żewġ uliedu.*

Text: Saydon: *Gara' fi żmien il-ħakma tal-imħallfin li kien hemm il-għaks fil-pajjiż,*

u mar raġel minn Bethlehem ta' Ġuda jgħammar għarib fl-inħawi ta' Mowab, hu u martu u ż-żewġ uliedu.

Commentary: a) Generally speaking, one may describe Cortis' rendering as more literal than that of Saydon. This may be seen in various parts of the translations, but the present writer will stop with the rendering of the verbal phrase **הַשְּׁפֵטִים** **כְּמִי שֶׁשִּׁפְטוּ** within the introductory time phrase of the entire narrative of Ruth. Cortis rendered this phrase 'in the days of the acts of judging of the judges' which is woodenly literal.³⁸ The Hebrew phrase used by the narrator **יְמֵי שֶׁשִּׁפְטוּ הַשְּׁפֵטִים** 'the days of the judging of the judges' actually says nothing about what the real activity of the 'judges' had been. What interested the biblical narrator was establishing a general historical context for his narrative in the Book of Ruth. Actually, he makes no other references to this context which thus remains 'out' of the story proper.

Cortis follows the narrator faithfully though his phrase *għamil il-ħaq*, 'acts of justice', giving the impression that he interprets the figure of 'judge', *imħallef*, as it sounds in Maltese and in modern languages as some kind of leader whose role in the Israelite society of the premonarchical period(s) of ancient Israel was mainly the administration of justice. But the data coming from both Near Eastern cultures as well as the Hebrew Bible attest to the movement of the *šōpētîm*'s role from one as judicial administrator to that of political leader, ruler. "The OT shows that the premonarchical rulers (*šōpētîm*) conducted military campaigns (Judges 2,16;3,10), governed the state (Judg10,3;12,7), and administered justice (Judg 4,4). The root *špṭ* is therefore multifarious in meaning in both the Akkadian and the OT. The best meaning of the term in every usage is determined only by paying close attention to the context in which *špṭ* is used."³⁹ The term in Ruth 1,1 seems to refer to the 'judges' in the Book of Judges, and there the rulers of the people are political figures rather than judicial officers, though the administration of justice formed also part of their responsibilities as it did of any ruling leader of any kind.⁴⁰

Saydon's translation favours the political understanding of the *šōpētîm*, reading the acts of judging' as 'acts of ruling': *fi żmien il-ħakma tal-imħallfin* 'in

38.

39. Temba L.J. Mañico, "Judge, Judging" in David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, III, Doubleday, New York 1992, 1104-1106, specifically p.1106

40. Ibid., 1105

the time of the judges' rule' which is probably more in line with modern exegetical thought.⁴¹

b) *The translation of the main verb* וַיֵּלֶךְ Cortis's translation of this verb which constitutes the predicate of the sentence where וַיֵּלֶךְ is the subject is potentially superior to that of Saydon. Cortis renders the verb 'u *telaq*' while Saydon translates it as *u mar*. The verb *telaq* carries several meanings among which 'to leave a place, to go away from a place.'⁴² Aquilina cites the expressions: *aħjar nitilqu* 'it is time for us to leave'; *telaq 'il barra* 'he went out'.⁴³ This nuance in *telaq* makes it fit better to render וַיֵּלֶךְ in our text than the verb *mar* 'he went'⁴⁴ because it suits better the idea that the man was beginning his journey from Bethlehem towards the land of Moab.

c) The syntax after the main verb in the two translations is almost identical; in both, the predicate is followed by a final clause though in Cortis the finality nature of the clause is rendered explicit by the conjunction *biex* while Saydon opted to leave the nature of the second clause become clear through the contextual relationship between the main verb *mar* and the verb in the final clause *jgħammad*. The result in the two syntactical structures is the same though Saydon's is probably stylistically superior.

d) Both Cortis and Saydon misunderstood the *waw* in וַיֵּלֶךְ; they both parsed it as the independent conjunction ו in Hebrew and rendered it in Maltese separately from the verb: *u telaq*, *u mar* respectively. This has been a serious misunderstanding by modern Hebrew grammar standards. First of all, the *waw* was part and parcel of the Hebrew verb form called *wayyiqtol*.⁴⁵ Since the time of Saydon when he worked on this translation, Hebrew studies have isolated as a separate morphological form the so-called '*wayyiqtol* narrative form'. "*Wayyiqtol* is the narrative verb form *par*

41. Besides the short bibliography offered by Mafico in her ABD article (cfr. note 39 above); on the 'judges' one may also consult Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1961,92-93; Robert G. Boling, *Judges*, Anchor Bible 6A, Doubleday, New York 1975,3-50; Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh, The Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050BCE*, Maryknoll, New York 1979.

42. Cfr. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 1417.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, 783.

45. Alviero Nicacci, "Basic facts and Theory of the Biblival Hebrew Verb System in Prose" in Ellen van Wolde(ed.), *Narrative Syntax & the Hebrew Bible*, Brill, Leiden1997,167 note 1.

excellence because it is the only one indicating the main line of communication.... This *wayyiqtol* marks the beginning of the main line of narrative... be repeated in the receptor language in the most natural way of saying it. First-placed verb form constitutes a plain, unmarked sentence where the verb is the predicate, as expected."⁴⁶ Notwithstanding its partially semitic origin and structure, unlike Hebrew, Maltese does not possess this 'narrative verb form' and hence its reproduction in Maltese by the conjunction *u* + the perfect form of the verb sounds unnatural in this language and does not constitute a good translation of the Hebrew equivalent. All this boils down to saying that the renderings by Cortis and Saydon of the verbal form וַיֵּלֶךְ in Ruth 1,1 in the above cited translations leave much to be desired; both pretended to reproduce the Hebrew text, but they have not translated it. Translation implies that the translator says the contents of the source text in the receptor language which has its own strategies to say the same things. The art of translating consists in discovering what these strategies are so that what was worth repeating in the source text may said in the way which is most natural for the receptor language.

e) *Biex ighix ġar* ... This is how Cortis rendered the final clause לָגוּר בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב: 'he went to live as neighbour'. Saydon rendered the clause differently: including the main verb *mar* his text reads *mar jgħammar għarib*, 'he went to live as a foreigner'. What are the implications of these different renderings? As said above, in his translation work Cortis was drawn to show the parallels between Hebrew and Maltese, and of course he must have noticed the phonetic parallels between the Hebrew verbal לָגוּר and the Maltese nominal *ġar*, 'neighbour'. He understood the final clause לָגוּר בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב as meaning 'to live as neighbour in the territory of Moab' in other words, 'to settle in Moab' to live as the neighbour of the Moabites. Comments: 1) We have already shown that the Hebrew לָגוּר and the Maltese *ġar* are to be considered as linguistic 'false friends' as they do not cover identical semantic fields notwithstanding the fact that they share a number of phonetic elements. Hebrew לָגוּר is rather much wider than the Maltese *ġar* which strictly speaking means 'neighbour' or in verbal configurations 'to live as neighbour/s'. Hebrew לָגוּר is nowadays taken to imply the following nuances, especially in the light of the various traditions which speak of the dangers to their integrity of Hebrew families who had to emigrate and settle in the territory of other neighbouring people:⁴⁷ settling in a place only for

46. *Ibid.*, 167-178.

47. To remain within the Books of Genesis and Exodus: 12,10-20; 20,1-18; 26,1-24; 47,4-Book of Exodus 15.

a while, never for good; the place and its people are complexively perceived to be hostile towards the settling community, and hence the settling community had somehow to be protected by the authority of the receiving community; the protection of the settling community was never clearly defined beforehand, and hence divine protection as a guarantee for the community immigrating into the new country is always marked in these narratives.

One may also presume that the narrator of Ruth was fully cognizant of this nuances complex attached to the word גֵּר so that his choice of the verb at Ruth 1,1 did not happen by chance. On the other hand, the narrator was thereby discretely interpreting the story of Ruth as a foundational narrative, as the story of one of their matriarchs,⁴⁸ in the same way that Gen 12,10-20 told of the dangers that the matriarch Sarah underwent when the clan had to temporarily move into a new territory because of greater dangers in its own land (12,10).

This further exegetical analysis of Ruth 1,1 would render the translation of Cortis and his backing exegesis rather fragile. In his translation through the rather unusual syntactical construction he employed, Cortis laid stress on the idea of neighbourly mutuality between Naomi's family and the Moabites among whom they were to settle. This however constitutes a complete misunderstanding of the גֵּר (*gēr*) institution which we are defining with Kellermann as a 'protected alien'.⁴⁹ The *gēr* never meant to integrate with the hosting society just as some contemporary 'illegal immigrants' keep refusing any legal status our hosting society offers them, for reasons we do not understand completely.⁵⁰ The protected alien would remain in the hosting society only for a definite period, perhaps till the situation in his own home country ameliorates (Ruth1,6). In this context, Saydon's translation improved that of Cortis in that it stands on better exegesis. The translation of מוֹרֵב לְגוֹר בְּשָׂרַי by *jghammar gharib fl-inħawi ta' Moab* 'to live as a foreigner in the territory of Moab' as we find it in Saydon Mss and Saydon I is exegetically correct even though the nominal *gharib* may raise a methodological issue in that it is not as well known as one would wish especially when he/she is aware that translation is expected to employ vocabulary that is really accessible to the translator's 'target

48. This intention of the narrator becomes quite clear towards the end of the narrative when he links the story of Ruth and Boaz to a genealogy of King David in 4,17-22.

49. See above note 33.

50. See *Times of Malta*. Of course one should allow for the different time context between the two events.

audience', in Saydon's case, the average speaker of Maltese. It would appear that eligibility of a lexeme to be used in Saydon's register was that it could be found in some written document: that would be taken that the word was available to whomsoever wanted to speak Maltese. But if translation is today considered to be an act of communication,⁵¹ and therefore the vocabulary employed has to be available to the average speaker of the language; vocabulary that is researched and rare, if not obsolete, will render a translation inadequate for its target audience. This seems to have been case of *gharib* although not everyone would vow that it is obsolete or rare.

3

Saydon versus Karm Zammit

In the second half of the twenty first century there appeared what one may consider as the last Protestant sponsored Bible in Maltese. It belongs to the same Translation Tradition as Saydon's because, as we shall show, it is heavily dependent on Saydon's contribution. The Malta Bible Society was working on the final touches of its translation, and within Maltese society there was perceived a deep need of a Bible in Maltese. The promoters of Karm Zammit's translation used this gap in the market to introduce this Bible and to push it as an adequate commodity notwithstanding its Protestant background and the lack of professional training of the translator. The translator did not hide the Protestant underpinnings of his work: in the forward he acknowledged that his models were the earliest translations in Maltese whose work had been sponsored by foreign Protestant institutions (Giuseppe Canolo, Mikiel Anton Vassalli, and Mikiel Anġ. Camilleri), his foreign 'support translations' were that of the French Louis Segond and the Italian Giovanni Luzzi, and, of course, he was translating the English Authorised Version. But some Catholic priests closed their eyes to these avowals of Protestant background and promoted this translation even if 'their' translation was just ready for the market. This is how this 'Protestant' Bible became one of the most widely used Bible within a Catholic majority readership, although it was never recognised as the Bible of the Catholic Church.

51.

Text: Saydon: *Ġara fi żmien il-ħakma tal-imħallfin li kien hemm il-ġħaks fil-pajjiż, u mar raġel minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda jgħammar għarib fl-inħawi ta' Mowab, hu u martu u ż-żewġ uliedu.*

Text: Karm Zammit: *Issa ġara, fi żmien li kienu jaħkmu l-imħallfin, illi kien hemm il-ġħaks fil-pajjiż. U wiehed raġel minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda mar jgħammar għarib fl-art ta' Mowab, hu, martu, u ż-żewġ uliedu subjien.*

Text: Authorised English Version: *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.*

Commentary: a) The inclusion of the King James Version in this study has been deemed necessary since the author of this translation acknowledged in the forward that he has used it as his source text. We have to include it also as having exercised some influence on Zammit's rendering of the text. Karm Zammit in no part of his Bibbja mentions which edition of the Authorised Version he employed for his translation work. For our study we have reproduced the text of the Authorised Version (AV) from *The Holy Bible, Standard Text Edition*, Cambridge University Press, Oxford 1985 (the date is not given in the publication) which is a *cum privilegio* edition. b) Three features are clearly direct influences from the AV. 1) *Now it came to pass* One such influence is seen in the rendering of the opening time phrase 'Now it came to pass in the days....' which Zammit rendered erroneously *Issa ġara...* which is a literal translation of the English but which does not suit the Maltese setting of a traditional narrative, especially the initial *issa* 'now'. Saydon's strategy of starting the narrative with the verb *ġara*, 'it happened' fits this tradition context better. 2) *His two sons* Zammit is more precise than Saydon (and Cortis for this) in translating שני בניו, following the AV, 'his two sons'. Saydon rendered the phrase by *ż-żewġ uliedu* 'his two children' relying upon the text to reinterpret and to subsequently correct this undertranslation. Actually, this undertranslation is corrected with verse 2 where we are told that the two children of Elimelech were in fact two 'sons'. 3) *A certain man* Zammit reproduced also the translation of אִישׁ in the AV with the indefinite 'a certain man' by *wiehed raġel*, 'a certain man' which is much less idiomatic in Maltese than Saydon's *raġel*. Zammit's translation is more woodenly English. In modern Maltese, probably under the influence of English, Maltese has constructed an adjectival use of the indefinite pronoun *wiehed*: 'wiehed raġel'; this is the use Zammit makes of the word. 4) *Sentence Structure* The sentence structure of Zammit seems to have followed the AV rather than that of Saydon. The AV and

Zammit divided the text into two independent sentences where the semantic link between the two is not that clear: the two events of the famine in Elimelech's land, and the emigration of the family do not seem to have been connected; they were two events that happened in the same time frame; the narrator in the Hebrew text, though, was implying that the emigration of Elimelech and his family to the east was occasioned by the famine in their ארצו, country, *pajjiž*. This has been a flaw on the part of the exegesis in AV, a flaw which Zammit introduced into his own translation by adopting the same division of the text as his source text. He made this mistake notwithstanding that he was closely consulting Saydon's translation; in this Saydon followed the Hebrew text where the *wayyiqtol* clause introduced by the second ויהי that establishes the narrative thread is closely followed by the second *wayyiqtol* clause ushered in by וילך.

The sentence sequence in Hebrew tie the two clauses together and gives the impression that the two events were inter-related. Some translations resort to subordinating one of the clauses in order to render this inter-relatedness more clear: "Once, in the time of the Judges, when there was a famine in the land, a man from Bethlehem in Judah, went with his wife and his two sons to live in Moabite territory" (REB).⁵² Here the first *wayyiqtol* clause is subordinated to the second *wayyiqtol* clause which is the וילך and which becomes then the main clause; technically speaking, in Hebrew both clauses are main clauses. But in the REB rendering the Elimelech family travels east to the land of the Moabites only because the famine made the situation in Bethlehem of Judah life threatening. Otherwise they would never have taken that option.

For all the rest, the translation of Karm Zammit is a carbon copy of Saydon's translation: exegesis (*fiž-žmien li kienu jaħkmu l-imħallfin*), vocabulary (*għarib*), the micro-Clause structure (*jgħammar għarib*). One may identify his contribution to this text tradition in that he corrected the slight mistake in Saydon (*ž-žewg uliedu = ž-žewg uliedu subjien*). In recompense, Saydon's is far superior idiomatically, for the 'colour' of its language. Karm Zammit's many borrowings from Saydon's raises the issue which is nowadays raised when it comes to publish a new translation; were all the efforts involved in the translation, and publishing, not to mention financing, worth the candle? And one has to take into consideration the fact that by the time

52. For the inter-relatedness of famine in a place and the consequent emigration of groups to a neighbouring country cf. Gen 12,10; 20,1-2.

this strong imitation of Saydon's translation was published at a time when there were strong rumours that a second edition of Saydon's translation was in the offing.⁵³

3

Carmel Sant versus Saydon

In 1984 the Malta Bible Society published its first edition of *Il-Bibbja jew Il-Kotba Mqaddsa bil-Malti* which became the first official Bible Translation of the Catholic Church on the Island. It was considered by many as a publishing event (cfr. the Preface by Professor Carmel Sant, the editor general). Within the Translation Tradition in Maltese it brought several innovations: it had a clearly defined 'target audience': '*traduzzjoni ġdida għal idejn kulhadd għall-użu publiku u privat*' (preface, p.x) [a new translation for the general public and for public and private use]. Marrying public and private use, this publication was preceded by the translation of the biblical texts to be used in the liturgy of the Catholic Church for both Sunday and daily readings; this helped the translators to keep their translation efforts strictly 'target audience orientated'. Besides, this translation was the fruit not of a single scholar but that of a team made up of writers and biblical scholars, even though Professor Sant's contribution seems to have excelled that of the other members of the team that worked with him (one may arrive to this conclusion from the list of those who worked on the first draft of each biblical book (cf. preface p.xi). Sant wrote the first draft of the greater part of the biblical books; and continued to refine the text till the very end of the editorial work. The present writer hopes to be able to study one day this redactional work more closely in order to trace the growth of the translation till its crystallization in the 1984 text. Sant says that the first draft passed through several individual and communal revisions by the members of the team. Concerning the Book of Ruth, Sant himself wrote the first draft and we may presume that he was therefore responsible for the greater part of the present text as we find it in the 1984 and subsequent editions of *Il-Bibbja*. We have to keep in mind that this Bible had four other editions, the Second (1996), the Third (2004), and the Fourth (2007 still in print). The Second edition done was under the general editorship of Rev Dr Anthony Abela, the Translation Consultant of the United Bible Societies for the Malta Bible Society. In 2004, the Malta Bible Society founded within its daughter organization, the Institute for Biblical Culture, which is responsible today for the teaching activities of the MBS, the *Kummissjoni*

53. Bezzina, *Saydon: Biblista u Studjuż tal-Malti*, 315-324; Sant 1992:139-152.

Biblika Permanenti (the Permanent Biblical Commission) in order to monitor the development of the text of its Bible in view of the ever evolving biblical research and in view of requests from time to time for changes in the text. The principle adopted by the Commission is that unless the text is proven mistaken, it *stet*. The Commission is made up of professional biblical scholars and it is convened every three to four months under the chairmanship of the present writer. No changes in the 1984 text of the Book of Ruth have been made by the Commission so far. This explains why we stopped with the first edition of the Bible (1984), and why we are focusing upon the contribution of Professor Carmel Sant notwithstanding there were always others who somehow helped Sant in his translation and redactional work on the book.

Text: Saydon: *Ġara fi żmien il-ħakma tal-inħallfin li kien hemm il-ġhaks fil-pajjiż, u mar raġel minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda jgħammar għarib fl-inħawi ta' Mowab, hu, u martu, u ż-żewġ uliedu.*

Text: Sant: *Fi żmien meta kienu jaħkmu l-inħallfin, kien hemm il-ġhaks fil-pajjiż. Kien hemm raġel minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda li mar joqgħod fl-inħawi ta' Mowab, hu, martu, u ż-żewġ uliedu.*

Commentary a) As one would expect, the two translations are quite similar, though there are a few differences which ought to be noted: the most significant concerns the sentence structure. Saydon follows the Hebrew text closely and almost repeat the two *wayyiqtol* clauses perhaps thinking that these are reproducible in the Maltese *u +the* perfect tense of the verb. We have seen that this is not the case. Maltese does not have the Hebrew verb form *wayyiqtol* and therefore the contents contained in the verb form of the Hebrew text has to be reproduced otherwise in Maltese. Sant's rendering offers a valid alternative in this regard. He renders the Hebrew verbal system by a cluster of short clauses, some main some secondary; the two וַיְהִי's are translated as main clauses: *kien hemm*, 'there was' the first having רַעַב as subject: 'In the time when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land'. The next sentence in the translation is the rendering of the other וַיְהִי clause this time the nominal אִישׁ, *raġel*, being the subject. This means that there is another small though significant difference between Sant and his mentor Saydon: the latter parsed וַיְהִי as part of the time phrase of the opening (v.1a), as a 'macrosyntactic sign' as Waltke and O'Connor defined it,⁵⁴ and hence not necessarily translatable;

54. Cf. page 3 note 10 of this paper.

Sant parsed it as the first of the *wayyiqtol* chain of verbs in the narrative, the first *wayyiqtol* that establishes the narrative thread: according to Sant ‘all started with the famine in Bethlehem’, while Saydon’s exegesis would comment ‘all started with Elimelek’s emigration to Moab’. Both appear to be correct because both events took place, though the first glance the text seems to favour Sant’s parsing and exegesis (the narrator’s putting the adverbial time phrase **כְּמִי שֶׁפָּטַח הַשָּׂפָטִים** between the verb and the subject creates a space which is rather too wide between the verb **וַיֵּחַד** and its presumed subject of the clause, **רַעֲב**; besides, the presumed grammatical relationship between the two elements has to pass through the other **וַיֵּחַד**, which makes this relationship ungrammatical. The problem with Sant’s parsing and exegesis therefore is that, as noticed before, the nominal **רַעֲב** cannot be, technically speaking, the subject of the first **וַיֵּחַד** in the text, and therefore Sant’s parsing is faulty and his exegesis as well as his translation need to be revisited. b) Sant’s reformulation of the text in Maltese involved giving pride of place to the verb (the second) **וַיֵּחַד** (*kien hemm*), and reducing in Maltese the Hebrew **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, which is the main verb in the Hebrew cluster, to a mere auxiliary *mar* in sustenance of the verb *joqgħod*, *mar joqgħod*, ‘went to live/reside.’⁵⁵ The problem with this verb *qagħad* in Maltese is that it does not *per se* carry the qualifying elements which, we have seen before, are entailed by the Hebrew verb **גָּר**. Sant has perhaps perceived the difficulties in the use of the nominal *għarib* of Saydon and simply dropped it without replacing it by an alternative which he could have done. In this regard, Sant’s rendering constitutes an undertranslation.⁵⁶ c) Sant improved the style of Saydon’s resumptive *hu, u martu, u ż-żewġ uliedu*, by dropping the conjunction before the second element, *martu*, his wife. Sant, like Saydon, relied on the further evolvment of the narrative to correct the slight undertranslation of **בְּנָיו** ‘his two sons’ by *iz-żewġ uliedu* ‘his two children’ who were males.

4

A proposal for a new translation

In this last paragraph the present writer offers his own proposal for a translation

55. For this meaning of the verb *qagħad* cfr. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 1122-1123.
56. As are many international translations who render **גָּר** by ‘reside’ ‘live’, ‘stay’ ‘sojourn’ (AV, which is slightly better in that it implies that the residing in the new place is not meant to be permanent but only for a limited time span.

in Maltese of Ruth 1,1 in the light of the best expressions of the translation tradition that has been exposed above.

Cortis (1924): *U ġaragħ, f'jiem għamil il-ħaqq ta' li mħalfin, li waqa' ġuħ f'l'art(ta Israel): u telaq raġel minn Bethlehem tagħ Juda, biex jgħix ġar fin-naħa ta' Moab, hu u martu u żewġ uliedu.*

Saydon (1932): *Ġara fi żmien il-ħakma tal-imħallfin li kien hemm il-għaks fil-pajjiż, u mar raġel minn Bethlehem ta' Ġuda, jgħammar għarib fl-inħawi ta' Mowab, hu u martu u ż-żewġ uliedu.*

Zammit (1982): *Issa ġara, fi żmien li kienu jaħkmu l-imħallfin, illi kien hemm il-għaks fil-pajjiż. U wiehed raġel minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda, mar jgħammar għarib fl-art ta' Mowab, hu, u martu, u ż-żewġ uliedu subjien.*

Sant (1984): *Fi żmien meta kienu jaħkmu l-imħallfin, kien hemm il-għaks fil-pajjiż. Kien hemm raġel minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda li mar joqgħod fl-inħawi ta' Mowab, hu, martu u ż-żewġ uliedu.*

In what follows the present writer hopes to offer a revised edition of Sant's version which today constitutes the official edition of the Bible in Maltese in the hope it will be considered worthy to replace the current text of Ruth 1,1. This revision does not mean to offer a completely original version of the text in Maltese; the revision being presented here takes the above translation tradition in its various expressions very seriously borrowing from them what the present writer deems to have been the best. Each part of the new edition will be followed by a commentary where this is necessary.

**Fi żmien meta kienu jaħkmu l-Imħallfin* [at the time when the Judges ruled].

This is a definite time frame wherein which the narrator sets his narrative of Ruth. The period of the Judges is being considered here as a definite historical period⁵⁷ for which reason the first letter of the word for 'judges', *Imħallfin*, is capitalised.

**Wiehed raġel siefer flimkien ma' martu u ż-żewġ uliedu subjien minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda biex imur jgħix ta' barrani fl-art ta' Mowab billi waqa' l-għaks fil-pajjiż*

57. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, 83

ta' Israel 'A certain man emigrated together with his wife and his two sons from Bethlehem of Judah in order to go and settle as a foreigner in the land of Moab since there was a famine in the land of Israel'

Commentary:

a) *Wieħed raġel siefer flimkien ma' martu u ż-żewġ uliedu subjien*

Indefiniteness in Maltese is not necessarily lexicalised as it is here. *Wieħed* literally means 'one' but it functions also as an indefinite pronoun.⁵⁸ Together with *raġel* it translates the Hebrew **אִישׁ**. The verb *siefer* is technical for 'to emigrate' which neither Sant nor Saydon employed in this text perhaps because the distance involved from Bethlehem to the territories of Moab was not too large.⁵⁹ The narrator insists that Elimelech travels away from his land with his family to settle somewhere in the Maobite territory for some time even if not for good, and hence one may speak of emigration. The verb *siefer* is the third form of the verb from the root *safar* found in this morphological form only as a noun.⁶⁰ In the context it is translating the main verb **יָלַד**. As in Hebrew the postposition (see above) underlines the accompaniment of Elimelech by his family, so here the phrase *flimkien ma' martu u ż-żewġ uliedu* comes just after the verb and before the adverbial phrase of place from *minn Betleħem ta' Ġuda* which would be normally more natural to put just after the verb of motion. The present writer has accepted the correction in Saydon and Sant introduced by Zammit and qualified the term *ulied* by *subjien* even though the tacit argument by the two scholars that the narrative by itself would have interpreted and corrected *ulied* for **בָּנָיו** is also taken to have been valid. Literally speaking, the translator may drop the general term *ulied* and include only *subjien* in the text: *u ż-żewġ subjien tiegħu* 'his two boys' because in Maltese this entailed that they were his own sons.

b) *minn Betleħem tq' Ġuda*

We have already shown that in Hebrew this phrase is ambiguous in that it may be interpreted both as adverbial phrase qualifying the verb **יָלַד** telling us from where the journey of Elimelech started, and as an adjectival phrase telling the place

58. Aquilina, *Maltese –English Dictionary*, II, 1531.

59. For the topography involved see Campbell, *Ruth*, 50-51.

60. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 1250.

of origin of Elimelech: he was a Bethlehemite. We have seen that most translations opted for this latter exegesis. This was constant also in the Maltese translation tradition we have so far studied. In our initial exegesis though we have shown that it is more probable that the narrator understood the phrase as adverbial and it is this option that may be read in the translation offered above. *Minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda* is qualifying *siefer* notwithstanding the rather large distance between the verb and the adverbial phrase; this distance has been created by insertion of the accompaniment phrase which mentions the various members of Elimelech that accompanied 'him' on his journey. We have seen that the Hebrew text gives these other subjects of the verb וְיִלְדָּי great importance by including them in a phrase that is postponed to the end of the sentence. In Maltese we could not adopt this syntactical strategy to achieve the same effect. Instead we brought the phrase to just after the verb and transformed the phrase to one of accompaniment. In this way the phrase is given greater syntactical prominence, just as the narrator wanted when he postponed it to the end of the sentence in Hebrew. Unfortunately, our strategy has the negative effect of distancing the adverbial phrase *minn Betlehem ta' Ġuda* from the main verb *siefer* though, in recompense, the phrase is no longer ambiguous as it is in Hebrew and in Saydon's translation which follows the Hebrew source text very closely.

c)...*billi waqa' l-ghaks fil-pajjiż ta' Izrael*

Two strategies have been adopted in translating the first *wayyiqtol* clause בְּאֵרֶץ רַעֲב וַיְהִי רָעֵב; the clause is reduced to a secondary clause in the service of the main clause that narrates the emigration of Elimelech with all his family members to Moab and it is explicitly redefined as a causal clause; this explains better the motivation of Elimelech in moving to the Moabite territory. Besides, the clause is transferred in the text structure to after the main clause and is linked to it by the conjunction *billi*.⁶¹ This further strengthened the relationship between the main clause and this secondary clause. For the translation of the verb וַיְהִי the present writer preferred Cortis's *waqa'* attached to the subject *il-ġuħ/il-ghaks* to *kien hemm* chosen by all other translators. Cortis though rendered רַעֲב by *ġuħ* while the present writer opted for *ghaks*. Probably both are possible though there exists a fine difference between the two. The former is used rather for physical hunger (*miniex bil-ġuħ*, 'I am not hungry'; *bil-ġuħ li ghandi qed nara l-kwiekeb*, 'I am so hungry, I can't stand any longer'.⁶² The nominal *ghaks* refers more though not exclusively to the state of

61. See Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, 123 for this conjunction.

62. *Ibid.*, 413.

depression in a country after a period of drought or some other natural disaster. We have the expression, at times used by politicians on the local scene, *l-ghaks tal-pajjiż* ‘the oppression of the country’; *ghex fl-ghaks u t-tbatija* ‘he was brought up in great poverty and misery.’⁶³ In view of these uses, *ghaks* is being preferred to *guħ*. Strictly speaking *fil-pajjiż ta’ Iżrael* makes explicit what in the text is only implicit; the text reads בְּאֶרֶץ ‘in the land’ which for the original target audience would have been a clear reference to ‘the land of Canaan’ or the ‘land of Israel’⁶⁴, but not necessarily so for the reader of the translation.

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63. See Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 949. One may find of some use the discussion Albert W. Agius, *It-Teżawru. Ġabra ta’ Sinonimi u Tifsiriet jixxiehbu Maltin*, Book Distribution Ltd., Malta 2000, 70.77.

64. Cfr BDB, 76; DCH, I, 386. As we have seen, the narrator may be linking the story of Ruth to the patriarchal narratives in Genesis, and hence the verbal and syntactical parallels with Gen 12,10 should not go unnoticed. Of course, the original listener to the story would know that Bethlehem formed part of ‘the land of Israel’. But for the reader of the translation, this may not be included among the facts of life to be necessarily known. This explains the specification ‘of Israel’ in the translation.