

GUILT HEALING THROUGH SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

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ABSTRACT

Martin Azzopardi sdc

GUILT HEALING THROUGH SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

This study aims at providing deep psychological, theological and pastoral support for Spiritual Direction to understand guilt and shame feelings and so provide healing. Carl Jung, the popular psychoanalyst believes that guilt can be released through therapy, which is a “dialogue or discussion between two persons.” The result of this therapeutic dialogue leads to healing and personality integration. Spiritual direction in the deepest sense is distinct from counselling, from opening up to a confidant and from sharing with a close friend. Spiritual direction is distinguishable from counselling in that the latter is client-oriented and deals primarily with the observance and behavioural aspects of the human person. Spiritual direction remains God-oriented: listening to him and to his mysterious, ineffable ways within the directee. I will take a journey into the human mind and explore the way it tries to meet threats to our psychic survival and our self-esteem. I try to portray the many faces of guilt and the various ways we all express guilt day after day. I show how guilt and shame make us uncomfortable, reduce us to unpleasant, childlike feelings, and lower our self-image so much that we do not like it. It is clear, then that if we can learn to deal with guilt we can communicate more successfully. This means that through spiritual direction we learn to accept guilt when it belongs to us, and to refuse it if it is not ours. So I will be analysing the difference between real guilt and false/neurotic guilt. The former we need to accept because it belongs to us. The latter we need to reject because it is not ours. As with most spiritual and psychological matters there are no fixed rules and no set prescriptions everyone can follow. Each spiritual director must find his own way to deal with his directee. But through this study I propose some suggestions and guidelines that are often helpful, and make it possible for the process of healing to be effective. However, there is indeed a true Conscience within us, a voice that can be said to come from our real Self and that tries to correct us when we deviate from our proper path in life. When this voice comes to us we need to listen. Thus, here I present the importance of discernment in spiritual direction. Painful though such corrections may be through the spiritual director, they lead us back to our true Self, not away from it. These corrections come, not from false guilt, but from a violation of our true and deepest nature. When we deviate from our true nature, we hear what amounts to be the voice of God within us. This is our true Conscience. The bibliographical research method applied in this dissertation will provide a deep understanding of the concept of guilt together with practical tools for spiritual directors to deal with an effective way of guilt healing through spiritual direction.

M.A. Spiritual Companionship

MAY 2014

**GUILT HEALING
SPIRITUALITY**

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
UNDERSTANDING GUILT**

**PSYCHOLOGY
CONSCIENCE**

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, the undersigned declare that this dissertation is authentic and was carried out under the supervision of Fr. Nicholas Cachia.

Martin Azzopardi sdc

Dedicated to:

All those who suffer from guilt feelings.

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A Pure Heart

A pure heart is one that is unencumbered, unworried, uncommitted, and which does not want its own way about anything, but which, rather is submerged in the loving will of God... There can be no restlessness except it come from self-will.

- Meister Eckhart

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INTRODUCTION

In life we happen to experience various feelings which are either beneficial or destructive to our moral self-growth. Guilt can be one of these feelings which can turn either beneficial or destructive in one's life, it all depends on how we face them and overcome them. Guilt feelings can turn so intense and neurotic that can oppress and suppress one's conscience leading a person to self-destructive wishes - depression, neurotic disorders, suicide, etc. On the other hand, if one is well guided to face and overcome guilt this can serve as an experience of moral growth in life.

Somehow or another every person in life experiences guilt feelings but the intensity of such feelings varies from a person to another. So whether guilt is real or neurotic a person needs help and support to acquire the knowledge of dealing well with guilt feelings throughout one's moral growth. In order to acquire healing, a person needs to know exactly the origin of one's guilt feelings, how one is affected by them and what steps one need to adopt to overcome them. In other words, a person needs not escape or ignore such guilt feelings but learn how to face and overcome them while making use of them to experience moral growth and self-freedom. According to many authors, therapists, counsellors and directors, guilt feelings can turn to be very helpful to a person's moral growth.¹

As people keep on experiencing guilt, the sources of their guilt feelings varies according to personalities and circumstances but if their negative emotional, psychological, spiritual and physical effects associated with it are not well addressed the results can be self-destructive. So the question that emerges here is "how do people overcome guilt?" The popular psychoanalyst Carl Jung insists that guilt needs therapy which consists of an intense professional "dialogue or

¹ Cf. Ernest Becker, *The Structure of Evil* (New York: George Braziller, 1968); John Donnelly, *Conscience* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1973); Josef Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility of Christian Morality* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1983); Richard McCormick, *Doing Evil to Achieve Good* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1978); Geoffrey Peterson, *Conscience and Caring* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Edward Stein, *Guilt-Theory and Therapy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972); Paul Tournier, *The Whole Person in a Broken World* (London: Collins, 1965).

discussion between two persons”² in order to overcome guilt feelings. It is through such therapeutic dialogue that a person experiencing guilt can acquire healing and personality integration.³ Jung refers to therapeutic dialogue as ‘confession’ which entails an “acknowledgement of secrets, emotions, and human limitations.”⁴ Guilt feelings can be kept secret in one’s life and Jung says that hidden secrets can act “like a psychic [(soul)] poison that alienates their possessor from the community.”⁵

So keeping our guilt feelings secret can have several negative side-effects affecting both our inner selves and our social relationships with others. Jung therefore highly recommends the need of therapeutic dialogue or confession, in order to understand guilt feelings and acquire healing.

Spiritual direction offers this sense of ‘therapeutic dialogue’ or ‘confession’ helping a person experiencing guilt to share and open his concealed secrets in order to overcome guilt. Spiritual direction accompanies a person along his spiritual journey inviting him to acquire deeper relationship with the presence of the ‘Sacred’ in order to achieve guilt healing.

So in spiritual direction sessions both director and directee meet together in the presence of one another, and in the presence of the ‘Sacred’ learning to recognize the subtle movements of the self and of the Holy Spirit.

Katherine Howard holds that people (now more than ever) need spiritual direction in life in order to free their spirits from daily burdens. Spiritual direction is needed because,

² Carl G. Jung, “The Collected Works of C. G. Jung,” in *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, eds. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, vol. 16 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1979-1983), 3, 10.

³ Edward Cletus Sellner, “The Event of Self-Revelation in the Reconciliation Process: a Pastoral Theological Comparison of A. A.’s Fifth Step and the Sacrament of Penance” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1980), 79.

⁴ Ibid., 79-80.

⁵ Ibid., 80.

There are moments in each of our lives when this invitation of the transcendent breaks through - moments of love, of joy, of beauty; moments of sorrow, of suffering, of sin, of death ...In all our activities and passivities, it is as if God is watching for any possible place to break into our awareness, to coax us to turn and see, to stop and feel the divine touch. This is true for ourselves as spiritual directors and for those who come to us for spiritual direction.⁶

Spiritual direction offers a person experiencing guilt the possibility of 'confessing' his burdens with another person in the presence of the Sacred. David Benner says that spiritual direction "is not primarily a matter of doing certain things. Often, in fact, it is precisely the opposite of doing: it is a gift of not doing - not interrupting, not attempting to solve problems, not prematurely or inappropriately advising, not assuming that what has worked for us will work for others."⁷

Spiritual direction needs to be understood says Benner as "a gift of hospitality, presence and dialogue"⁸ which Jung insists upon in order to acquire guilt healing.

Spiritual direction surely offers a person means and tools to achieve guilt healing and Pegge Bernecker highlights the importance of both love and forgiveness when she says: "Will you join me... and choose to traverse the dangerous territory of honest authenticity, tempered with forgiveness and loving compassion?"⁹

In offering compassionate support, spiritual direction helps the person experiencing guilt to unveil one's inner self, admit one's guilt feelings and reflect upon them to acquire spiritual freedom throughout one's moral growth.

⁶ Katherine Howard, *Seeking and Finding God in Tending the Holy: Spiritual Direction across Traditions* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2003), 117.

⁷ David Benner and Crabb Larry, *Sacred Companions* (New York: InterVarsity, 2004), 46.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Pegge Bernecker, "Compassionate Listening," *Listen* (Oct. 2008): 1.

However, it is through God's compassion and abiding presence that such a person acquires true guilt healing as Tilden Edwards states, "In spiritual direction the focus is on that divine force, on God, as the integral core of our being and purpose... Spiritual direction is about healing our relationship with God..."¹⁰

Barry and Connolly consider this "relationship with God" as the heart of their definition of spiritual direction meaning something that is, "established by the creation of the human person and exists even when the person is unaware of its existence".¹¹ So a person experiencing guilt who seeks spiritual direction to acquire healing needs to experience "an interpersonal process in which two people work together toward the goal of a deeper, more explicitly intimate and mutual relationship with God".¹²

On this same line of thought, Thomas Merton¹³ considers spiritual direction as a "continuous process of formation and guidance, in which a Christian is led and encouraged in his special vocation so that by faithful correspondence to the graces of the Holy Spirit he may attain to the particular end of his vocation and to union with God".¹⁴ Again in Merton's words, "This union with God signifies not only the vision of God in heaven but, as Cassian specifies, that perfect purity of heart which, even on earth, constitutes sanctity and attains to an obscure experience of heavenly things".¹⁵ Surely he reminds us of Jesus words praying for his disciples saying: "Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20b-21).

By offering soul dialogue through a holistic approach, spiritual direction offers a person experiencing guilt the possibility of healing which is different from

¹⁰ Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion: Guide to Tending the Soul* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 2001), 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³ See Thomas Merton, *Spiritual direction and meditation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1960).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the healing offered by modern psychology. In fact Thomas Merton says that “You don’t go to a spiritual director to take care of your spirit the way you go to a dentist to have him take care of your teeth. The spiritual director is concerned with the whole person”.¹⁶

Spiritual direction doesn’t offer a prescribed medicine to overcome guilty feelings but surely offers “the Way” (Acts 19:23) – a Christian transformational journey to acquire healing. David Benner¹⁷ insists on this “Transformational Journey” through the power of Jesus Christ while referring to spiritual direction as an accompaniment on a voyage of becoming. However, to acquire this sense of ‘transformation’ Rogers¹⁸ insists on a positive understanding of God’s Image viewing salvation as a process of transformation where we stop seeing ourselves as ‘forgiven sinners’ but see ourselves as ‘beloved children of God’ on a transformational life journey towards a spiritual union with God.¹⁹

However, a person experiencing guilt cannot acquire this spiritual transformation without a sense of renovation of one’s heart. Willard believes that “spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself”.²⁰ So spiritual direction intends to offer such a person the possibility of what Willard calls “a conversational relationship with God”²¹ transforming one’s heart burdened with guilt into a freer and more loving heart.

Once we accept spiritual direction as a means of ‘transformational journey’ towards healing, we start seeking God’s grace to revive from our false self while

¹⁶ Merton, *Spiritual direction and meditation*, 14.

¹⁷ See David G. Benner, *Sacred companions: The gift of spiritual friendship and direction* (New York: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

¹⁸ F. G. Rogers, “Spiritual direction in the orthodox tradition,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 30/4 (2002): 276-289.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ D. Willard, *Renovation of the heart: Putting on the character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003), 22.

²¹ D. Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a conversational relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 56.

deepening our conversation and communion with God and unite in the presence and love of the indwelling Christ.²²

Through this dissertation I aim to provide a journey departing from the psychological and moral understanding of guilt towards a reflection on spiritual direction in seeking effective ways to overcome guilt feelings.

In chapter one I shall deal with the Psychology of Guilt – seeing how guilt can be an anxiety-provoking thorn in one’s psyche or a growth-stimulating element in one’s personality. Guilt is a mental process rather than a feeling and this process automatically produces feelings of shame and grief. Throughout the psychological process of understanding guilt, the distinction between real and neurotic guilt will be made clear for both director and the directee. The gender and culture aspect which differentiates the guilt experience between men and women turns out also to be helpful in the healing process.

In chapter two I will deal with the Morality of Guilt versus the Dynamics of Grace. The feeling of guilt will acquire a different character depending on whether the morality which the person experiencing guilt recognizes the character of an external, authoritative system of rules (divine will, the canon law, the views of one’s neighbours) or of a personal autonomous morality of conscience. Here I shall briefly describe moral conscience; then in some detail I will describe an entirely different but deceptively similar-looking reality: the superego. Finally I will reflect on the aim of spiritual direction in helping the directee to replace neurotic guilt by a true and valid sense of sin. Then through the dynamics of grace as explained by Karl Barth’s theology, I shall see that if Christ has taken the shame of human sin upon himself and has made it fully his own in order to redeem the sinner, then human beings may also take on and receive the honour before God that belongs to Christ alone.

In chapter three I will examine the role of Spiritual Direction and helpful process models needed for Guilt Healing. I will deal first with the major role of the spiritual director, namely, to help directees pay attention to their experience as the

²² Merton, *Spiritual direction and meditation*, 14.

locus of their encounter with God. In this regard, Christian mysticism and mystics can offer many insights for better discernment and understanding throughout the guilt healing process. This will be followed by a systematic analysis of the various phases or stages adopted by the Grief Healing Process applying them as fruitful guidelines to a Guilt Healing Process.

Finally in chapter four I will be dealing with effective ways for Guilt Healing, exposing more practical and schematic steps for an effective guilt healing process. There is no precise formula of how to make use of such ways of healing - all depends on the professionalism and discretion of the spiritual director dealing with a particular case study. While spiritual directors should be equipped with effective ways of guilt healing, they should also be aware of destructive ways of escape from guilt, otherwise the healing process won't succeed and its results will be catastrophic. When such indications of destructiveness occur in the directee, it is obvious that any consideration of psychiatric referral must be carefully examined by the director.

So while it is important to understand the deep psychological, theological and pastoral understanding of guilt and its effect on the wholeness of our personality, we need also to explore the various effective ways, methods and skills for guilt healing through spiritual direction while realizing the various destructive escapes from guilt.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GUILT – A DISTINCTION BETWEEN REAL AND NEUROTIC GUILT AND THE GENDER DIFFERENCE.

1.1 DEFINITION OF GUILT

Guilt is a human phenomenon which can create lots of anxiety in one's psyche, or it can also stimulate growth in one's personality.²³ Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton²⁴ hold that guilt motivates individuals to change their behaviour or adopt a new way of behaviour.

According to psychoanalytic literature, guilt is understood as a self-punishing process that takes place in one's life through sanctioning or censuring all violations of moral standards,²⁵ within the specific regulations of a given culture. Then correction of behaviour is carried out by fear of guilt, telling people that their doings are wrong. Freud²⁶ assumed that guilt is a necessary precondition in the development of one's Super-Ego as he considers it the result of one's Oedipus complex. According to this point of view, guilt and its uneasy feelings, has the ability of punishing impulses which we consider unacceptable and which violate

²³ Helen B. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 11.

²⁴ R. F. Baumeister, A. M. Stillwell and T. F. Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," *Psychological Bulletin*, 115/2 (1994): 243-267.

²⁵ Cf. S.S. Tomkins, "Affect, imagery, consciousness," in *The negative affects*, vol. 2 (New York: Springer, 1963); D.L. Mosher, "Interaction of fear and guilt in inhibiting unacceptable behaviour," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 29/2 (1965):161–167; Lewis, *Shame and guilt in neurosis*.

²⁶ S. Freud, "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961a), 173–182. Original work published 1924; S. Freud, *Civilization and its discontents* (New York: Norton, 1961b). Original work published 1930; S. Freud, "The Io and the ID," in *The complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey J (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), 3–66. Original work published 1923.

our inner norms. Therefore, guilt is caused by a conflict between the Ego and the Super-Ego and has the role of keeping one's behaviour in line with the standards of morality.

Mosher²⁷ holds that guilt is an expectation of self-inflicted punishment followed by uneasy feelings after having violated one's internal standards of behaviour. Other authors like Piers Singer and Lewis have also seen guilt as a negative affective component, which punishes people for their transgressions after violating personal standards.²⁸

Another definition by Scherer²⁹ holds that guilt warns of the negative aspects of someone's behaviour that is not in line with one's external or internal norms or both. However, this view focuses less on the individual's internal processes and still focus on the punishment aspect. According to various authors like Kugler, Jones, Harder and O'Connor all this justifies the implications of guilt in psychopathology.³⁰

In fact Freud³¹ is probably the first to consider that excessive guilt is at the base of all neuroses. For Freud, guilt does not only punish people who do wrong, but leads them to desire also punishment when they feel that they are in error or doing wrong. Guilt tends to lead people to experience self-punishing behaviour that can lead to failure in one's normal life.³² Then Menninger and Panken believe

²⁷ Mosher, "Interaction of fear and guilt in inhibiting unacceptable behaviour," 161–167.

²⁸ Cf. G. Piers and M. Singer, *Shame and guilt: a psychoanalytic and cultural study* (New York: Norton, 1971). Original work published in 1953; Lewis, *Shame and guilt in neurosis*; M. Lewis, *Shame the exposed self* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

²⁹ K. R. Scherer, "On the nature and function of emotion: A component process approach," in *Approaches to emotion*, ed. K. R. Scherer and P. Ekman (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1984), 293–318.

³⁰ K. Kugler and W.H. Jones, "On conceptualizing and assessing guilt," *Journal of Social Psychology* 62/2 (1992): 318–327; D.W. Harder (1995) "Shame and guilt assessment and relationships of shame and guilt proneness to psychopathology," in *Self-conscious emotions: the psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride*, ed. J.P. Tangney and K.W. Fischer (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 369–392; L.E. O'Connor, J.W. Berry and J. Weiss, "Interpersonal guilt, shame and psychological problems," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 18/2 (1999): 181–203.

³¹ Freud, "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex," 173–182.

that this self-punitive function of guilt is related to masochistic behaviours an idea which is widely accepted in psychoanalytic literature.³³

However, Fromm³⁴ says that someone's fear of being guilty is not primarily due to the possibility of losing someone's love but of having disobeyed an authority, even an unreal interiorized authority. Guilt is a kind of power that authority has over people. In fact for Fromm people who feel guilty are ready to do anything to acquire the approval of authority so they can ease or heal their guilt feelings. This psychological process mechanism could explain the possible role of guilt in cases of homicides followed by the killer's suicide. In fact Baumeister says that the amount of guilt which follows after someone kills somebody can lead to the desire of deserving an equally extreme punishment by committing suicide.³⁵

Although some studies show that guilt is linked with the expectation or the fear of being punished,³⁶ none of them prove that the guilty person always wishes to suffer or be punished. Nelissen and Zeelenberg say that this deep wish to suffer or to be punished tends to appear only when the person is under certain neurotic conditions.³⁷

At this point there is another aspect about guilt to be considered. Within the psychodynamic approach, it is not clear to some authors how guilt is distinguished from other emotions. The idea that a person is able to prevent specific behaviours to avoid unpleasant feelings clearly shows the possibility that one is experiencing just fear to be guilty. Moreover, in adulthood, fear of guilt linked with moral

³² Freud, "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex," 173–182; S. Freud, "The lo and the ID," 3–66.

³³ Cf. K. Menninger, *Man against himself* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966). Original work published in 1934; S. Panken, *The joy of suffering: psychoanalytic theory and therapy of masochism* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1983).

³⁴ See E. Fromm, *Etica y Psychoana`lysis* (Madrid: Fondo De Cultura Econo`mica, 1985). Original work published 1947.

³⁵ Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," 243–267.

³⁶ F.W. Wicker, G.C. Payne and R.D. Morgan, "Participant descriptions of guilt and shame," *Motiv Emot* 7/1 (1983): 25–39.

³⁷ R.M.A. Nelissen and M. Zeelenberg, "When guilt evokes self punishment: evidence for the existence of a Dobby Effect," *Emotion* 9/1 (2009):118–122.

violations appears not only after the person has acted in an unethical way, but also when he simply anticipates the intention or the possibility of transgression. Hence, this emotional state can be seen as anticipated anxiety rather than guilt. In fact Prinz and Nichols,³⁸ state that:

guilt could be a learned by-product of other emotions, like fear or sadness. We propose that guilt is actually a form of sadness or sadness mixed with a little anxiety. When young children misbehave, parents withdraw love. Love withdrawal threatens the attachment relationship that children have with their parents, and losing attachments is a paradigm of sadness. It can cause anxiety, insofar as attachment relations are a source of security. The threat of losing love leads children to associate sadness with transgression, through associative learning. The anxiety-tinged sadness about wrongdoing is then labelled guilt.³⁹

In line with this view, guilt should be seen and understood as a consequence of a combination of anxiety and sadness, rather than a pure emotion. Now beyond the criticism to this particular view, it is important to highlight that it is the very nature of this emotion that seems to be brought into question here. Currently, guilt is broadly seen as a type of emotion, but some questions related to the role of guilt in moral behaviour still need to be addressed. Further research is needed to analyse the different emotional states that precede violations of moral standards in order to differentiate better among them.

More recently, literature is focusing more on the relational consequences of someone's actions or omissions rather than on someone's internal states. In the area of social psychology, guilt is considered as an adaptive emotion able to improve social relationships.⁴⁰ So within this line of thought, guilt crops up when

³⁸ J. Prinz and S. Nichols, "Moral emotions," in *Moral psychology handbook*, ed. J. Doris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 111–148.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 136–137.

⁴⁰ M.L. Hoffman, "Development of prosocial motivation: empathy and guilt," in *The development of prosocial behaviour*, ed. N. Eisenberg (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 218–231; M.L. Hoffman, "Varieties of empathy-based guilt," in *Guilt and children*, ed. J. Bybee (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 91–112; Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," 243–267; J.P. Tangney and R. Dearing, *Shame and guilt* (New York: Guilford, 2004).

one believes that one has harmed another person through a relationship. Therefore, guilt is understood as a prosocial phenomenon that aims to maintain, reinforce and protect important interpersonal relationships, particularly with loved ones.⁴¹

So, this emotion is derived from the fear of losing a relationship with someone whom you love and you have hurt, and stimulate us to apologize and express empathy toward the offended person. Therefore, from an interpersonal point of view, guilt has the ability and function to improve interpersonal relationships by creating preoccupation for the well-being of a person. For this reason, guilt is needed in our relationships with others.⁴² Guilt is intended to keep cohesion in a group,⁴³ leading people to carry out reparatory acts, help others, communicate their feelings and be sensitive to others' feelings.⁴⁴

1.2 DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GUILT AND SHAME

Guilt and shame are terms often used interchangeably and frequently

⁴¹ J.P. Tangney, "Situational determinants of shame and guilt in young adulthood," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 18 (1992):199–206; Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," 243–267; K.C. Barrett, "A functionalist approach to shame and guilt," in *Self-conscious emotions: the psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride*, ed. J.P. Tangney and K.W. Fisher (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 25-63; M.L. Hoffman, "Varieties of empathy-based guilt," 91–112; K.P. Leith and R.F. Baumeister, "Empathy, shame, guilt and narratives of interpersonal conflicts: guilt-prone people are better at perspective taking," *Journal of Personality* 66 (1998): 1–37.

⁴² J.P. Tangney, "Moral affect: the good, the bad and the ugly," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61/4 (1991): 598–607; J.P. Tangney, "Shame and guilt in interpersonal relationships," in *Self-conscious emotions*, ed. J.P. Tangney and K.W. Fischer (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 114–142.

⁴³ See G.W. Allport (1954) "The nature of prejudice," in *Reading American Psychiatric Association (APA) ed. Addison-Wesley, 4th edn, text revision of Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (Washington, 2000).

⁴⁴ P.M. Niedenthal, J.P. Tangney and I. Gavanski, "Distinguishing shame and guilt in counterfactual thinking," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67/4 (1994): 585–595; Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," 243–267.

thought to be the same concept. However, studies have recently shown that there is a distinction between these two concepts. Both guilt and shame are related to “wrong-doing” behaviour either by omission or commission.⁴⁵ They both involve negative emotions and cognitions related to the offensive behaviour that one experiences in life.⁴⁶ So Wilson holds that guilt is composed of negative emotions related to wrongdoings or perceived failures to act appropriately, whereas shame is composed of a negative evaluation of one’s own worth because he or she has acted “wrongly.” Thus, according to this view, guilt is more related to someone’s actions, while shame is more related to one’s moral integrity and self-worth, and/or past actions and how they are perceived. In addition, shame is a concept which holds feelings of “disgrace, disrepute, dishonour, loss of self-esteem, loss of virtue, and loss of personal integrity”.⁴⁷ In contrast, guilt holds feelings of sorrow, repentance, and disappointment in one’s actions.

Guilt and shame also differ in their negative cognitions related to them.⁴⁸ So while guilty cognitions focus on the evaluation of one’s behaviour and not of one’s personal integrity, shameful cognitions tend to focus more on evaluating one’s self, loss of self-esteem, and loss of one’s moral integrity. Someone who feels shame may think that he or she is to blame for the immoral act and so one is a bad person. On the other hand someone who feels guilty may believe that he or she acted wrongly and therefore feels that his or her actions are wrong, but still holding a positive self-esteem.

While some authors and researchers have seen differences between the emotions of guilt and shame, others have not, and so they see guilt and shame as same concepts. So we might find literature which sees guilt and shame as separate emotional reactions and other literature which joins them together like Harris, Schulman and Mekler.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ J. P. Wilson, B. Drozdek and S. Turkovic, “Posttraumatic shame and guilt,” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 7/2 (2006): 122-141.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

In addition some studies focussed on guilt and shame-proneness in people and examined their general tendency to respond to events with feelings of guilt or shame. Guilt-proneness and shame-proneness are also known as trait guilt or trait shame and study research has shown that guilt-proneness and shame-proneness are linked to some psychological disorders.⁵⁰ Research has in fact shown that shame-proneness tends to put a person at greater psychological risk than guilt-proneness. However, taking into account the difference between guilt-proneness and shame-proneness, most study research shows that the unique characteristics of guilt-proneness are no longer a significant predictor of adverse psychological symptoms.⁵¹

1.3 ABSENCE OF GUILT

Guilt will always affect our personality due to the ability and power within us to evaluate the self according to our internalized standards and values.⁵² Even the unawareness of guilt affects our personality. It is the psychopath who is not sensitive to guilt due to his “antisocial personality”.⁵³ Bowman describes this personality as follows:

⁴⁹ Cf. P. L. Harris, *Children and emotion: The development of psychological understanding* (New York: Blackwell, 1989); M. Schulman and E. Mekler, *Bringing up a moral child* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1985).

⁵⁰ E.S. Kubany et al., “Initial examination of a multidimensional model of trauma-related guilt: Applications to combat veterans and battered women,” *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment* 17/4 (1995): 353-376; J.P. Tangney, P. Wagner, & R. Gramzow, “Proneness to shame, proneness to guilt, and psychopathology,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 101/3 (1992): 469-478.

⁵¹ S. L. Pineles, A.E. Street, and K.C. Koenen, “The differential relationships of shame-proneness and guilt-proneness to psychological and somatization symptoms,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 25/6 (2006): 688-704.

⁵² Paul Tournier, *Guilt and Grace* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962), 15.

⁵³ Bowman Wolman, *The Therapist's Handbook: Treatment Methods of Mental Disorder* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976), 411.

This term is reserved for individuals who are basically unsocialized and whose behaviour pattern brings them repeatedly into conflict with society. They are incapable of significant loyalty to individuals, groups or social values. They are grossly selfish, callous, irresponsible, impulsive, and unable to feel guilt or to learn from experience and punishment...⁵⁴

Psychopathic antisocial behaviour is rooted in our biological and social aspect of our life and it is caused by what we inherit and experience.⁵⁵ Consequently the psychopath personality is not able to listen to that “self-evaluator” called conscience and it is this inability which produces in the person patterns of self-defeating and destructive behaviour. Then it is this inability to be aware of one’s guilt that stops one’s process of growth and integration.⁵⁶

1.4 AWARENESS OF GUILT

To be aware of one’s guilt is to confirm that a person follows a value system and accepts social norms. Guilt awareness leads a person to be aware of one’s human weakness and fallibility. The quality of one’s growth and personality integration is measured through one’s ability to deal with one’s awareness of a personal transgression of a commitment to a value system.⁵⁷ When conscience starts to monitor our inner self, guilt erupts to make us aware of a transgression or violation in our life.⁵⁸ Then feelings of shame and loss of self-esteem which follows could influence our way of dealing with guilt.⁵⁹

In spiritual direction one should see how a directee is handling one’s own guilt feelings. A spiritual director must be able to see and study; ‘Why a person

⁵⁴ Ibid., 414-415.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 417.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, 97.

⁵⁷ Richard Taylor, *Good and Evil* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 4.

⁵⁸ Geoffrey Peterson, *Conscience and Caring* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 56.

⁵⁹ Paul Tournier, *The Violence Inside* (London: SCM Press 1978), 97.

gets destroyed when coping with guilt?’ and ‘Why others grow and find inner integration when handling guilt? There is no clear answer to these questions unless we understand that there are two kinds of guilt, the neurotic and the real.’⁶⁰

1.5 NEUROTIC GUILT

Traditionally, guilt was seen as an “uncomfortable” emotion leading a person to mental disorders. So in this perspective, guilt must be avoided and got rid of. This view is historically rooted in a psychoanalytic approach, which sees the emotion closely linked to the development of several psychopathologies.⁶¹

As already mentioned, some psychoanalytic literature considers guilt as a negative emotion linked to the breaking or violation of one’s internal norms and the fear of punishment which follows.

Psychologically a child requires security and if this sense of security is not satisfied, he becomes anxious. Then to reduce anxiety the child becomes confused as a result of the functioning of the law of effect. If the child experiences reward and punishment in approximately equal amounts from his parents, he tends to become confused concerning his relationship with them. He won’t feel secure enough because their reaction to what he does is likely to be wrath understood as love. He becomes emotionally dependent upon his parents as he doesn’t know when they will reward him or when they will punish him. When the reward or punishment comes many hours or days later, the child’s behaviour turns disordered. Following a bad pattern in reward and punishment is very confusing

⁶⁰ Gerard Haigh, “Existential Guilt: Neurotic and Real,” *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* (1961):120-130.

⁶¹ Freud, “The dissolution of the Oedipus complex,” 173–182; E. Hartmann and R. Loewenstein, “Notes on the superego,” *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 17 (1962): 42–81; S. Blatt, “Levels of object representation in anaclitic and introjective depression,” *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 29 (1974):107–157; W.H. Jones and K. Kugler, “Interpersonal correlates of the Guilt Inventory,” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 61 (1993): 246–258.

for the child and it is then that he starts experiencing anxiety followed by guilt feelings.⁶² In his clinical practice, Freud⁶³ observed very often strong guilt in his patients' psychopathology linked to sexual fantasies about one of their parents. This strong guilt will then lead them to the Oedipus complex. When guilt becomes neurotic, the Super-Ego uses guilt as a means of punishment to avoid succumbing to the unacceptable impulse - a process which can easily lead a person to psychopathology.⁶⁴

1.6 THE EFFECTS OF NEUROTIC GUILT

Lewis⁶⁵ holds that neurotic guilt is only linked with some psychopathologies. Neurotic Guilt can make us vulnerable to disorders related to thought, like obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or paranoia. In fact according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) the descriptive characteristics of obsessive-compulsive disorder also include "feelings of guilt and pathological responsibility".⁶⁶

Another basic characteristic in the pathology of OCD is strong sensitivity to guilt, particularly in cognitive-behavioural models.⁶⁷ In line with these models, obsessions and compulsive behaviours crop up to avoid situations in one's life that

⁶² Freud, "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex," 173–182.

⁶³ S. Freud, "New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961c), 5–182. Original work published 1933.

⁶⁴ L.E. O'Connor, J.W. Berry and J. Weiss, "Interpersonal guilt, shame and psychological problems," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 18/2 (1999): 181–203.

⁶⁵ See Lewis, *Shame and guilt in neurosis*.

⁶⁶ American Psychiatric Association (APA), in *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*, ed. Adison Wesley (2000), 430.

⁶⁷ P.M. Salkovskis, "Obsessional-compulsive problems: a cognitive-behavioral analysis," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 23 (1985): 571–583; S. Rachman, "Obsessions, responsibility and guilt," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 31/2 (1993): 149–154; R. Shafran, "The manipulation of responsibility in obsessive-compulsive disorder," *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 36 (1997): 397–408.

can cause guilt. This is highly linked with the perception of being responsible for the happening of negative events in our lives.⁶⁸

Cameron holds that neurotic guilt destroys our personality and affects the process of growth and integration through the following destructive behavioural patterns.⁶⁹

- a. Self-rejection;
- b. Hostility;
- c. Symptoms of Paranoia;
- d. Depression due to intense anxiety.

According to Josef Fuchs these destructive patterns do not affect only the individual but also one's relationship with others and with God and lead him to possess destructive feelings in one's relationships.⁷⁰

1.6.1 SELF-REJECTION

Neurotic guilt has no room for compassion as the person gets immersed in shame and anger over the transgression. Just as the neurotic person had experienced the anger or fury of a punitive parent, that same anger is kept by the person himself/herself. So anger is turned towards the self leading a person to reject oneself. Cameron holds that the person who rejects oneself has already depreciated his/her self-anger.⁷¹ Guilt-awareness also leads to an unconscious self-hate:

⁶⁸ K. Shaver and D. Down, "On causality, responsibility and self blame: a theoretical note," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50 (1986): 697–702; K.M. McGraw, "Guilt following transgression: an attribution of responsibility approach," *Journal of personality and Social psychology* 53/2 (1987): 247–256; M. Miceli, "How to make someone feel guilty: strategies of guilt inducement and their goals," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 22/1 (1992): 81–104.

⁶⁹ Norman Cameron, *Personal Development and Psycho-pathology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), 388.

⁷⁰ Josef Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility of Christian Morality* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1983), 14.

⁷¹ Cameron, *Personality Development and Psycho-pathology*, 215.

Since the patient unconsciously hates himself, he is justified in saying that he feels unloved and unlovable. He also realizes that he does not feel the love for others... Neurotically depressed persons usually go further than this; they behave cruelly to those whom they would like to love and go on loving. If, as a result, they suffer from remorse, the remorse is fully justified. Each abrupt answer or sharp protest, each temper outburst, each quarrel leads to an increase in realistic guilt; and each increase in realistic guilt brings an increase in the hostility of the archaic superego.⁷²

1.6.2 HOSTILITY

Since the individual has condemned the self, hostility emerges directed towards the self and towards others. One can only give to others what one has so if the person has hostile feelings towards himself/herself, one tends to transfer these same feelings towards others. Because of the hostility within, neurotic guilt will make a person judgemental of others. So for what the self has condemned in him/her, he/she condemns others.⁷³ As Lewis explains:

The position of the self as initiator of guilt, and the determiner or judge of extent of responsibility, puts the self "in charge" of the hostility directed against itself. It also puts the self in charge of the distribution of hostility... Similarly; the active role of the self in guilt makes it possible that hostility is discharged upon "others" as well as upon the self, thereby creating an affinity between guilt and projection of hostility.⁷⁴

1.6.3 SYMPTOMS OF PARANOIA

Neurotic guilt leads a person to be "suspicious" of others. As the individual hates himself/herself and considers his/her worthlessness to be true, he/she starts suspecting that others (even loved ones) have hatred and contempt in their heart for his/her worthlessness. Accepting or believing in other people's appreciation or affirmation becomes impossible.⁷⁵ Consequently, this sense of paranoia brings

⁷² Ibid., 419.

⁷³ Ibid., 299.

⁷⁴ Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, 44-45.

⁷⁵ Haigh, "Existential Guilt: Neurotic and Real," 122.

about the destruction of relationships which are highly essential to our personality. So projected hostility brings hostility in return, and the person who suffers from neurotic guilt finds himself/herself isolated.⁷⁶ According to Lewis:

‘Hostile Belligerence’ is characterized by a complaining attitude, manifest hostility and an inclination to express resentment towards others, and to feel suspicious of the intentions of others... Those who are guilt-prone demonstrate by finding fault with the people and circumstances around them.⁷⁷

1.6.4 DEPRESSION DUE TO INTENSE ANXIETY

As neurotic guilt leads to intense anxiety, the individual may turn to have some feelings of phobia. Due to the unconscious fear of punishment, intense anxiety and unconscious shame can also lead to depression. Then this experience of “floating anxiety” and of lack of self esteem can lead a person towards depression. In fact Lewis says:

...worry thoughts may appear under the influence of an unconscious state of guilt or responsibility. Or the self may occur in the wake of by-passed shame-feeling. Similarly, depressed mood may be instated without the person’s awareness that he is coping with shame feeling. Moreover, the superego can operate with varying patterns of awareness which seem to differ with individual personality. Less differentiated patients often experience the operation of the superego as shame, that is to say, with particular awareness of the “other” devaluing the self. These patients also have a higher level of negative affect which they experience as depression.⁷⁸

In some disorders, the link between neurotic guilt leading to depression is emphasized also in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). The Manual says that among the symptoms which characterize Major

⁷⁶ Cameron, *Personality Development and Psycho-pathology*, 455.

⁷⁷ Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, 140.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

Depressive Episodes are “feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which can be delirious) nearly every day”.⁷⁹

It is interesting to know that some studies have also shown that there is a connection between proneness to neurotic guilt and eating disorders.⁸⁰ Also neurotic guilt stops a person from loving and receiving love and he/she cannot be compassionate to the self nor to others. Then this broken personality is not able to relate to others or to God effectively. Feelings of hostility stop the person from showing sensitivity to those who relate with him and show him love. In the spiritual sense, feelings of hostility blocks a person from becoming aware of God’s gentle touch and grace and the person turns blind to the reality of God’s unconditional compassion.⁸¹

1.7 REAL GUILT

Real guilt presupposes a healthy conscience, a healthy “self-evaluator” where a person perceives his own motives and actions accurately. It also presupposes that a person can take decisions totally freely.⁸² If moral values (commandments and precepts) are seen as a means by which the Supreme Authority - God - protects us from self-destruction and the destruction of others, then real guilt involves a conscious and a free decision to break this Significant Relationship rather than a mere violation of imposed moral standards.⁸³ Karl Rahner says that “Guilt is the free decision to evil, evil with regard to God and

⁷⁹ American Psychiatric Association (APA), 327.

⁸⁰ P.K. Dunn and P. Ondercin, “Personality variables related to compulsive eating in college women,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 37/1 (1981): 43–49; J. Rodin, L. Silberstein and R. Striegel-Moore, “Women and weight: a normative discontent,” in *Nebraska symposium on motivation*, ed. T.B. Sonderegger (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 267–307; C.G. Fairburn and P.J. Cooper, “Binge-eating, self-induced vomiting and laxative abuse: a community study,” *Psychological Medicine* 14/2 (1984): 401–410.

⁸¹ John Donnelly, *Conscience* (New York: Alba House, 1973), 167.

⁸² Kevin Kelly, *Conscience: Dictator or Guide?* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 129.

⁸³ Louis Monden, *Sin, Liberty and Law* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 47.

man”.⁸⁴ So real guilt, also presupposes the fact that a person is aware and able to “relate” to the Significant Being who is the source of one’s moral values.⁸⁵

Real guilt is the conscious awareness of a person’s free choice of a destructive behaviour to oneself as well as to others. Due to this free choice of accepting evil, real guilt is, in fact, a free act of rejection of a Significant Relationship (moral source), of oneself, and of others. According to Piet Schoeninberg it is the realization of one’s choice of rejection and destruction that produces feelings of remorse rather than the fear of punishment or shame.⁸⁶ Remorse is possible only because the individual fully likes one’s relationship with the Supreme Being who is the source of his/her morality. Then it is maturity and responsibility which enables an individual to feel remorse as this is a painful feeling of regret, a full acceptance of responsibility for the act.⁸⁷

Real guilt does not put a person into despair or self-hatred because the individual’s Significant Relationship is built on love, trust, and compassion. The individual can then face and accept guilt because he/she is aware of the possibility of reconciliation and his/her restoration into that Significant Relationship of love, trust and compassion.⁸⁸

The feeling of remorse in real guilt is similar to the feeling of grief where a person feels sorrow over the loss of a special relationship as well as the loss of one’s integrity. This grief, however, is not confused with bitterness or fear of punishment. Here the person is aware of his / her weaknesses and has accepted it.

However, accepting that you are weak and fragile does not mean giving in to permissiveness. The person who is enough mature and responsible is fully

⁸⁴ Karl Rahner et al., *Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 89.

⁸⁵ Bernard Haering, *The Law of Christ* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1963), 197.

⁸⁶ Piet Schoeninberg, *Man and Sin* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 288.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

conscious of the reality that despite the limitations of human nature, (barring brain dysfunction) each one is able to make choices. In fact, Schoeninberg insists saying that each person is free to use or abuse God's gifts.⁸⁹

1.8 EFFECTS OF THE ACCEPTANCE OF REAL GUILT

1.8.1 SELF-HONESTY

Being aware of your own real guilt is an honest acceptance of your own weakness and fallibility. It is this self-honesty that leads a person to realise one's own whole potentiality as well as one's own imperfection. Self-honesty will then stimulate self-confidence and humility.⁹⁰ St. Teresa of Avila was able to experience so much self-honesty when in her autobiography she wrote:

O my Jesus! What a sight it is when you through your mercy return to offer Your hand and raise up a soul that has fallen in sin...! How such a soul knows the multitude of Your grandeurs and mercies and its own misery! In this state it is in truth consumed and knows your splendours. Here it doesn't dare raise its eyes, and here it raises them up so as to know what it owes You.⁹¹

1.8.2 EMOTIONAL GROWTH

Accepting one's real guilt means to come in touch with your own sorrow and regret. Rahner holds that working on these feelings leads a person to an intense desire for forgiveness and reconciliation which brings about peace and emotional balance in one's life. Every time the individual receives the sign of forgiveness and reconciliation through the sacrament of penance (or experience a

⁸⁹ Ibid., 171.

⁹⁰ Devlin Lord, "The Sense of Guilt as an Instrument of Law and Order," *The Listener* (1965): 438-439.

⁹¹ Kiernan Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, *St. Teresa of Avila, Collected Works*, vol. 1, (Washington DC: I.C.S. Publications, 1976), 124.

sense of forgiveness through spiritual direction) he/she experiences a “call” to emotional and spiritual growth.⁹²

1.8.3 RESTORATION OF SELF-ESTEEM

When a person is able to accept fully forgiveness and compassion, he / she will then experience the restoration of his/her self-esteem. To be forgiven means that you are reconciled and reconciliation is actually the re-affirmation of the person.⁹³ In fact in the Gospels we read how Christ’s look and touch of compassion and forgiveness restored Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9) and Peter (Mark 16:7) from their painful remorse. Jesus was able to lift up their self-esteem and enable them to take all the risks and challenges in following Him.

In both spiritual direction and the sacrament of reconciliation, we presuppose that the person who repented is fully aware of his human weakness. Francis Mac Nutt says that we tend to presuppose that a person has accepted the fact that humanity breaks moral law because of fragility.⁹⁴

However, despite all the remorse, the true repentant person continues to believe in that unconditional restoration from both God and others.⁹⁵

1.8.4 STRENGTHENS THE EGO

Experiencing this sense of forgiveness and reconciliation helps a person to feel a sense of security.⁹⁶ Spiritual direction can help the directee to understand that reconciliation with God implies the restoration and reinforcement of grace. The

⁹² Rahner et. al., *Sacramentum Mundi*, 191.

⁹³ Ibid., 97.

⁹⁴ Francis Mac Nutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1966), 101.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁹⁶ MacNutt, *Healing*, 133.

repetition of a particular experience in one's life can easily be internalized and be part of one's personality. Repeated signs of mercy and forgiveness through the sacrament of reconciliation and feeling a strong sense of forgiveness in spiritual direction can help a person to acquire a strong sense of compassion towards oneself and towards others.

1.9 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REAL GUILT AND NEUROTIC GUILT

In psychotherapy and especially in spiritual direction a clear distinction between real and neurotic guilt is needed for an effective healing process in guilt feelings. So the following differences are to be considered in spiritual direction especially when dealing directly with guilt healing:⁹⁷

- a. Real guilt is based on a conscious and free act, whereas neurotic guilt is influenced by an unconscious pattern of guilt which has its roots in childhood.
- b. Real guilt stimulates reluctance and a wish for reconciliation with a Significant Relationship - the source of moral values, whereas neurotic guilt produces shame, anger, and hostility.
- c. Real guilt does not restrain hope, love, and trust because of the person's ability to accept compassion. Neurotic guilt leads towards despair as the person is not able to express compassion or forgiveness and so is not able to accept forgiveness or compassion from anyone.
- d. Real guilt is deliberate; neurotic guilt is compulsive. In real guilt, the person is fully aware of one's responsibility in the choice of a particular act, whereas neurotic guilt reduces conscious responsibility due to neurotic compulsive behaviour.

⁹⁷ Haigh, *Existential Guilt: Neurotic and Real*, 122-126.

1.10 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN GUILT FEELINGS

Another important factor which spiritual direction should consider for an effective guilt healing process is the gender difference. Gender difference is another important psychological and social aspect of guilt. Men and women do not experience the same sense of guilt and so a psychological difference should be taken into consideration. Such a difference enhances more the healing process and the understanding of such feelings.

According to Freud, guilt, shame and morality restricts the sexual instinct and so anxiety and fear follow leading to guilt feelings. Freud relates shame with the 'genital visibility' of man, in a quasi-biblical manner, although the visibility of the genitals is the result of the vertical posture and not of the fall from grace. Then for the woman, is the lack of visibility:

Shame, which is considered to be a feminine characteristic par excellence but is far more a matter of convention than might be supposed, has as its purpose, we believe, concealment of genital deficiency. We are not forgetting that at a later time shame takes on other functions.⁹⁸

At this point, it is important to acknowledge the fact that most study and research results concerning gender differences are from western cultures, and these differences are not to be considered universal. Recent studies show that gender differences in experiencing and expressing guilt and shame, are larger in an individualistic culture rather than in a collectivistic culture.⁹⁹ According to these study results,¹⁰⁰ gender differences in emotion are usually larger in an individualistic society as the social aspect is less. On the other hand in a

⁹⁸ S. Freud, "New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey, vol. 22, 5-182 (New York: Norton 1961), 132. Original work published 1933.

⁹⁹ A. H. Fischer and A. S. R. Manstead, "The relation between gender and emotions in different cultures," in *Gender and emotion: Social psychological perspectives*, ed. A. Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71-94.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

collectivistic culture, gender differences in emotion are less as the social roles are more differentiated according to gender. Such studies show that men who live in an individualistic culture experience less guilt and shame feelings than women who live in an individualistic culture or men and women living in a collectivistic culture. Fischer, Mosquera, van Vianen and Manstead¹⁰¹ found that men coming from countries with small gender differences in societal roles experienced less powerless emotions like fear, sadness, guilt and shame when compared to women or both genders coming from traditional countries. These results are explained¹⁰² by fear, sadness, shame and guilt (individualistic values) which reflect lack of control and power, something not so consistent within the individualistic aspect of masculinity.

According to Kitayama, Markus and Matsumoto,¹⁰³ being independent from others is an important aim within an individualistic society but reaching fully this aim would become a threat to social life. Therefore women coming from an individualistic society or culture took more the responsibility of keeping positive social relationships and an emotional spirit.¹⁰⁴

This pattern of gender differences is similar to other personality dispositions. Costa, Terracciano and McCrae¹⁰⁵ managed to study gender differences across various cultures and found that women tend to experience more neurotic behaviour than men. However, they've seen more gender differences in modern - individualistic cultures rather than in traditional - collectivistic cultures. This is caused by differences in self presentation where it

¹⁰¹ A. H. Fischer, et al., "Gender and culture differences in emotion," *Emotion* 4/1 (2004): 87-94.

¹⁰² Fischer and Manstead, "The relation between gender and emotions in different cultures," 71-94.

¹⁰³ S. Kitayama, H. R. Markus and H. Matsumoto, "Culture, self and emotion: a cultural perspective on self-conscious emotions," in *Self-conscious emotions: the psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride*, ed. J. P. Tangney and K.W Fischer (New York: Guilford Publications, 1995), 439-464.

¹⁰⁴ Fischer and Manstead, "The relation between gender and emotions in different cultures," 71-94.

¹⁰⁵ P. T. Costa, A. Terracciano and R. R. Mc Crae. "Gender differences in personality traits across cultures: robust and surprising findings," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81 (2001): 322-331.

occurs that in a collectivistic culture, females may compare themselves to other females, not male and within an individualistic culture behaviours are more easily attributed to personality instead of role-demands.

Now considering some few other study research on age and gender differences as related to the interpersonal nature of guilt feelings, women tend to experience more guilt than men. Though we don't have many studies analysing this issue, there are studies which see more interpersonal concerns in females than in males¹⁰⁶ which then lead women to feel guiltier than men.

1.10.1 A WOMAN'S GUILT

According to Sigmund Freud, men and women do not experience the same amount of guilt.¹⁰⁷ When compared to men, Freud holds that women have a weaker sense of guilt. But, later studies have shown that women experience a more powerful sense of guilt than men due to more interpersonal concerns. Such studies got enough empirical evidence to hold that females tend to experience a more intense guilt than males do.¹⁰⁸

While Freud focuses on guilt as experienced in the oedipal period when a child first felt a strong passion for the parent of the opposite sex,¹⁰⁹ later studies

¹⁰⁶ Cf. A.H. Eagly, *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1987); C. Gilligan, *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); M.L. Hoffman, "Sex differences in moral internalization and values," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32/4 (1975): 720-729.

¹⁰⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth, 1965), 67-71.

¹⁰⁸ J. Bybee, "The emergence of gender differences in guilt during adolescence," in *Guilt and children*, ed. J. Bybee (CA: San Diego, 1998), 113-125; I. Etxebarria, "Non-rational guilt: Predictors of its appearance in processes of change in moral values," *Journal of Moral Education* 23/2 (1994): 145-164; O.J. Harvey et al., "Relationship of shame and guilt to gender and parenting practices," *Personality and Individual Differences* 23/1 (1997): 135-146; M.L. Hoffman, "Sex differences in moral internalization and values," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 32/4 (1975): 720-729; N. Lutwak, J.R. Ferrari and J.M. Cheek, "Shame, guilt, and identity in men and women: The role of identity orientation and processing style in moral affects," *Personality and Individual Differences* 25/6 (1998): 1.027-1.036; J.P. Tangney, "Assessing individual differences in proneness to shame and guilt: Development of the Self-Conscious Affect and Attribution Inventory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59/1 (1990): 102-111.

focus more on the first years of the child before the oedipal period. According to Sperder such studies show that a girl faces more emotional difficulty than a boy as she prepares for the oedipal conflict and so more guilt is experienced.¹¹⁰ Before a girl transfers her love to her father, her first love is her mother which becomes the most important person in her early life. For a boy, the mother is also his first love but when he faces his oedipal feelings the object of his love will not change. For the boy, the mother who nurtured him becomes his erotic target and he competes with his father to attain his mother's love.¹¹¹

Contrary to boys, a girl switches the object of her love from mother to father, risking losing the love of her nurturer and protector. Also a girl wishes that her mother disappears forever so she alone can possess her father. This change in love from mother to father, from chief nurturer to enemy-rival, leads a girl to experience more guilt than a boy.¹¹²

According to Shweder, a second reason why women experience more guilt than men is due to male superiority as seen in various cultures throughout history. In such cultures, women are treated as inferiors and so experience more guilt feelings due to inner anger. As women feel more discriminated against than men, they tend to feel angrier and so experience more guilt than men.¹¹³

Despite all advances that women's liberation brought in today's world, in some cultures women still feel that they are valuable only if they take care of husbands and children. They may feel uncomfortable when they assume roles which were always ascribed to men. So Shweder says that when women fulfil

¹⁰⁹ Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: Anchor, 1954), 143.

¹¹⁰ Dan Sperder, *On Anthropological Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 63.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹¹² R. Shweder, "Anthropology's Romantic Rebellion, Or There's More to Thinking Than Reason and Evidence," in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotions*, ed. R.A. Shweder and R. Levine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 27-36.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

roles traditionally ascribed to men they tend to feel an undue amount of guilt. In such cultures, Shweder says that women feel guilty working at “a man’s job”.¹¹⁴

1.10.2 A MAN’S GUILT

As adolescent males tend to experience less the presence of interpersonal concerns than adolescent girls and further less concern between adolescence and adulthood, study research insists on differences in guilt intensity. Men tend to experience less guilt intensity than women according to such studies.¹¹⁵

Shweder holds that modern men struggle with a different kind of guilt. Not withstanding the fact that today we are experiencing less distinctions between man and woman, man is still influenced by the way he was brought up as a child when between the sexes were more clear and accepted.¹¹⁶

Man today, still feels the drive to be strong, tough, and hide vulnerability and when such drives are not satisfied, shame and guilt crops up. At the same time men tend to feel guilty when being assertive towards others.

Thus according to Shweder, a man feels guilty both when sounding weak and when sounding too assertive or powerful.¹¹⁷ Freud holds that man tends to feel angry and guilty when seeing woman taking over his prerogatives and so stealing his masculinity.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁵ Cf. I. Etxebarria, “Non-rational guilt: Predictors of its appearance in processes of change in moral values,” 145-164; O.J. Harvey et al., “Relationship of shame and guilt to gender and parenting practices,” 135-146; C. Zahn-Waxler and J. Robinson, “Empathy and guilt: Early origins of feelings of responsibility,” in *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride*, ed. J.P. Tangney and K.W. Fischer (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 143-173.

¹¹⁶ Shweder, “Anthropology’s Romantic Rebellion, Or There’s More to Thinking Than Reason and Evidence,” 46.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁸ S. Freud, “Civilized Sexual Morality,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Starchey, vol. IX (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), 189.

With regard to age differences in guilt intensity, some studies see an increase in guilt feelings during childhood and a decline in guilt feelings during adolescence,¹¹⁹ especially among males.¹²⁰

On the other hand, other studies suggest a later increase in guilt feelings.¹²¹ Such studies found a positive correlation between age and guilt among men in their twenties and thirties. So considering that men experience more antecedent events of an interpersonal nature in adulthood, adult men experience more intense guilt than adolescents. However, with regards to age differences in the nature of guilt feelings, more research is needed as there is not enough research available.

¹¹⁹ See J.A.Bybee, R. Merisca and E. Zigler, "Developmental, situational, and gender differences in the intensity of guilt reactions," (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Society, New York, August 1995).

¹²⁰ See C. Williams and J. Bybee, "Do grade level, peer delinquency, emotionality, and gender affect ratings of own and other's guilt?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, RI, Providence, 1994) in Itziar Etxebarria, Xabier Isasi and Judith Perez, "The Interpersonal nature of guilt producing events. Age and gender differences," *Psicothema* 14/4 (2002): 783-787.

¹²¹ Bybee, "The emergence of gender differences in guilt during adolescence," 113-125.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE MORALITY OF GUILT VERSUS THE DYNAMICS OF GRACE

Psychologists and therapists have long seen the moral importance of guilt while having confusing ideas about shame considering it to be a bad moral emotion.¹²²

As traditionally, guilt was seen as the result of the breaking or violation of moral rules and imperatives, Freud and Lazarus considered guilt as a central moral emotion.¹²³ Hoffman sees guilt as a central moral emotion when the breaking of moral rules harms and causes suffering to others.¹²⁴ Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton¹²⁵ consider guilt more intensely related to specific moral circumstances whilst Clark, Mills and Fiske¹²⁶ see guilt as related to moral circumstances specifically related to harm, loss, or distress in communal relationships. Thus guilt is not just the result of a caused harm; but also the result of one's harmful behaviour or action affecting or breaking friendship or communion spirit. Considering this social aspect, guilt results more strongly and far more commonly in destroyed close relationships than in distant ones.¹²⁷

¹²² J. P. Tangney, "Moral affect: The good, the bad, and the ugly," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61/4 (1991): 598-607.

¹²³ Cf. S. Freud, *Civilization and its discontents*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961). Original work published 1930; R. S. Lazarus, "Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion," *American Psychologist* 46/8 (1991b): 819-834.

¹²⁴ M. L. Hoffman, "Affect and moral development," in *New Directions for Child Development: Emotional Development*, ed. D. Cicchetti and P. Hesse, vol.16 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982a), 98.

¹²⁵ R. F. Baumeister, A. M. Stillwell and T. F. Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," *Psychological Bulletin* 115/2 (1994): 243-267.

¹²⁶ M. S. Clark and J. Mills, "Interpersonal attraction in exchange and communal relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (1979): 12-24; A. P. Fiske, *Structures of social life* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

¹²⁷ Baumeister, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," 243-267.

Traditionally speaking, guilt feelings have always been related to feelings of remorse, involving deep regret, painful humiliation, distress, self-punishment, and / or self-flagellation. Freud ¹²⁸ sees lots of anxiety related to guilt feelings while Kaufman ¹²⁹ sees a big sense of deserving punishment in guilt.

So to analyse the moral aspect of guilt two important aspects are to be considered: the empirical psychological aspect and the philosophical/conceptual aspect.

2.1 EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT

Empirical psychological studies focus mostly on studies of psychopaths and studies of certain aspects of moral development in children. Hare considers lack of guilt feelings in a person as an indicator of psychopathy¹³⁰ but one should not rush concluding that all normal non-psychopaths are prone to guilt feelings. On the other hand though psychopaths lack proneness to guilt feelings it does not mean that only psychopaths lack guilt feelings. So we can encounter cases of moral adult people who are not prone to guilt feelings and still considered as moral people.

Nowadays, lack of proneness to guilt and sense of morality is examined in children born with certain types of brain deficits, or who suffered certain brain injuries. However we can't say that as there is a sense of morality in normal children (not having such deficits) there is proneness to guilt feelings. So though studies show that such abnormalities or injuries affect people's emotions and capacities, ¹³¹ there is no evidence at all showing that for children to become moral beings it is necessary to have this sense of proneness to guilt.

¹²⁸ See Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

¹²⁹ See W. Kaufmann, *Without Guilt and Justice: From Decidophobia to Autonomy* (New York: Peter Wyden, 1973).

¹³⁰ See R. D. Hare, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993).

¹³¹ See A. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003).

2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ASPECT

Some philosophers suppose (without scientific evidence or proof) that guilt feelings are essential to morality and that they are both related. In fact, Brandt¹³² sees an action to be morally wrong if a person feels guilty or remorseful after committing an action without having anything which excuses him for that action. So from a philosophical aspect, guilt is not seen as coming from our upbringing and parenthood or the result of anxiety after punishment. Guilt is seen here as an unlearned emotional response to our actions causing others to suffer.

Brandt says¹³³ that a person's "moral code is evidenced by his autonomous guilt feelings - those arising from failure to act in accord with his own moral motivation".¹³⁴ Brandt¹³⁵ continues saying that "a person's morality consists of intrinsic aversions to some types of actions and corresponding dispositions to feel guilty and to disapprove of others and to think these attitudes are justified in some way."¹³⁶ On the same line of thought, Williams¹³⁷ holds that "if an agent never felt [remorse or self-reproach or guilt], he would not belong to the morality system or be a full moral agent in its terms",¹³⁸ thus also considering that guilt feelings and morality depend on each other.

Talking about violations of moral standards, Gibbard¹³⁹ says that, "if an agent violates [them] because of inadequate motivation to abide by them, guilt is

¹³² R. B. Brandt, "Some Merits of One Form of Rule-Utilitarianism," in *Series in Philosophy*, no. 3 of *University of Colorado Studies* (1967), 39-65.

¹³³ R. B. Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 167-170.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹³⁵ R. B. Brandt, "Introductory Comments," in *Morality, Utilitarianism, and Rights* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-13.

¹³⁶ Brandt, "Introductory Comments," 7.

¹³⁷ See B. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹³⁹ A. Gibbard, "Moral Concepts: Substance and Sentiment," in *Philosophical Perspectives*, no. 6, *Ethics*, ed. James E. Tomberlin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing, 1992), 199-221.

warranted on his part, and resentment on the part of others”¹⁴⁰ so here guilt turns into “agonized” feelings of “self-blame”.¹⁴¹ However, on this same line of thought Greenspan¹⁴² tends to be more subtle in holding that a person’s moral considerations arise from his connection with guilt.

2.3 CONSCIENCE AND SUPEREGO: A KEY DISTINCTION.

As we are dealing with the moral aspect of guilt healing we need to make a clear distinction between conscience and superego. Though similarities between moral conscience and superego exist, differences between these two terms should be clear. Some psychologists and psychiatrists did not distinguish between these two terms and so they failed to recognize a genuine pre-conceptual recognition of moral values – conscience. On the other hand many theologians recognize the distinction between moral genuine conscience and superego and they also recognize the pastoral-practical implications of this distinction especially in spiritual direction.

So though a clear distinction between genuine conscience and superego is needed we should admit that both terms have similar functions. In fact, both genuine conscience and superego reflect a sense of: non-verbality, pre-conceptuality; command, prohibition; accusation, approval and both seek reconciliation when moral standards or norms are violated. However, withstanding all these similarities, genuine conscience and superego differ from each other in other factors and realities.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 202.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 201.

¹⁴² See P. S. Greenspan, *Practical Guilt: Moral Dilemmas, Emotions, and Social Norms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

2.3.1 MORAL CONSCIENCE

Karl Rahner and J. Glaser¹⁴³ offer lots of insights to the concept of moral conscience as distinguished from the reality of the superego. They refer to conscience when a person must freely take a serious moral decision in life.

According to Karl Rahner¹⁴⁴ if we can assume that a person's moral action is love (which means the unity of the love of God and love of neighbour) and if we can assume that this invitation to love happens in each person's history of salvation; and also assuming that God's self-offering mediates this divine initiative of abiding love (though not consciousness in a pre-conceptual manner of knowing) then **moral conscience** can be understood as **the pre-conceptual recognition of an absolute call to love and thereby to co-create a person's genuine future. Moral conscience can also be considered as a nonverbal insight into a person's radical invitation to love God, his neighbour until he himself becomes abiding love.**¹⁴⁵

Using Rahner's terminology, while a "good conscience" reflects a pre-conceptual experienced harmony which exists between the Ultimate Value (God), the created values, and our existence (co-created by our free acts), a "bad conscience" reflects a preconceptual experienced disharmony between the abiding futureless and futile existence that our freedom has created leading us to co-create our self as abiding love.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God," in *Theological Investigations*, 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), 231-249; J. Glaser, "Transition between Grace and Sin," *Theological Studies* 29 (1968): 260-274; J. Glaser, "Authority, Connatural Knowledge, and the Spontaneous Judgment of the Faithful," *Theological Studies* 29 (1968): 742-751; J. Glaser, "Man's Existence: Supernatural Partnership," *Theological Studies* 30 (1969): 473-488; J. Glaser, "The Problem of Theoretical and Practical Moral Knowledge," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 161 (1969): 410-417.

¹⁴⁴ Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God," 231-249.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

In Rahner's terms, conscience is a call to love; the same call which comes from Ultimate Value (God) and promise of love. Conscience makes us continuously aware of the destructive power of indifference or hostility to this call for love. Conscience is the peace (not self-satisfaction) that comes from our consent to love which can create feelings of disharmony and disintegration in ourselves when we don't abide by this call of love which fulfils our whole being.¹⁴⁷

Kochanska and his colleagues¹⁴⁸ offer lots of positive insights on the development of conscience and they describe conscience under two major aspects:

- a. Conscience reflects an affective discomfort aspect which leads a person to experience emotional results of transgression; e.g., guilt, apology, empathy for the victim, etc.
- b. Conscience reflects an active moral regulation or vigilance aspect which leads a person to experience the internalization of standards along with confession, reparation, and monitoring of others' wrongdoing.

Kochanska¹⁴⁹ asserts that self-control is a basic element in the development of morality. Through his studies, Kochanska observed a connection between high inhibitory control and low impulsivity, and later conscience development in early temperaments. In the development of conscience in young children, Kochanska reports a correlation between parenthood and the child's predictors of the development of conscience.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ G. Kochanska et al., "Maternal reports of conscience development and temperament in young children," *Child Development* 65/3 (1994): 852-868; G. Kochanska, K. Murray and K.C. Coy, "Inhibitory control as a contributor to conscience in childhood: From toddler to school age," *Child Development* 68/2 (1997): 263-277.

¹⁴⁹ G. Kochanska, "Socialization and temperament in the development of guilt and conscience," *Child Development* 62/6 (1991): 1379-1392.

Studies carried by Hoffman and Saltzstein¹⁵⁰ observed that an induction method applied by parents can lead to high internalization of moral standards and guilt feelings in children. Similarly, studies by Allinsmith and Greening¹⁵¹ report that less assertive parenthood leads to more guilt feelings in children while more assertive parenthood leads to less guilt feelings in children. Kochanska and Aksan¹⁵² report a connection between the internalisation of moral standards in pre-school children and a mutual positive sense of affectivity between mother and child and low maternal assertion in upbringing. In another study on this mutual positive sense of affectivity between mother and child, Kochanska¹⁵³ reports a connection between conscience development and a sustained pattern of mother-child reciprocity including mutual affectivity, low power assertion, and maternal empathy.

2.3.2 THE SUPEREGO

Contrary to conscience, the superego does not reflect extroverted love but introverted love where we focus on being lovable and not on loving. So the call of the superego originates from a compulsion leading us to experience a sense of being lovable and not to love others.¹⁵⁴

However, we cannot understand the nature and function of the superego, unless we go back to our childhood. Our childhood comprises lots of needs, desires, and impulses which cannot find satisfaction and so we tend to find

¹⁵⁰ M.L. Hoffman and H.D. Saltzstein, "Parent discipline and the child's moral development," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 5/1 (1967): 45-57.

¹⁵¹ W. Allinsmith and T.C. Greening, "Guilt over anger as predicted from parental discipline: A study of superego development," *American Psychologist* 10 (1955): 320.

¹⁵² G. Kochanska and N. Aksan, "Mother-child mutually positive affect, the quality of child compliance to requests and prohibitions, and maternal control as correlates of early internalization," *Child Development* 66/1 (1995): 236-254.

¹⁵³ Kochanska, "Inhibitory control as a contributor to conscience in childhood: From toddler to school age," 263-277.

¹⁵⁴ Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God," 231-249.

ourselves confused in our satisfactions. In fact Melanie Klein says: “Experience of guilt is inextricably bound up with fear (more exactly, with a specific form of fear, namely, depressive fear); it drives one to reconciliation and reparation; it emerges in the first few months of an infant’s life together with the early stages of the superego.”¹⁵⁵

Psychologically our desires, needs and impulses lead to a hierarchy of importance and power. According to Eicke, the strongest and the most fundamental of these drives are the need to be loved, and the need to enjoy approval and affection in all what we do and say.¹⁵⁶ In fact Eicke says that the experience of disapproval in our childhood is a kind of annihilation leading the child to experience a temporary sense of love withdrawal. Then Eicke says that this love withdrawal is followed by fear of punishment.¹⁵⁷ On this line of thought, Freud holds that for the sake of the ego, being loved is equivalent to life itself.¹⁵⁸ So the disapproval of our parents in our childhood does not reflect only a love withdrawal but a withdrawal of life itself. Here then comes the need for the child to organize and order his desires so he can satisfy his main need – that of being loved by others. According to Eicke as the child is not psychologically mature to deal with this conflict, a less personal/primitive mechanism takes over. Such mechanism acts as a censor and regulates the behaviour of the child so he won’t lose love, affection, and approval which are the primary object of the child’s desires.¹⁵⁹

Zulliger holds that the commands and prohibitions of the superego do not originate from intrinsic goodness of an action. They are the result of this desire in

¹⁵⁵ Melanie Klein, *Das Seelenleben des Kleinkindes und andere Beitrage zur Psychoanalyse* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1962), 140.

¹⁵⁶ Dieter Eicke, “Das Gewissen und das Uber-Ich,” in *Das Gewissen als Problem*, ed. Nikolaus Petrilowitsch (Darmstadt: Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 72; Albert Gorres, *Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1962), 166-72.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud, “The Life and work of Sigmund Freud” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey, vol. 13 (London: Hogarth Press, 1940), 288.

¹⁵⁹ Eicke, “Das Gewissen und das Uber-Ich,” 97-99; Gorres, *Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis*, 166-172.

our nature to be loved and accepted. In fact Zulliger says: "The primitive conscience is built on the basis of fear of punishment and a desire to earn love."¹⁶⁰ Similarly Eicke says: "The superego has its source in the naked fear of retribution or withdrawal of love; its organizing function serves to protect the ego from the outside world."¹⁶¹

However, Felicitas Betz holds that this aspect of censorship in our psyche develops in stages. In the first years of a child's life, his parent's commands and prohibitions remain effective till his parents are actually present.¹⁶²

But Gorres, Eicke and Zulliger hold that during this time the child starts assimilating bit by bit the orders of authority and so the process of internalization of norms and rules starts developing. Then this process of internalization needs **introjection** and **identification** which are two important psychological mechanisms in our development.¹⁶³

Thanks to the mechanism of **identification**¹⁶⁴ a child starts forming values - values which by now are centered on the self and which are needed to conduct him. Then if we don't abide by these values and norms we start experiencing fears and feelings of guilt. We start experiencing fear of not being loved, of being abandoned or persecuted by others; feelings of not having done the right thing, of not having made our self loveable. In fact Freud says: "Consciousness of guilt was originally fear of punishment by parents; more exactly, fear of losing their love."¹⁶⁵ On the other hand thanks to the process of **introjection** the child acquires an

¹⁶⁰ Hans Zulliger, *Umgang mit dem kindlichen Gewissen* (Stuttgart: Verlag. Hans Huber, 1955), 30; Gorres, *Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis*, 170.

¹⁶¹ Eicke, "Das Gewissen und das Uber-Ich," 79.

¹⁶² Felicitas Betz, "Entwicklungsstufen des kindlichen Gewissens," in *Beichte im Zwielficht* (Munich: J. Pfeiffer, 1966), 33.

¹⁶³ Gorres, *Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis*, 166; Eicke, "Das Gewissen und das Uber-Ich," 77-80; Zulliger, *Umgang mit dem kindlichen*, 63-69; Bertha Sommer, "Uber neurotische Angst und Schuldgefuhle," in *Wilhelm Bitter*, ed. Angst und Schuld (Stuttgart: Klett, 1959), 44.

¹⁶⁴ Eicke, "Das Gewissen und das Uber-Ich," 80.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

authority figure within himself, reflecting his upbringing in both family and society.¹⁶⁶

According to Edmund Bergler, the superego has characteristics and functions similar to two traditional forms of conscience:

- a. *Conscientia Antecedens*: which commands and prohibits certain concrete possibilities in a given situation, and
- b. *Conscientia Consequens*: which accuses and condemns the offender when he fails to obey.

Bergler refers to the superego as:

The extent of the power yielded by the Frankenstein which is the superego is still largely unrealized... Man's inhumanity to man is equaled only by man's inhumanity to himself.¹⁶⁷

Melanie Klein, says that the superego is the guardian of a person's sense of value. Similarly to Freud, Klein holds that the violation of the superego is the result of lack of love which psychologically turns a person to feel that his life is lost.¹⁶⁸ Hence with just intellectual reasoning lacking spiritual support and direction; panic, fear, and guilt feelings violating our superego makes it more difficult to cope in life.

When referring to guilt feelings caused by the superego, Zulliger says "When a child does something wrong, disobeys a command, etc., he experiences a feeling of isolation."¹⁶⁹ So here crops up another characteristic of the superego - **isolation**. The guilty person feels isolated from the "good" people as he feels "bad". This sense of isolation leads us then to understand several other phenomena related to guilt. Following this sense of isolation, Zulliger says that our

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Edmund Bergler, *The Superego*, vol. x (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1952), 8.

¹⁶⁸ Klein, *Das Scelenleben des Klein Kindes und andere Beitrage zur Psychoanalyse*, 135.

¹⁶⁹ Zulliger, *Umgang mit dem kindlichen Gewissen*, 103-105.

powerful subconscious drive creates a sense of belonging. We start feeling the need of being accepted by others.¹⁷⁰

Besides confessing and accepting punishment, our nature tries to get rid of the hurt superego in various indirect ways. Zulliger mentions three main indirect solutions:

- a. First, by feeling betrayed by our own unconscious guilt leading us to find ways to show our own mistakes to feel reconciled.¹⁷¹
- b. Secondly by seeking punishment¹⁷² for our violations against the norms of the superego. In so doing the person provokes punishment through further violations and so ending one's need for punishment for the original unpunished misdeeds.
- c. Finally, by creating a community where the person feels more accepted and less isolated. In so doing, the person creates a community spirit which accepts him with his misdeeds and shows him esteem.¹⁷³

Zulliger's description of the superego's ability to escape alienation from that group (represented by the authority figures in his life) helps us to understand further the difference between the superego and conscience.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand Zulliger considers conscience as the call of genuine value which can lead a person to an extremely isolated position but still lead him to obey social norms with a sense of creativity into the future. However, the superego also helps us to perform well in the process of socialization within a given set of rules and limits but it just deals with the more primitive levels of psychic life.¹⁷⁵ This coincides with Gorres point of view when he says that:

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Zulliger, *Umgang mit dem kindlichen Gewissen*, 108-124.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

The superego, in Freud's sense, is primarily a function of organization of the primitive levels of psychic life. This is supported by the fact that higher animals are said to have a superego when they have been trained.¹⁷⁶

For Tournier, the superego is considered as a principle of pre-personal censorship and control but still important and necessary for life. The superego leads to the development of genuine conscience and to perceive values in life.¹⁷⁷ For Gorres then the superego is able to conserve the psychic energy and function in a mature adult life:

When the superego is integrated into a mature conscience... it relieves an individual from having constantly to decide in all those situations which are already legitimately decided by custom, taste, and convention 'what one should do' and 'what one should not do.'¹⁷⁸

However, Gorres maintains that apart from psychiatry, the role of education and pastoral practice is needed to reduce the effect of the censorship element in our lives and allow more genuine values to grow.¹⁷⁹ It is here that spiritual direction finds its role and need.

As we are talking about morality, Odier and Tournier say that in a person there are two moral worlds:

- a. A moral world which is genuine and
- b. A pseudo-moral/religious world which is false.

This discourse leads us to deal with the childish morality in one's adult life where Melanie Klein says: "With a small child this is always the case; but even with

¹⁷⁶ Gorres, *Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis*, 170.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Tournier, *Echtes und Falsches Schuldgefühl* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1967), 57.

¹⁷⁸ Gorres, *Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis*, 169.

¹⁷⁹ A. Gorres, "Über-Ich," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 10 (Freiburg: Herder, 1966), 437.

many adults the only factor that changes is that the larger human society takes the place of the father or both parents.”¹⁸⁰ According to Felicitas Betz this struggle is a lifelong battle:

The maturing of one’s conscience is a task that takes a lifetime; it is with us far beyond the end of adolescence. For one who has been the object more of conscience training than conscience education, this task of arriving at mature conscience will be particularly difficult, if not impossible.¹⁸¹

Considering such differences and similarities between conscience and superego, spiritual direction should highlight the pastoral and ascetic practice which flows from such a superego-weighted interpretation of guilt, leading a person to experience genuine freedom from sin through God’s grace.

2.4 TRANSITION BETWEEN GRACE AND SIN

Theological literature studied the common Catholic ideas regarding grace and sin.¹⁸² Theologians like Rahner, Schuller, Metz, and Mondin brought new insights on core freedom and the frequency of core decisions. In the past theology failed to recognize the various kinds of guilt experiences and their release - a fault which should not occur in spiritual direction. Theology just recognized all guilt experiences and their release as theological data, coming from man’s freedom. Unfortunately the distinction between the nature of superego guilt and genuine moral guilt was not recognized.

¹⁸⁰ Klein, *Das Scelenleben des Klein Kindes und andere Beitrage zur Psychoanalyse*, 135; Eicke, “Das Gewissen und das Uber-Ich,” 89.

¹⁸¹ Betz, “Entwicklungsstufen des kindlichen Gewissens,” 39.

¹⁸² J.Glaser, “Transition between Grace and Sin,” *Theological Studies* 29 (1968): 260-274; J.Glaser, “Man’s Existence: Supernatural Partnership,” *Theological Studies* 30 (1969): 473-488.

Maritain¹⁸³ deals with the moral concept of core freedom and he is convinced that children can make core-freedom decisions too. Applying a phenomenological justification point of view he says:

Yet in some rare cases, the first act of freedom will never be forgotten, especially if the choice - however insignificant its object - through which the soul was introduced into moral life occurred rather late. In other cases there is a remembrance of some childish remorse, whose occasion was unimportant but whose intensity, out of proportion with its object, upset the soul and awakened its moral sense.¹⁸⁴

Maritain's view about genuine freedom is clearly related to the area of the superego. The recognition of all guilt data as genuine theological data leads Maritain to shed more light on moral theology. In moral theology the healing of superego guilt by an authority figure was mistaken for genuine moral guilt and its remission. This occurred because we did not recognize enough the nature of the superego and the vast dimensions of the transition between sin and grace.

2.5 THE DYNAMICS OF GRACE (A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF KARL BARTH)

Karl Barth contributed a lot to the moral dimensions of the transition between sin and grace by focussing on the theology of God's grace versus the natural theology and the Church. Natural theology makes man able to experience God through innate spiritual and material abilities.

Barth's contribution to natural theology shows that notwithstanding all the misery of guilt and death, our lives are redeemed by divine grace. Above all, it shows that through God's grace we are already standing in the truth notwithstanding our wish for self-sufficiency and self-justification:

¹⁸³ J. Maritain, *Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 66-69.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

The core of this theology is that for us the truth can be had without the truth itself, because we are the truth itself, or at any rate, we are also the truth itself, in independence of the truth of God. This theology of life only needs to be made explicit as such and the whole of natural theology is in force in its basic idea.¹⁸⁵

However, as natural theology expresses our wish for self-sufficiency, it does not allow God's redemption from guilt and death. While natural theology seems to offer more control, God's grace "disrupts" us in order to give us full freedom and liberation. So God's grace is seen as the ability within us to rebuild our own destructed nature and humanity in order to acquire genuine fellowship with it. Barth says that although God finds us "in the shadow of death, his miraculous action to them is to bring them out of this shadow, to free them from this prison, to remove the need and pain of their cosmic determination".¹⁸⁶ So God acts as a healer to all those who are in pain or guilt and this image of God's grace is highly needed for an effective guilt healing process through spiritual direction.

Dealing then with God's mercy towards mankind, Barth says:

The mercy of God lies in his readiness to share in sympathy the distress of another, a readiness which springs from his inmost nature and stamps all his being and doing. It lies, therefore, in his will, springing from the depths of his nature and characterizing it, to take the initiative himself for the removal of this distress... The personal God has a heart. He can feel and be affected... God is moved and stirred, yet not like ourselves in powerlessness, but in his own free power, in his innermost being; moved and touched by himself, i.e. open, ready, inclined... to compassion with another's suffering and therefore to assistance.¹⁸⁷

Here Barth moves from God's mercy towards God's compassion and he highlights the person of Jesus Christ as a model of compassion and love:

¹⁸⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II/1 (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), 135-136.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, IV/2, 222.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, II/1, 370.

At the side of humankind in this respect – that which causes suffering to human beings as his creatures is also and above all painful and alien and antithetical to himself. As Jesus acts in [God's] commission and power, it is clear that God does not will that which troubles the will... entanglement and humiliation and distress and shame... He wills... that they should be whole.¹⁸⁸

However, during a guilt / shame healing process through spiritual direction, it is not enough to deal with God's mercy and compassion leaving aside God's righteousness and forgiveness. Hence Barth offers positive theological insights on God's righteousness and forgiveness which are surely helpful and needed for an effective guilt/shame healing process.

2.5.1 GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Though mercy and righteousness sound like two different and opposite aspects of God, Barth says that "God's justice is also in fact a determination of his love, and his judgement is expression of his grace... It is as God forgives sins in his mercy that he judges".¹⁸⁹ In other words, God's righteousness is affirmed through compassion and mercy towards the sinner. Through His righteousness, God decides to enter into covenant with mankind. In fact Barth says, "For God's righteousness is that human beings in covenant with him should be righteous; that they should be those who are justified in God's sight because God has addressed them and dealt with them in righteousness, putting them in the right".¹⁹⁰

Barth continues saying that through the cross of Jesus Christ, God remains both righteous and merciful towards the sinner.¹⁹¹ God's righteousness acts on behalf of the poor and the helpless, on behalf of those who are affected by psychic and spiritual forces which are far more powerful than they:

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., IV/2, 225.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., II/1, 382.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., II/1, 385.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., II/1, 368-406.

To establish justice for the innocent who are threatened and the poor, the widows, the orphans and the strangers who oppressed... God stands at every time unconditionally and passionately on this and only on this side: always against the exalted and for the lowly, always against those who already have rights and for those from whom they are robbed and taken away.¹⁹²

So Barth continues saying that, “when we encounter divine righteousness, we are all like the people of Israel, menaced and altogether lost according to its own strength. We are all widows and orphans who cannot procure right for themselves.”¹⁹³

Barth sees God’s righteousness and mercy as two sides of the same coin and he holds that “the truth emerges that God’s righteousness does not really stand alongside his mercy, but that as revealed in its necessary connection, according to Scripture, with the plight of the poor and wretched, it is itself God’s mercy”.¹⁹⁴ Then through God’s forgiveness of sin, God’s righteousness becomes God’s mercy at the same time.

2.5.2 FORGIVENESS OF THE SINNER

According to Kaufman in order to acquire a sense of integrity in our personality we need to feel worthy - we need to know ourselves as “worthy beyond question.”¹⁹⁵ In saying so Kaufman is recognising the spiritual dimensions within our psychodynamics of guilt and shame.

Barth, holds that in order to know ourselves as “worthy beyond question” we need to discover our sense of worth in Christ, and in so doing we discover that only God makes us worthy. In fact Barth says that a person “knows and grasps his

¹⁹² Ibid., II/1, 386.

¹⁹³ Ibid., II/1, 387.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Gershen Kaufman, *Shame: The Power of Caring*. (Cambridge/MA: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1980), 140.

own righteousness as one which is alien to him, as the righteousness of this other,” that is, of Jesus Christ.¹⁹⁶

Then with regard to our human sin, Barth says that a person is able to recognise one’s sins only through the experience of forgiveness and so it is through Jesus Christ that we can fully discover ourselves as sinners. Hence when we accept ourselves as sinners we acquire a sense of gratitude towards God’s forgiveness and not a sense of guilt and shame.¹⁹⁷ Similarly to what Barth is saying, Frank Lake imagines what goes on within a Christian who is trying to heal out from his real guilt feelings:

The depressed Christian, and here we must underline the word Christian, for it is of Christians that we are speaking, comes to know what true sin and actual guilt are when he tries to answer the question, ‘Why, during all these months of misery, would I not respond to Christ’s offer of life?... Why have I been blind to all He is doing?... I have been spending my days poking about in my own ethical navel, circling around my own past in hectic self-appraisal, alternately approving and condemning. I was determined to be my own judge.’¹⁹⁸

Here real guilt is seen as the result of our neglect of God’s forgiveness and of a free life in God. Instead real guilt leads a person to be his own judge rather than accepting God’s mercy and righteousness to overwhelm his life. In fact Lake (in line with Barth’s view) adds saying, “That one calling himself a Christian should have so neglected and misrepresented Christ to himself, though explicable in terms of neurotic projection, is a valid ground for a sense of actual guilt.”¹⁹⁹ Then when referring to neurotic guilt, Lake argues that:

¹⁹⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 631.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Frank Lake, *Clinical Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 226.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Neurotic guilt is dissolved so that real guilt may be established, in the specific sense in which the Holy Spirit is concerned to establish it, that is, in relation to Jesus Christ ... The aim of the clinical theological approach is to replace neurotic guilt by a true and valid sense of sin.²⁰⁰

So considering this theological view, spiritual direction should motivate a directee to inculcate a valid sense of sin and of forgiveness, so he can genuinely experience a conversion from his own self towards Jesus Christ's righteousness and forgiveness in order to get rid of his own guilt feelings.

2.5.3 GUILT / SHAME AND HONOUR

Acquiring a healthy sense of guilt and shame is a very delicate process as we have to accept ourselves as sinners before God. However, Barth talks about our objective situation of shame/guilt before God saying that:

human beings are shamed (whether or not they are correspondingly ashamed) because they find that they are compared with God. With God? Yes, if they are radically and totally shamed it is because they are compared with God, and measured by his holiness they necessarily see their own unholiness revealed.²⁰¹

According to Barth just as we cannot fully perceive the gravity of our sin until we are forgiven through Jesus Christ, so we cannot heal our real guilt and shame unless we believe that Jesus Christ has already taken it from us. In fact Barth says:

God has received us so basically and radically that he was ready to make himself our Brother in his own Son, to share our situation, to bear our shame, to be put to shame in our place and on our behalf, thus removing us human beings from the situation which contradicts his election and love and creative will, divesting us of our shame and clothing us with his own glory.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 227.

²⁰¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 385.

So according to Barth, God has taken fully our guilt and shame of sin through Jesus Christ who takes it upon himself so that we experience God's honour and glory.

In saying so Barth refers to Jesus as "the one great sinner"²⁰³ as he bears on his own body all the guilt and shame of our sins.

Consequently if Christ has taken the guilt and shame of our sins upon him to redeem us, then we receive God's honour which belongs to Christ alone. On the other hand while we feel "totally shamed" in front of God's holiness, He (God) shares with us freely and graciously a portion of his own honour. Therefore if we are humble enough to see our objective unworthiness before God we partially partake in God's glory and become exalted by Him:

The joy in which we can boast in relation to [Christ] is absolutely bound up with the humility in which we are necessarily ashamed in relation to him... Hence none of us can confess him and therefore be a Christian, unless we confess that we are totally shamed by him.²⁰⁴

Then Barth talks about human "freedom in limitation" by arguing that God calls one to freedom when He calls us to join in a covenant partnership with Him. So if we partake in God's call for a genuine relationship with Him we acquire freedom. Barth says:

What remains is the unsurpassable honour done to us when the commanding God who is our Father calls us as his own child, not just anywhere or to any great or small achievements and activities, but to himself. To be with this Father as the child of this Father is freedom.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ibid., IV/2, 384.

²⁰³ Ibid., IV/1, 239.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., IV/2, 396.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., III/4, 648.

According to Barth, God honours us in a twofold way:

- a. By inviting us to partake partially in His glory by virtue of our creature hood; and
- b. By calling us into His service by virtue.²⁰⁶

Barth says that God does so as “an expression of his esteem, a distinction... He considers human beings worthy that he should confront them as their Commander and stand on their level as Partner with partner.”²⁰⁷

When referring particularly to those who experience guilt and shame as sinners, Barth says that everyone is worthy of God’s honour, even the most sinful person:

What are all human declamations about the intrinsic dignity of human beings compared with the foundation which it is given here according to the witness of the Bible? On the other hand, how can this honour be overlooked, forgotten or denied in the face of this foundation? How can “dignity” be denied to even the most miserable of human beings when the glory of God himself was the honour of that person as nailed in supreme wretchedness to the cross?²⁰⁸

Barth writes:

God tells each one of us that he needs us in a definite and concrete respect, that he has a use for us. Not one of us is to pass our short span of life in vain... God wills for each one of us that in our limited time and at our limited place we should be his witness.²⁰⁹

For Barth talking about a person’s sense of worth and honour is something objective and not intrinsic. So a spiritual director cannot find it by just looking within

²⁰⁶ Ibid., III/4, 649.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., III/4, 654.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., III/4, 657.

his directee or by looking at the directee's circle of friends. Barth holds that, "Human beings have not called forth their honour, any more than they could call forth themselves out of nothingness or call, justify, or sanctify themselves... They have it only because God is there for them".²¹⁰

Discerning about God's concrete call to mankind to partake partially in his honour, Barth adds saying:

We each have our honour before God and from God. No circumstances and no human being can increase or diminish it, can give it to us or take it from us. Even we ourselves cannot do this. God alone is competent to decide our dignity and worth.²¹¹

Now after considering the distinction between conscience and superego and the dynamics of grace we can say that guilt and shame are moral experiences which have a key role in the development of human moral behaviour.²¹²

According to Beauchamp and Childress a person's morality is related to human conduct giving us the ability to recognize what is wrong from what is right. Therefore morality includes ethical principles which consider and respect the autonomy of others, the good to others, promotion of welfare, and decisions in the best interest of others.²¹³

Katchadourian sustains that Western moral beliefs and attitudes (influenced by Christianity) towards the experience of both guilt and shame is being seen under some sort of judgment.²¹⁴ So for Katchadourian guilt feelings depend on:

²¹⁰ Ibid., III/4, 664.

²¹¹ Ibid., III/4, 678.

²¹² See J. P. Tangney and R. L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004).

²¹³ See T. L. Beauchamp and J. F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²¹⁴ See H. Katchadourian, *Guilt – The bite of conscience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

- a. Whether the morality of the guilty person is characterized by an external, authoritative system of rules (divine will, the canon law, the views of one's neighbours) or
- b. Whether the morality of the guilty person is characterized by a personal autonomous morality of conscience.

According to Katchadourian, it is through the history of religion that we can understand this moral understanding of guilt feelings. So we cannot separate the moral understanding of guilt from the history and understanding of religion and culture.

2.6 RELIGION AND CULTURE VERSUS GUILT

Studies performed by Koenig, McCullough and Larson have shown that religion is strongly connected and related to various different psychological and health variables.²¹⁵ However, few studies have focussed on the connection between religion and the cross-cultural differences in guilt proneness. In the past religion has always been viewed as affecting in many aspects a person's life,²¹⁶ mostly his moral beliefs and social expectations related to guilt. Ellis holds that sometimes it is religion which causes guilt in people,²¹⁷ and studies carried by Ciarrocchi, Spero, and Van Ornum²¹⁸ recognize in a religious person a destructive, scrupulous, or penitent personality followed by an excessive worry about sin and guilt.

²¹⁵ See H. G. Koenig, M. E. McCullough and D. B. Larson, *Handbook of religion and health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²¹⁶ See G. Allport, *The individual and his religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).

²¹⁷ A. Ellis, "Psychotherapy and atheistic values: a response to A. E. Bergin's Psychotherapy and religious values," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 48 (1980): 635–639.

²¹⁸ Cf. J. W. Ciarrocchi, *The doubting disease: Help for scrupulosity and religious compulsions*. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995); M. H. Spero, "The contemporary penitent personality: diagnostic, treatment, and ethical considerations with a particular type of religious patient," *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 4/3 (1980): 131–196; W. Van Ornum, *A thousand frightening fantasies: understanding and healing scrupulosity and obsessive compulsive disorder* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

However, few empirical studies consider examining the relationship between guilt and religious participation in a person's life. Studies carried by Gartner, Larson, and Allen²¹⁹ show that people coming from a less religious society are more affected by impulse control disorders, which includes drug and alcohol use, suicide, and anti-social behaviour. On the other hand, such studies show that people coming from a highly religious society are affected by disorders of over control, such as excessive guilt. Other more recent studies carried by Luyten, Corveleyn and Fontaine recognise a strong link between religiosity and general guilt.²²⁰ However, another research performed by Albertsen does not recognize a direct link between religiosity and destructive guilt.²²¹

So we have mixed research results about specific religious beliefs and attitudes towards guilt. However, considering the perception of God's grace and His unconditional forgiveness, Watson, Morris, and Hood²²² see less guilt feelings in religious people without denying guilt feelings emerging from negative theology and belief. Studies held by Ratanasiripong²²³ recognise a positive relationship between belief and guilt suggesting that this positive relationship may be explained by the supposition that without guilt or wrong-doing concept, a person will not feel the need for God's grace. So Ratanasiripong believes that a strong sense of guilt in a person may possibly lead him to feel the need of God's grace in his life.

Though few studies have examined guilt proneness across religious traditions, studies carried by Braam, Sonnenberg, Beekman, Deeg and Van-Tilburg, recognize high levels of guilt amongst Catholics when compared to

²¹⁹ J. Gartner, D. B. Larson and G. D. Allen, "Religious commitment and mental health: a review of the empirical literature," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 19 (1991): 6–25.

²²⁰ P. Luyten, J. Corveleyn and J. R. J. Fontaine, "The relationship between religiosity and mental health: Distinguishing between shame and guilt," *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 1/2 (1998): 165–184.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² P. J. Watson, R. J. Morris and R. W. Hood, "Sin and self-functioning, part 2: Grace, guilt and psychological adjustment," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 16/3 (1988): 270–281.

²²³ P. P. Ratanasiripong, "Effects of culture and religious belief on self-conscious emotions and depression: Acculturation, self-construal, belief in grace, shame, guilt, and depression among Asian American and European American Protestants" (Doctoral diss., The Wright Institute, Berkeley, CA, 1996) Dissertation Abstracts International, 57, 7235.

Calvinist Protestants and non-church goers.²²⁴ This study complements with another study held by London, Schulman, and Black²²⁵ which recognizes high guilt feelings amongst Protestant and Catholic people when compared to Jewish people in the United States' Midwest region. Albersten through his study recognises more destructive guilt feelings amongst Catholics and Lutherans when compared to Buddhist and Episcopalian people in the United States.²²⁶

Considering such studies, Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf and Saunders agree that high level of guilt feelings appear to be more common amongst Catholics while observing different levels of guilt in different religious traditions both on the community and individual scale.²²⁷

2.7 THE PSYCHOANALYTIC AND THEOLOGICAL VIEW VERSUS SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

A guilt healing process through spiritual direction is faced with a paradigm requiring a bilingual competency. The psychoanalytic and theological view of guilt offers two frameworks of interpretation which are not to be divided nor confused with each other. Thus psychology remains psychology (comprising its methods and norms) while theology remains theology. For an effective guilt healing process, psychology (while recognising its own contribution) must function within a larger theological context - a context which reflects the charismatic setting of spiritual direction as a particular ministry within the Church.

²²⁴ A. W. Braam et al., "Religious denomination as a symptom-formation factor of depression in older Dutch citizens," *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 15 (2000): 458–466.

²²⁵ P. London, R. E. Schulman and M. S. Black, "Religion, guilt, and ethical standards," *Journal of Social Psychology* 63/1 (1964): 145–159.

²²⁶ E. J. Albertsen, "Interpersonal guilt, spirituality, and religiosity: An empirical investigation of relationships" (Doctoral diss., The Wright Institute, Berkeley, CA, 2002) *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63, 1013.

²²⁷ D. N. Elkins et al., "Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality: Definition, description, and measurement," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 28/4 (1988): 5–18.

In this regard Winnicott's statement about the nature of psychotherapy can be applied also to the nature of spiritual direction:

Psychotherapy is not making clever and apt interpretations; by and large it is a long-term giving the patient back what the patient brings. It is a complex derivative of the face that reflects what is there to be seen. I like to think of my work this way, and to think that if I do this well enough the patient will find his or her own self, and will be able to exist and feel real.²²⁸

So keeping in mind the bilingual competency, a spiritual director should not simply read or listen to what the directee is saying but be able to help his directee to interpret guilt feelings. In spiritual direction, the process of interpretation deepens and enriches the directee's self-perception and self-understanding in relation to his guilt feelings. In fact, Hans Frei writes "The language we use is what enables us to experience in the first place. There is no such thing as a non-interpreted, non-linguistic experience."²²⁹

Equipped with a bilingual competency, the spiritual director will enhance the richness of both the psychodynamic and theological view to facilitate the directee's guilt healing process. So while spiritual direction considers the interaction and distinction of both the psychodynamic and theological/moral view the whole process of guilt healing gets facilitated and enhanced.

²²⁸ D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 117.

²²⁹ Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven/CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 74.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND HELPFUL PROCESS MODELS NEEDED FOR GUILT HEALING

As religion is generally related to an organised set of beliefs and attitudes within a religious institution,²³⁰ spirituality is related to beliefs and practices which lead one to acquire values helping that person to connect one's existence with the transcendent.²³¹ Though more studies are needed to see whether religion and spirituality are inter related or separate from each other, Tloczynski, Knoll and Fitch say that present studies examine spirituality and religiosity as separate concepts ignoring the similarities that exist and any overlap that there may be between them.²³² Such studies examine only the relationship between religiosity and spiritual or mystical experiences, ignoring the connection between religiosity and spirituality.

3.1 SPIRITUALITY AND GUILT HEALING

While Breed and Fagan²³³ hold that high spiritual/mystical experiences are more likely to be experienced by people with high affiliation to traditional religious beliefs, Hood²³⁴ says that spiritual/mystical experiences, can originate from either

²³⁰ E. Shafranske and H. N. Malony, "Clinical psychologists' religious and spiritual orientations and their practice of psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy* 27 (1990): 72–78.

²³¹ D. N. Elkins et al., "Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality: Definition, description, and measurement," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 28/4 (1988): 5–18; R. L. Piedmont, "Does spirituality represent the sixth factor of personality? Spiritual Transcendence and the Five-Factor Model," *Journal of Personality* 67/6 (1999): 985–1013.

²³² J. Tloczynski, C. Knoll and A. Fitch, "The relationship among spirituality, religious ideology, and personality," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25/2 (1997): 208–213.

²³³ G. Breed and J. Fagan, "Religious dogmatism and peak experiences: a test of Maslow's Hypothesis," *Psychological Reports* 31/3 (1972): 866.

²³⁴ R. W. Hood, "Mystical experience as related to present and anticipated future church participation," *Psychological Reports* 39 (1976): 1134.

religious or non-religious people. Hood found the lowest spiritual/mystical scores amongst people who stopped completely attending church and very high spiritual/mystical scores amongst church goers.

Studies carried by Morris and Hood ²³⁵ show that religious interpretation and meaning to spiritual / mystical experiences is mostly given by people who practice religion. The same studies show that differences in spirituality might be associated with different degrees of interpersonal guilt. Other studies related to guilt healing and spirituality show that there is a high connection and correlation between spirituality and proneness to interpersonal guilt. In fact, a study carried by Albertsen shows that people who have a spirituality based on relationships tend to experience neurotic guilt while people who build their lives on a deep spirituality (detached from human concerns) show less proneness to neurotic guilt.²³⁶

So Hood considers it worth analysing how much such spiritual/mystical experiences are motivating and whether religious beliefs and attitudes support and give meaning or ignore and minimize such intense personal experiences.²³⁷ This is surely an important characteristic for an effective guilt healing process through spiritual direction.

However, as we are talking about spiritual/mystical experiences, Johnston holds that “mysticism only begins after a harrowing purification which tradition calls ‘the dark night’.”²³⁸ He says that “quite often mystics, prior to their great awakening, have gone through a period of nervous upheaval bordering on psychological collapse... suffer[ing] from insomnia and depression... sometimes suicidal tendencies.”²³⁹ So considering a Christian religious context we shall briefly

²³⁵ R. J. Morris and R. W. Hood, “Religious and unity criteria of Baptists and Nones in reports of mystical experience,” *Psychological Reports* 46 (1980): 728–730.

²³⁶ E. J. Albertsen, “Interpersonal guilt, spirituality, and religiosity: An empirical investigation of relationships (Doct. diss. Dissertation Abstracts International. The Wright Institute, CA: Berkeley, 63/2002), 1013.

²³⁷ Hood, “Mystical experience as related to present and anticipated future church participation,” 1127–1136.

²³⁸ William Johnston, “Arise, My Love” in *Mysticism for a New Era*, ed. Patrick W. Carey and Joseph T. Lienhard (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 118.

see the connection and confusion that lies between the experience of dark night of the soul and depression caused by neurotic guilt feelings.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING A SPIRITUAL CRISIS (DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL)

In order to study the connection and confusion that lies between the experience of dark night of the soul and neurotic feelings, Gerald May confronts such experiences²⁴⁰ by referring to the writings of two main Spanish Christian mystics; St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. May holds that in spirituality the dark night experience “has become a catch phrase in the circles of pop spirituality where it is used to describe all kinds of misfortunes from major life tragedies to minor disappointments.”²⁴¹ Hence, guilt feelings can be related to a dark night experience of the soul as they affect the spiritual progress of a person along his faith journey.

May disagrees with the consolation idea that suffering is part of God’s will for those people who are taking faith seriously in their lives.²⁴² Referring to the Spanish understanding of darkness, May says that such experience “implies nothing sinister.”²⁴³ By the Spanish word ‘oscura,’ St. John and St. Teresa simply meant “the dark of a real night”²⁴⁴ where it is impossible for a person to “see clearly.”²⁴⁵ So when one experiences such spiritual darkness or ‘oscura’

²³⁹ Ibid., 104-105.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Gerald G May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004); Gerald G May, “Encounter” in *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 105-112.

²⁴¹ May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 4.

²⁴² Ibid., 8.

²⁴³ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 26.

throughout his spiritual life “liberation takes place in a hidden way, beneath our knowledge and understanding... beyond our conscious control.”²⁴⁶ May holds that here spiritual liberation occurs through a transforming union where one experiences a “journey of consciousness”²⁴⁷ leading him to experience freedom of existence.²⁴⁸ Consequently, one starts then experiencing God’s incarnate love leading to a transforming union. May holds that the nature of a spiritual dark night experience of the soul deepens one’s love²⁴⁹ and though the spiritual way is not clear a person experiences God’s loving grace through a “mystical co-participation between God and a person.”²⁵⁰

A spiritual dark night experience of the soul involves a decentralisation of our ego (highly needed in a guilt healing process), in fact May says:

a direct experience of union or deep intimacy which may be beautiful beyond words, but it also requires a certain sacrifice of our self-image as separate and distinct. We become vulnerable, less in control. We can no longer maintain the illusion that we are the master of our destiny.²⁵¹

Such a process happens through the “deep and ongoing process of unknowing that involves the loss of habitual experience”²⁵² where one is able to withdraw and empty oneself²⁵³ from his compulsive attachments including guilt feelings.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 47.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

²⁴⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 240-241.

²⁵⁰ May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 75.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 45.

²⁵² Ibid., 107.

²⁵³ Ibid., 82.

According to May, such compulsive attachments depend on our personal identity, restricting images of God and our compulsive ways of living.²⁵⁴ As we are dealing with the decentralisation of the ego, May holds that through such a process a person may experience lots of unpleasant feelings.²⁵⁵ However, a person should understand that “liberation always involves loss”²⁵⁶ and one must suffer pain in order to have a “deeply transformational”²⁵⁷ experience within a spiritual dark night of the soul.

For May a dark night experience is “not a phase of development but rather the essence of one’s ongoing spiritual journey.”²⁵⁸ So our spiritual path turns into an ongoing process that liberates a person from one’s own ego attachments in order to achieve “a God-given clarity, liberation of love and deepening of faith.”²⁵⁹ While comparing May’s views with Johnston’s understanding of mystical experience leading to a new consciousness, one cannot consider the awakening of the new consciousness as the end of the process. Rather it is the beginning of one’s ongoing spiritual life journey where a person discovers more deeply this God’s gift of wisdom which is necessary in a guilt healing process.

In line with the writings of St. Teresa and St. John, May holds that a spiritual dark night experience of the soul “is nothing other than the story of a love affair.”²⁶⁰ To exercise the process of liberation from a person’s egocentric attachments, a dark night (*oscura*) is required otherwise one’s defence mechanism will distort the process.²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁵⁷ May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 70.

²⁵⁸ May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, 107-108.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶¹ Gerald G. May, “A Deeper Longing: The Liberation of Desire” in *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 63-101.

Though clinical depression and a spiritual dark night experience of the soul are not to be confused, May holds that a person who is experiencing a time of 'oscura' might experience feelings of "hopelessness, helplessness, agitation and emptiness... impoverishment of thoughts, absence of motivation and loss of self-confidence" which are similar to depression symptoms caused by guilt feelings.²⁶² However, May insists on a clear distinction²⁶³ between these terms and he says that a dark night experience and clinical depression differ mostly on:

- a. The source.²⁶⁴ The source of the dark night experience is God's love leading one to achieve transforming union and though depression may result during this experience it is not the source of it. So though depression symptoms may result as a response to the experience of dark night there is no "psychological causation."²⁶⁵
- b. Rightness is another important significant difference between clinical depression and a spiritual dark night experience of the soul as May holds that in a dark night experience "there is a rightness about it all."²⁶⁶ So the elements of the whole dark night experience seem to be right pulling towards the right direction.

Discerning and doing inner reflection about a person's spiritual state or crisis is not an easy task but seeking help through spiritual direction will surely help to acquire insight into what a person experiences on both the subconscious and unconscious level.²⁶⁷ Spiritual Direction surely offers this ability to guide a person through this process of discerning and reflection. In fact Elkins says: "Our problem is not that the sacred has ceased to exist, but rather that we have lost our

²⁶² May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, 109.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁶⁷ E.S. Jones, *A song of ascents: A spiritual autobiography* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1968), 53-54.

connection to it”²⁶⁸ and so spiritual discernment helps one to come in touch with one’s guilt feelings through a spiritual relationship with the transcendent.

3.3 SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Spiritual direction could be one of the settings where the directee understands better one’s guilt feelings and receives help towards healing. Shirley MacLaine says that the ability to understand one’s own spiritual consciousness offers us the faculty to see oneself and feelings in a Divine way.²⁶⁹ On this same line of thought, Barry and Connolly say that understanding one’s spiritual consciousness helps to connect oneself and one’s abilities to the Divine knowledge and understand life events through God’s eyes.²⁷⁰ Spiritual direction must involve the whole personality of the person experiencing guilt by “inviting God to communicate with us in prayer and trying to respond to him in prayer tend to involve all of our selves. Feeling, mood, thought, desire, hope, will, bodily gestures and attitudes, activity, and direction of life tend to be affected.”²⁷¹

Such spiritual approach leads one to understand one’s own situations while offering more ability to seek the cause of one’s guilt/shame feelings. However, to offer a professional effective guilt healing process, a spiritual director needs to be equipped with psychic talents and use the psychic tools and mediums to direct his directee. In fact though Benner says that spiritual direction is “Spirit centered” he maintains that “both spiritually oriented psychotherapists and spiritual directors should, therefore, be literate in both the psychological and spiritual domains of inner life.”²⁷²

²⁶⁸ D.N. Elkins, *Beyond religion: A personal programme for building a spiritual life outside the walls of traditional religion* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1998), 63.

²⁶⁹ Shirley MacLaine, *Going Within* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1989), 57.

²⁷⁰ W.A. Barry and W.J. Connolly, *The practice of spiritual direction* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 32.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

At this stage one must make a clear distinction between spiritual direction and psychotherapy. According to Barry and Connolly, “spiritual direction differs from moral guidance, psychological counseling, and the practice of confessional, preaching, or healing ministries (though having affinities with them) in that it directly assists individuals in developing and cultivating their personal relationship with God.”²⁷³

Similarly, Sperry distinguishes between spiritual direction and non-spiritually attuned psychotherapy and he contrasts these disciplines on the basis of four variables: clientele, goals, relationship with the therapist or director and intervention methods. According to Sperry, whereas traditional psychotherapists use various psychotherapeutic interventions in their work to lessen disordered symptoms and/or impairments to acquire personality change and/or fulfilment; spiritual directors make use of listening, instruction in prayer, and other spiritual practices as intervention methods to acquire “spiritual growth”.²⁷⁴

3.4 THE ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

To acquire an effective and positive guilt healing process, a spiritual director should be professionally trained in the method of assisting directees and help one to explore and deepen his feelings through faith. To do so a spiritual director needs to listen to the directee’s guilt feelings and understand one’s particular situations and circumstances. Listening should be exercised in a gentle and a non-judgmental way as O’Donohue explains through the candle light metaphor.²⁷⁵ Metaphorically a candle throws enough light to “befriend the darkness, [as] it

²⁷² D. G. Benner, *Sacred companions: The gift of spiritual friendship and direction* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2002), 88.

²⁷³ Barry and Connolly, *The practice of spiritual direction*, 9.

²⁷⁴ See L. Sperry, *Spirituality in clinical practice: Incorporating the spiritual dimension in psychotherapy and counselling* (Philadelphia: Brunner-Rutledge, 2001).

²⁷⁵ John. O’Donohue, *Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World* (London: Bantam Books, 1999), 110-112.

gently opens up caverns in the darkness”²⁷⁶ which one need to discover in order to have an effective guilt healing process. Such metaphorical model of spiritual direction helps the directee to remain open and receptive to an ongoing sense of transformation by offering a safe and trusted environment in direction.

Another important role of a spiritual director is the ability to assist the directee in recognizing and discerning inner guilt feelings and deal with them using all the means given at one’s disposal which includes relating them to one’s relationship to God. In doing so the directee’s inner movements must be recognized. By “inner movements,” Ruffing means the “motivations, temptations, confusions, ambiguities and painful and pleasant psychological and spiritual experiences”²⁷⁷ which might be causing the directee’s guilt feelings. To facilitate discernment about guilt feelings and acquire transformation and healing, a spiritual director must help the directee to seek such inner movements in the present moment. Working on the ‘now moment’ of one’s guilt feelings is also considered by Gestalt Therapy as an effective measure to acquire healing.²⁷⁸

A spiritual director has the responsibility to make the directee more aware of the presence of God in one’s life. In order to get rid of guilt feelings, the directee should engage in a contemplative action, trying to discover God in all things and circumstances. So here comes the importance of discernment, where a spiritual director enables the directee both to discover God in one’s life experience and to abide by His will in one’s present circumstances. St. Ignatius of Loyola used to say that “each time and hour that he wanted to find God, he found Him.”²⁷⁹ Though contemplation helped a lot Ignatius to discover God each time he searched for Him, it was through discernment that Ignatius got this ability. Discernment led Ignatius to notice differences in his spiritual life urging him to do frequently the examination of consciousness. The examination of consciousness is an important

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Janet Ruffing, *Uncovering Stories of Faith: Spiritual Direction and Narrative* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 117.

²⁷⁸ Erving Polster and Miriam Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1973), 17.

²⁷⁹ Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola*, ed. John C. Olin (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 93.

tool for an effective guilt healing process and it is a practice which Aschenbrenner links to discernment.²⁸⁰ For Ignatius, the examination of consciousness has the same function of prayer reflection. It should lead the directee to discern what is coming from God from what is not. Ignatius says that God not only creates all creatures, but is able to dwell in them and work in them.²⁸¹ So a spiritual director aims to help the directee to see his guilt feelings within a religious dimension and enable him to consider such feelings as a means of prayer - helping the directee to meet God.²⁸²

Beeck says that to acquire a religious dimension we need two abilities; to encounter God and to search for God. A person can achieve these two abilities because God is immanent and therefore God is always there to encounter.²⁸³ Hence a spiritual director should enable the directee to be more aware of God's presence in his life and lead him to do a regular examination of consciousness and discernment about one's feelings.

Considering such a role, both spiritual director and directee should reflect on the importance of mutuality. A spiritual director must be a "partner in the search of the truth"²⁸⁴ together with the directee as they both derive from the same religious tradition of faith. To have an effective guilt healing process, a spiritual director should not approach the directee with answers or prescribed solutions. Instead a spiritual director must project a sense of openness - helping the directee to listen to the presence of God's love in one's circumstances. Copeland says that the more empathy a spiritual director shows to the directee, the more "affectively, intellectually and imaginatively"²⁸⁵ their mutual relationship becomes. Therefore,

²⁸⁰ George Aschenbrenner, "Consciousness Examen," in *Review for Religious* 31/1 (1972): 14-21. Reprinted in David L. Fleming (ed.) "Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola," in *Review for Religious* (St. Louis/MO, 1983): 175-185.

²⁸¹ Louis J. Puhl, "Contemplation to Attain the Love of God," in *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1951), 230-237.

²⁸² Elkins, *Beyond religion*, 63.

²⁸³ See Frans Josef van Beeck, "God Encountered" in *Understanding the Christian Faith*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

²⁸⁴ Ruffing, *Uncovering Stories of Faith*, 135.

here mutuality entails that both spiritual director and directee are open and receptive to God's Truth seeing their present life circumstances and situations through faith.

So a spiritual director should help the directee to focus on the life journey and not on a particular moment in crisis. In fact May says that while psychology relates to the "how of life"²⁸⁶ spiritual direction relates to the "why"²⁸⁷ in connection to "the dynamic process of love in one's life."²⁸⁸

3.5 INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Besides the fact that spiritual direction differs from psychotherapy and counselling in intent, content and attitude, it reflects an interpersonal relationship spirit. Lord says that such an interpersonal relationship spirit within spiritual direction mirrors a sense of space and peace; openness and receptivity; quietness and clarity helping the directee to self-transform.²⁸⁹

However, nowadays both Benner and Crabb try to integrate spiritual direction and psychotherapy by including spiritual practices and other religious resources into psychotherapy describing it as a "spiritually sensitive psychotherapy".²⁹⁰

But surely guilt healing through spiritual direction within an interpersonal relationship dynamic entails a special attention towards God which every spiritual

²⁸⁵ Shawn M. Copeland, "Political Theology as Interruptive," *CTSA Proceedings* 59 (2004): 80.

²⁸⁶ May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, xvi.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ D. Lord, "An Experience of Group Direction," *Review for Religious* 46/2 (1987): 86.

²⁹⁰ See D. G. Benner and Larry Crabb. *Sacred companions: The gift of spiritual friendship and direction* (New York: Inter Varsity Press, 2002).

seeker should desire and look for throughout one's life. In this regard, Lord says that both spiritual director and directee need to pay special attention to prayer life and daily awareness of God.²⁹¹ The importance of prayer and meditation is also highlighted by Richards and Bergin in order to acquire an effective healing process.²⁹²

Throughout the guilt healing process, the spiritual director needs to allow space for quiet prayer so that he can channel God's truth and love to the directee.²⁹³ In order to help the directee understand and deal with one's own guilt feelings, God needs to remain the main aim of direction if we are to acquire healing. However, there are moments when this becomes difficult as very often the spiritual director might get overwhelmed by personal concerns, private agendas, fears or desires or intriguing elements with regard to the directee's situation.²⁹⁴

In this regard, Janet Ruffing, talks about the psychological notions of transference and counter transference in the realm of spiritual direction. When a person is practicing deep sharing of inner life over a period of time, there is likely the chance that the directee projects his personal psychic problems onto his spiritual director. Likewise, spiritual directors can fall into projecting their personal psychic unprocessed material onto their directees. So Ruffing insists with spiritual directors on the need of supervision and on the need of referral when transference and counter transference go beyond control.²⁹⁵

So during the healing process, the spiritual director must always remain open to understand the dynamic within the directee, as to let the Spirit of God take the lead and show the way.²⁹⁶ If directors are not vigilant enough and careful,

²⁹¹ Lord, "An Experience of Group Direction," 87.

²⁹² P.S. Richards and A.E. Bergin, "A spiritual strategy for counselling and psychotherapy," *Washington, DC: American Psychological Association (1997): 129-135.*

²⁹³ Lord, "An Experience of Group Direction," 88.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁹⁵ See Janet K. Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2000).

²⁹⁶ Lord, "An Experience of Group Direction," 90.

spiritual direction sessions won't be effective and so guilt healing will not occur. Spiritual directors must be attentive to recognize all that keeps them away from seeking God's will and grace. Lord says that the following factors can all hinder a sense of openness to God's will: personal cares and attachments; self-importance; concern for how the direction goes; hidden agendas and expectations; fears of spiritual surrender, psychological understandings and psychodynamic explanations, personal attractions or repulsions and human concern for the directee's struggle.²⁹⁷

However, getting rid of all these factors is not always possible; at least directors should try to be aware of them and avoid them as much as possible to ensure an effective guilt healing process. Spiritual directors should keep on reminding themselves and their directees of what they are truly looking for in spiritual direction.²⁹⁸

At this stage, Lord is not suggesting directors to focus on God to the exclusion of oneself or the directee. What he intends here is that spiritual directors are vigilant and careful in order to remain open to God. This entails adopting the same attitudes and spirit that we hold in prayer. So the main aim remains God's pure will avoiding any self-selected or personally restricted aspect of God. Though this should be the aim of every spiritual seeker, Lord considers it a priority in spiritual direction as we are dealing with a person's soul.²⁹⁹

Spiritual direction healing needs to occur **in** and **through** God and not of one's personal wishes or wilfulness. In fact Lord says that it is imperative in spiritual direction to seek one's utter dependence upon God.³⁰⁰ Undoubtedly this exercise entails a great humility; otherwise one won't be open to God's grace and power to overcome guilt feelings. Then, if a person is open to God's grace one may grow in spirit and ensure an effective spiritual healing process.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 90-91.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 96.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 90.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 94.

As we are dealing with the interpersonal dynamics of spiritual direction, the issue of transference and counter-transference highlighted by Janet Ruffing brings the need of supervision. As we cannot fully recognize the intense and conflicting feelings which occur between the spiritual director and directee, Maureen Conroy insists on supervision to dissipate the power of these feelings, to explore their root cause, to maintain the sacredness of the direction process and to decide what actions need to be taken.³⁰¹ Thus supervision offers the sacred opportunity for the spiritual director to drink of God's love, experiencing Jesus' promise: "The water I give shall become a fountain within you"³⁰²

The rhythm of supervision enables pure areas of light and polluted areas of darkness to emerge into the director's awareness. This process in turn facilitates the discernment of interior movements and growth in inner freedom.³⁰³ William Barry and William Connolly, hold that "growth as a spiritual director cannot be superficial, it must take root in the core of the person, in the heart, in that center where directors meet God and other people most intimately."³⁰⁴ Hence, when spiritual directors seek supervision they must pay special attention to their tendency towards transference or counter-transference in order to ensure a clear healing process.³⁰⁵

Lannert³⁰⁶ says that very often counter-transference happens with directors who have unresolved religious conflicts who project them onto their own directees. Research studies³⁰⁷ show that when counter-transference occurs, directees tend

³⁰¹ Maureen Conroy, *Looking into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors* (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola University Press, 1995), 30.

³⁰² Conroy, *Looking into the Well*, 34.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁰⁴ William A. Barry, and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Seabury, 1983), 179.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 186

³⁰⁶ J.L. Lannert, "Resistance and countertransference issues with spiritual and religious clients," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 31/4 (1991): 68-76.

³⁰⁷ Lannert, "Resistance and countertransference issues with spiritual and religious clients," 74; P.S. Richards and A.E. Bergin, "A spiritual strategy for counselling and psychotherapy," *Washington, DC: American Psychological Association* (1997): 129-135.

to acquire the values and (dis)beliefs of their spiritual directors and not the proper values needed to heal their guilt feelings.

Now as we are dealing with guilt feelings (which can turn into neuroticism) spiritual directors must know exactly what to do and how to refer when discovering that the case is not up to their competency. So Gerald May³⁰⁸ advises immediate referral especially when dealing with psychiatric problems (in our case neurotic guilt feelings) which can turn self-destructive.

3.6 HEALING MODELS OFFERED BY SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

According to Patricia Coughlin³⁰⁹ if spirituality and psychology are inter-related, spiritual directors can easily tackle psychological issues like “shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, loneliness and destructive ways of organizing and interpreting the meaning of feelings and events”³¹⁰ from a spiritual point of view. Though spiritual direction aims to deal more with one’s relationship with God, psychological issues like guilt feelings can still heal through spiritual help and support while keeping in mind the psychological understanding of such feelings. However, Coughlin holds that deciding not to tackle psychological issues in spiritual direction would imply that God is not part of our everyday life and feelings.³¹¹ So it is important for a directee who suffers from guilt feelings to experience this sense of being loved by God throughout the healing process in direction. As a healing spiritual model, Coughlin highly recommends the integral model of Ken Wilbur³¹² inspired by Thomas Keating’s psychology of Centering Prayer. Centering Prayer is a method of prayer which is very popular and built up

³⁰⁸ See. May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*.

³⁰⁹ Patricia Coughlin, “Listening to the Soul’s Story / Psychology in Spiritual Direction,” in *Sacred Is the Call: Formation and Transformation in Spiritual Direction Programs*, ed. Suzanne M. Buckley (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 80-92.

³¹⁰ Ibid. 80.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ken Wilbur, *Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World* (Boston: Shambhala, 2006), 82.

in such away as to address psychological issues in spiritual direction. Whatever framework of prayer is used, it addresses psychological problems and topics through spirituality.³¹³

Another effective healing model is the Personality Theory used in the Enneagram.³¹⁴ Such healing model invites a spiritual director to apply helpful ways of prayer and seek ways of speaking about God in particular situations and circumstances. The developmental models of healing, as suggested by Erik Erikson³¹⁵ and Robert Kegan³¹⁶ also insist on particular kinds of prayer and images of God which fit in one's particular situation.

Such developmental models can help lots in the guilt healing process as they facilitate the understanding of the development of such feelings while seeking appropriate images of God appealing to the directee's particular circumstances. Such models surely highlight the moral sense of the directee and see how one is processing his own feelings, images and realizations. These models will also help the spiritual director to see and assist his directee's changes of the soul and help him to accept God's call in prayer and in everyday life.³¹⁷ Developmental models of healing highlight the importance of empathy, inviting spiritual directors to be less judgmental and less frustrated with "uncooperative" directees.³¹⁸

³¹³ Finbarr Flanagan, "Centering Prayer: Transcendental Meditation for the Christian Market," *Faith and Renewal* (May/June, 1991): 2, quoting from Basil Pennington, *Daily We Touch Him*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977, 68. Centering prayer is a method of prayer initiated by Fr. Basil Pennington and Fr. Thomas Keating and intends leading a person into contemplation. The person chooses a sacred word and he keeps on reading and thinking about it until it takes over his troubling thoughts and feelings. Fr. Keating says, "All thoughts pass if you wait long enough" up to a stage where the person reaches a state of pure consciousness or a mental void suspending the thinking process. This method of prayer aims at leading a person to a direct contact with God by discovering the centre of his own being and one's true self. In so doing the true self takes over the false self and so the person gets rid of his self-destructive emotions. Cf. Basil Pennington, *Daily We Touch Him* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 68; Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart* (Amity, NY: Amity House, 1986), 97.

³¹⁴ See The Enneagram Institute. 2010.<<http://www enneagraminstitute.com/>>.

³¹⁵ See Erik H. Erikson. *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton, 1980).

³¹⁶ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge: The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1982), 83.

³¹⁷ Elizabeth Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 74.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

As spiritual direction deals a lot with a person's maturity in faith one cannot do without the development model stages in adult spirituality. When referring to such development stages, James Bowler³¹⁹ mentions four general phases of maturation in faith:

- a. The first is the stage of ultimate reality and meaning that is defined by directee's exterior world and culture.
- b. The second is a world of ultimate reality and meaning that is defined by the directee's own self.
- c. The third is characterized by the denial or repressing experience occurring in the directee's consciousness, and
- d. The fourth stage is characterized by the directee's realization of God's sustaining act of creation in nature.³²⁰

Here Bowler is focussing on the major transitions in a directee's spiritual journey and very often it is in such transitions that a person experiences spiritual dryness. In understanding and handling such transitions of maturity stages in faith, Liebert insists that directors should exercise empathy, spaciousness, and assurance.³²¹ Understanding these transitions of maturity stages in faith will surely help the spiritual director to direct better the directee especially when passing through experiences of stress and anxiety caused by guilt feelings.

As we are able to feel, think, emote and sense the world around us through our body, Lucy Abbot Tucker³²² maintains that the body is "a treasure chest of information."³²³ She highlights the importance of the Enneagram theory model for healing as it characterizes people, in part, according to what aspect of their body

³¹⁹ James M. Bowler, "Maturing in Faith / Stages in the Adult Spiritual Journey," in *Sacred Is the Call: Formation and Transformation in Spiritual Direction Programs*, ed. Suzanne M. Buckley (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 93 -100.

³²⁰ Bowler, "Maturing in Faith / Stages in the Adult Spiritual Journey," 94-97.

³²¹ Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns*. 84.

³²² Lucy Abbot Tucker, "Embracing the Wisdom of the Body / Feelings and Spiritual Direction," in *Sacred Is the Call: Formation Direction Programs*, ed. Suzanne M. Buckley (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 101-109.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 102.

they primarily derive wisdom from. The Enneagram theory holds that our body is composed of three centres – head, heart and gut. The Enneagram says that “Those who lead from the head approach life first from their thinking function. Those who lead from the heart look first to relationships and those who lead from the gut approach life from their feeling function”.³²⁴

So to acquire spiritual maturity, a director should help the directee to handle guilt feelings in a holistic way by integrating all his body functions. Such an emphasis on a holistic approach for an effective healing process is also highlighted in Gestalt Therapy.³²⁵

A directee needs to be guided to deal with feelings and “allow them to be [his] teachers and guides.”³²⁶ In doing so the directee can enjoy the fullness of wisdom, acquire more light about one’s feelings and achieve freedom. Through the method of ‘Focussing,’ Eugene Genlin³²⁷ maintains that taking time to feel feelings, to name them and dialogue with them, can help people see where they feel emotionally stuck in order to achieve healing. Therefore applying the ‘Focussing’ method in spiritual direction can help the directee to uncover and resolve feelings which hinder proper freedom.

3.7 THE GRIEF-PROCESS AS A MODEL TO OVERCOMING GUILT FEELINGS

Recently professional research contributed much to the understanding of grief and to the handling of emotional stress that follows. Such research offers

³²⁴ The Enneagram Institute, 103.

³²⁵ Fredrick Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1969), 2.

³²⁶ The Enneagram Institute, 102.

³²⁷ Eugene T. Genlin, *Focusing* (New York: Bantam, 1981), 32.

many insights for an effective model of grief healing adopting art therapy.³²⁸ Throughout the grief process, people experience many overwhelming feelings and if not well supported such intense feelings can cause low self-esteem, depression, suicidal ideation and / or physical illness.³²⁹ When trying to distinguish between mourning and grief, Worden³³⁰ says that “mourning” is the process which occurs after a loss and “grief” is the personal experience of the loss. So through a grief-healing process one mourns for the loss of his loved ones and tries to acquire healing keeping him on going in life. Professional therapeutic models of grief are specifically intended to offer effective healing to the mourners so they can continue living a normal healthy life. Various authors propose various stages or phases for an effective grief-process³³¹ and all that they propose to the mourner can offer also insights to a guilt healing process. It was actually Sigmund Freud³³² who initiated the importance of a grief-healing process model calling it ‘grief work’, trying to help people in bereavement.

Kubler-Ross says that people who are dying and their families or friends who are grieving tend to experience stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance followed by emotional reactions like shock, numbness, and pain.³³³ Then such experienced stages often act as defence

³²⁸ B. Birnbaum, “Haven hugs and bugs: An innovative multiple-family weekend intervention for bereaved children adolescents and adults,” in *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care* 8/5 (1991): 23-29; D.A. Crenshaw, *Bereavement: Counseling the Grieving Throughout the Life Cycle* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing,1990); J. Goldstein, C.L. Alter and R.A. Axelrod, “Psycho educational bereavement support group for families provided in an out-patient cancer center,” *Journal of Cancer Education* 11/4 (1996): 233-237; S. Levi, R. Gilad and A. Friedman-Kalmovitz, “Pictorial art as a teaching strategy in death education,” in *Nursing Times Research* 1/3 (1996): 198-203.

³²⁹ W. Stroebe and M.S. Stroebe, *Bereavement and health*, vol. 77 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 283–287.

³³⁰ See J.W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 1991).

³³¹ T. Attig, “The importance of conceiving of grief as an active process,” *Death Studies* 15/4 (1991): 385-393; J. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Loss, Sadness and Depression*, vol. 3 (New York: Basic Books,1980); C.A. Corr, “A task-based approach to coping with the dying,” *Omega* 24/2 (1991): 81-95; T. Rando, *Grief, Dying and Death: Clinical Interventions for Caregivers* (Champaign, IL: Research Press,1984).

³³² S. Freud, “*Mourning and Melancholia*” in the author's Complete Works, vol. xiv (London, England: Hogarth Press, 1957), 237.

³³³ E. Kubler-Ross, *On death and dying* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1969), 6.

mechanisms helping the bereaved person cope with extremely difficult situations in life. However, as time and space for sharing feelings is needed to deal with the sense of loss in a grief-healing process so is time and space needed to overcome guilt feelings.

Building on Kubler-Ross description of grief phases or stages, Worden³³⁴ developed an active grieving model based on four tasks needed for an effective grief healing process. When distinguishing between phases and tasks, Worden says that “Phases imply a certain passivity, something the mourner must pass through. Tasks on the other hand are much more consonant with Freud's concept of grief work and imply that the mourner needs to take action and can do something.”³³⁵ Though Worden admits that people tend to react differently to the sense of loss in life, he presents the following developmental tasks as effective tools to achieve healing:³³⁶

- a. Accepting the reality of the loss. A grief healing process entails first the acknowledgment and realization of the loss and such task involves an intellectual acceptance as well as an emotional one. For an effective guilt healing process, accepting and acknowledging guilt feelings is a priority.³³⁷
- b. Working on the feeling of pain which results from the loss. Such a task is needed, otherwise feelings will manifest through other symptoms or behaviours. So a grief healing process aims at helping people work on their feelings of pain so they can be able to move on in life. When it comes to guilt feelings, such a task is important as otherwise a person will carry the effects of such feelings all throughout his life.³³⁸

³³⁴ See J.W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 1991).

³³⁵ Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, 35.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-50.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

- c. Adjusting ourselves to an environment in which the deceased is missing. This task requires self adjustment to different things and to different people related or connected to the deceased. So to ensure an effective guilt healing process, working on one's self to cope with our guilt feelings is also recommended.³³⁹
- d. Relocating the deceased and moving on in life. People who suffer the loss of their loved ones find it difficult to forget the memories of their relationship with the deceased so a grief healing process aims at helping people to look forward in life. A sense of letting go of emotions (related to the deceased person) is needed to enhance a grief healing process while focussing less on the loss and more on other ongoing relationships. The same thing is needed when it comes to guilt by helping the person to focus less on one's past guilty actions and focus more on better relationships with others.³⁴⁰

Grief process models are like general maps, trying to understand the pain of a grieving person offering them guidance to keep on going in life. However, as every person is unique we cannot hold a fixed healing pattern. This is true also when it comes to guilt feelings, spiritual directors need to apply models of healing accordingly and not offering fixed common direction to every person.

As grieving people risk experiencing future physical, emotional and social problems, (especially when finding it difficult to come in terms with grief) Bayer insists on focussing to heal feelings of detachment, isolation and depression experienced by people who have lost their loved ones.³⁴¹ Such emphasis can be helpful when it becomes difficult to overcome guilt. For an effective grief-healing process model, Lattanzi, Coffelt³⁴² and Worden³⁴³ highlight the importance of two

³³⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 50.

³⁴¹ D.L. Bayer, "Empathic counseling with hospice families," *The American Journal of Hospice Care* (Summer, 1984): 18-20.

³⁴² See M.E. Lattanzi and D. Coffelt, *Bereavement Care Manual* (Boulder, CO: Boulder County Hospice, 1979).

³⁴³ See J.W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*.

practical principles worth considering also in a guilt healing process:

- a. Adopting Coping Skills. A grief process model recommends the adoption of coping skills like meditation, relaxation and also art making to aid grieving people deal more effectively with the stress of bereavement. Such principle is also helpful to people suffering from guilt feelings as they too experience lots of stress and anxiety.³⁴⁴
- b. Application of Referrals in Extreme Difficulties. A grief healing process model must recognize the gravity of the grief effect and if the case turns to be difficult to handle, referral is to be applied urgently. As already mentioned, such need of referral is also recommended in spiritual direction especially when dealing with severe neurotic guilt cases which can turn self-destructive.³⁴⁵

Effective, useful and practical approaches identified by grief counsellors³⁴⁶ can also be applied by spiritual directors in a guilt healing process without putting aside God's grace and prayer.

As practical tasks or approaches can be very effective in helping the grieving person expressing fully his thoughts and feelings regarding the loss, it can also be helpful in overcoming guilt feelings.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 65.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.,104.

³⁴⁶ C. Bolton and D. J. Camp, "The post-funeral ritual in bereavement counseling and grief work," *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 13/3 (1989): 49-60; K. Dean, "The remembrance book: A personal discovery for the feelings of those who grieve," *Midwives Chronicle* 104/1246 (1991): 314-317; M. Eaton-Heegaard, *When Someone Very Special Dies: Facilitator Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Woodland,1988); M. Hammer, D.G. Nichols and L.A. Armstrong, "Ritual of remembrance," *American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing* 17/6 (1992): 310-313; J.W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 1991).

3.8 APPLYING GRIEF HEALING PRACTICAL TASKS TO A GUILT HEALING PROCESS

Grief counsellors like Johnson³⁴⁷ Shear³⁴⁸ and Worden³⁴⁹ offer specific designed therapy to people under pain and sufferings recommending the following art therapy structure tasks:

- a. Use of Symbols and Analogies – This task encourages the mourner to bring photos, letters, tapes, articles of clothing or significant objects from the deceased to understand how much important this person meant to be. Here a sharing spirit is required.³⁵⁰ Applying this task to guilt feelings, a spiritual director can invite the directee to bring objects related or connected to one's guilt feelings and discern onto.
- b. Writing – This task involves the writing of letters to the deceased helping the mourner to express inner thoughts and feelings. In this regard writing poetry is also recommended to facilitate the expression of feelings.³⁵¹ Applying the writing task to guilt feelings, a spiritual director can invite the directee to express feelings through writing or poetry to ease feelings and enhance the healing process.
- c. Art Making – This practical approach invites the grieving person to express inner feelings through art and expressing as well one's own personal experiences with the deceased.³⁵² This can also be an effective tool in a guilt healing process by encouraging the directee describe one's inner guilt feelings or experiences through art imagery.

³⁴⁷ D.R. Johnson, "The role of the creative arts therapies in the diagnosis and treatment of trauma," *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 14 (1987): 7-13.

³⁴⁸ M.K. Shear, "The treatment of complicated grief," *Grief Matters: The Australian journal of grief and bereavement* 9/2 (2006): 39-42.

³⁴⁹ See Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 106.

- d. Guided Imagery – Through this helpful method the grieving person is invited to imagine what one needs to say to the deceased.³⁵³ With regards to guilt feelings a directee can be invited to imagine what guilt feelings look like and encourage one to come to terms with such imagery feelings through words and expressions.
- e. Healing Rituals – As external healing rituals enable a grieving person to ease one’s grief pain through condolences and memories,³⁵⁴ external spiritual exercises or tasks (like meditation and prayer) can also help a guilty person to ease one’s stress and anxiety feelings.

Johnson³⁵⁵ holds that art making is very effective in helping the grieving person expressing one’s own inner feelings of anxiety, fear, crisis, and threat through the creativity of visual imagery.

Such importance to art making is also highlighted by other authors like Peckman, Hatcher and Dissanayake³⁵⁶ and can easily be applied in a guilt healing process. In fact Hatcher³⁵⁷ talks about such importance from an anthropological point of view by saying:

Whatever the theoretical explanation, it is clear that art somehow helps human beings cope with the trauma of death. Beauty and art forms have been part of funeral ceremonies since Neanderthal times. This universal human problem is met everywhere with symbolic solutions to satisfy the mind and esthetic solutions to release the emotions.³⁵⁸

³⁵³ Ibid., 107.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 118.

³⁵⁵ Johnson, “The role of the creative arts therapies,” 7-13.

³⁵⁶ Cf. M. Peckman, *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior and the Arts* (Philadelphia, PA: Chilton, 1965); E. Hatcher, *Art as Culture* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); E. Dissanayake, *What is art for?* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1988).

³⁵⁷ See Hatcher, *Art as Culture*.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 106-107.

Art therapists like Forrest and Thomas, Grant, Graves and Orton³⁵⁹ observe consistently the importance of the power and capability of art in helping people cope and heal their pain feelings. Simon³⁶⁰ holds that people need making use of various means of non-verbal communication and coping techniques to bring out the various thoughts and emotions experienced in grief. Various thoughts and emotions are also experienced when a person is feeling guilty; the aforementioned means can surely ease the guilt healing process too. So when words are not easy to express, art can serve as a natural expression to inner feelings.³⁶¹

Wagner, Knaevelsrud and Maercker³⁶² recently highlighted the importance of expressing inner feelings, recommending writing assignments to ease a healing process. Schimmel and Kornreich³⁶³ say that through creative expression and communication, people can find lots of support and guidance in life as they acquire new coping skills. Simon³⁶⁴ says that bereavement art is an attempt to work through conflicts and this normally happens in three stages:

- a. In the first stage, we have the expression of the conflict, bringing feelings of stress and anxiety closer to one's consciousness.
- b. In the second stage, art enables one's sufferings to find control through imagery.
- c. In the third stage, resolutions are acquired to see one's sufferings as part of nature enabling one to take initiatives to keep on going in life.

³⁵⁹ M. Forrest and G.V. Thomas, "An exploratory study of drawings by bereaved children," *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 30/4 (1991): 373-374; A. Grant, *The Healing Journey: Manual for a Grief Support Group* (Long Branch, NJ: Vista Publishing, 1995); S. Graves, *Expressions of Healing* (Van Nuys, CA: New Castle Publishing, 1994); M. Orton, "A case study of an adolescent mother grieving the death of her child due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome," *Art Therapy: American Journal of Art therapy* 33/2 (1994): 37-44.

³⁶⁰ R. Simon, "Bereavement Art," *American Journal of Art Therapy* 20 (1981): 135-143.

³⁶¹ M. Raymer and B.B. McIntyre, "An art support group for bereaved children and adolescents," *Art Therapy* 4 (1987): 27-35.

³⁶² B. Wagner, C. Knaevelsrud and A. Maercker, "Internet-based cognitive-behavioral therapy for complicated grief: A randomized controlled trial," *Death Studies* 30/5 (2006): 429-453.

³⁶³ B. F. Schimmel and T. Z. Kornreich, "The use of art and verbal process with recently widowed individuals," *American Journal of Art Therapy* 31 (1993): 91-97.

³⁶⁴ Simon, "Bereavement Art," 135-143.

Adopting these art therapy stages can also be beneficial to a guilt healing process. So when a person recognizes and accepts the reality of death (or in our context, guilt feelings), one can be able to acquire healing and this is achieved step by step. Bachmann says that the present circumstances become real when a person thinks of the act (e.g., death of loved ones) or of the place which reminds him of the past.³⁶⁵ By facing the reality of death (in our context, guilt feelings), the grieving person manages to build up once again one's internal and external world. Bachmann says that this is possible when the person's feelings of hatred as well as love (same feelings felt when facing guilt) dissolve in forgiveness.³⁶⁶ Sofield, Juliano, and Aymond say that true healing can be achieved if a person "let go" and forgive. If we really forgive, we experience real effects of forgiveness and such "real effects" can lead a person to experience "a rebirth, an overpowering sense of new life."³⁶⁷

So as a grieving person learns to detach oneself from the dead person whose loss obstructed one's self-development,³⁶⁸ a guilty person finds a new way to open one's life to a new beginning by overcoming guilt feelings. In spiritual terms this is called *metanoia* (conversion) and Mowrer says that this feeling of a new orientation in life already means a new beginning, a new life altogether.³⁶⁹ However, Pruyser says that acquiring a new identity in life does not mean exactly the original one but restoring an identity which was "broken" and "shattered" by our guilt/sin.³⁷⁰

In healing guilt feelings, spiritual direction aims at helping the directee to seek a new identity which is possible with a new orientation. Adopting this new

³⁶⁵ Charles Bachmann, *Ministering to the Grief Sufferer* (Englewood Cliffs/NJ, 1966), 191.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁶⁷ Loughlan Sofield, Carroll Juliano and Gregory M. Aymond, *Facing Forgiveness, A Catholic's Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2007), 10.

³⁶⁸ Bachmann, *Ministering to the Grief Sufferer*, 49.

³⁶⁹ O.H. Mowrer, *Learning Theory and Personality Dynamics* (New York: Ronald, 1950), 72.

³⁷⁰ Paul W. Pruyser, "Anxiety, Guilt and Shame in the Atonement," *Theology Today* 21/1 (1964): 33.

orientation surely helps the directee to open up to a new beginning but for Pruyser this new orientation should be based on a new value-system, which a person builds up for himself in conformity with the society one lives in³⁷¹ So guiding the directee to set up his life on a value-system, facilitates the guilt healing process, because “what you value is what you love, and you become what you love.”³⁷² Therefore, spiritual direction aims to adopt a healing model where the core of the self is based on what we value or love most.³⁷³

Thomas Merton holds that such a value-system is derived from the Holy Spirit and he says that spiritual direction “is a continuous process of formation and guidance, in which a Christian is led and encouraged in his special vocation by the graces of the Holy Spirit”³⁷⁴ So the primary goal of the spiritual direction model is to guide the directee in seeking and responding intentionally to the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

³⁷¹ Paul W. Pruyser, *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 195.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation and What Is Contemplation?* (Wheathampstead – Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke, 1975), 14-15.

CHAPTER FOUR:

EFFECTIVE WAYS FOR GUILT HEALING AND DESTRUCTIVE ESCAPES FROM GUILT

Overcoming guilt feelings implies a healing therapy and for Jung such therapy must recognize and unveil our repressed or unexpressed emotions in order to release guilt feelings.³⁷⁵

One of the most important initial ways needed to overcome guilt feelings is surely acceptance or confessing that we are guilty / sinful. Once we learn to accept our guilt feelings we need to be courageous in taking up the responsibility for our own committed mistakes or offences and also take the necessary punishment for our wrong actions. Ungersma says that to achieve healing we need to go to the root of the problem and understand the cause of our guilt feelings or sin.³⁷⁶

Accepting or confessing that we are guilty or sinful can turn out to be very painful sometimes.³⁷⁷ As we have already seen, Bachmann says that such pain can be compared with the grief-process that one experiences when grieving after the loss of his beloved ones. However, when referring to guilt feelings Bachmann holds that the experienced pain implies that one forgives one's past and opens oneself to a new beginning for the future.³⁷⁸

Sofield, Juliano, and Aymond say that those people who are seeking to heal from pain but still nursing their past offences or wrong doings cannot experience

³⁷⁵ Edward Cletus Sellner, "The Event of Self-Revelation in the Reconciliation Process: a Pastoral Theological Comparison of A. A.'s Fifth Step and the Sacrament of Penance" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1980), 87.

³⁷⁶ A. J. Ungersma, *The Search for Meaning: A New Approach in Psychotherapy and Pastoral Psychology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 159.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Charles Bachmann, *Ministering to the Grief Sufferer* (Englewood Cliffs/NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 87.

forgiveness and so they are “bearing the weight of non-forgiveness.”³⁷⁹ Thus guilt will lead the person to “eternal grief, physical trauma, and at times, clinical depression.” Sofield, Juliano, and Aymond say that the key to “rebirth” and “new life” (which Bachmann refers to) is forgiveness and it is through God’s grace that one becomes able to forgive.³⁸⁰ When talking specifically about forgiveness, Sofield, Juliano, and Aymond say that “Forgiveness is neither a cognitive nor an emotional response. Forgiveness is an act of the will. It is the choice to let go of the desire to get even with an offending party”.³⁸¹

Then referring particularly to the effect and benefit of forgiveness, Sofield, Juliano, and Aymond say that “those who chose forgiveness experienced a profound sense of freedom and would often describe it as if a physical, emotional, and spiritual weight had been lifted from their shoulders”.³⁸²

Therefore forgiveness is a need which should be highlighted by spiritual directors otherwise we suffer real emotional, psychological or mental, spiritual, and physical effects. Paul Tillich says that when we experience forgiveness we acquire true healing bringing us inner peace and freedom. For Tillich forgiveness is considered to be the greatest experience one can have and when a person is directed towards forgiveness one becomes not only an instrument of healing power but also a medium of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.³⁸³ In line with Tillich’s thoughts, Dallas Willard reflects on the way God speaks to us. God’s call to experience a “renovation of the heart” through his loving grace³⁸⁴ can also help in the guilt healing process inviting the directee to open one’s heart to God’s grace as to acquire this sense of renovation of the heart.

³⁷⁹ Loughlan Sofield, Carroll Juliano and Gregory M. Aymond, *Facing Forgiveness, A Catholic’s Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2007), 10.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² Sofield, *Facing Forgiveness*, 11.

³⁸³ Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), 117.

³⁸⁴ See Dallas Willard, *In Search of Guidance* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993) and *The Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003).

Tillich explains that “the deeper our experience of forgiveness is, the more is our love.” For Tillich, accepting our directee and his feelings means to be “suddenly grasped by the certainty that we are forgiven,” and therefore acquiring the power to love both God and oneself.³⁸⁵

A guilt healing process involves “conversion” which for Tiebout implies a change in personality patterns from anxiety and depression to easiness in both thinking and feeling; “from aggressiveness and stubbornness [to] ...sweetly reasonable; from feelings of inferiority and superiority [to becoming] ...more accepting and tolerant of others and gentler with him [/her] self,” and more than that implies the overcoming “of the sense of isolation and loneliness.”³⁸⁶

For Haughton such a conversion or transformation process from guilt feelings implies “a major change [that] overcomes the barriers which previously separated the person from his or her ‘authentic self,’ others, and God.”³⁸⁷ So Haughton says that conversion or transformation in one’s personality needs a maturity process, which can be “a sudden or dramatic event ...[but] nevertheless comes as the culmination of a long process and continues on as a life-long process in which people struggle to live a life of real love.”³⁸⁸

Adding to this, Haughton sees conversion or transformation from guilt feelings as a “total revolution, a complete change of the mode of existence from the estrangement and muddle of sin to sharing in the life of God.”³⁸⁹ Surely this was the experience of many Christian Mystics who undoubtedly offer us various ways and tools to overcome both guilt and sin. Christianity offers lots of great saints and mystics, who can serve as a role model to directees seeking guilt healing in their Christian life and practice.

³⁸⁵ Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1955), 3-14.

³⁸⁶ Sellner, “The Event of Self-Revelation in the Reconciliation Process,” 58.

³⁸⁷ Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man* (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 122, 130-132.

³⁸⁸ Haughton, *The Transformation of Man*, 102, 119-120.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

4.1 SPIRITUAL TOOLS OFFERED BY CHRISTIAN MYSTICS TO OVERCOME GUILT

Emilie Griffin through her book 'Wonderful and Dark is This Road: Discovering the Mystic Path'³⁹⁰ combines together lots of stories and writings of Christian mystics while offering several tools and ways applied by these mystics to overcome their bad feelings. Griffin defines mysticism as "close intimacy with a loving God,"³⁹¹ implying an openness to God's grace. Adopting the tools (the beatitudes) presented by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount will transform a person into a Christian Mystic.³⁹²

Griffin says that Christian mystics like Francis of Assisi, Dante Alighieri, Teresa of Avila, Brother Lawrence, John of the Cross, Gregory of Nyssa, Jean-Pierre de Caussade and Thomas Merton tell us that conversion to God implies grace and choice, since they are aware of the truth that God is within the world yet beyond the world.³⁹³ Griffin believes that Christian mystics can serve as spiritual guides and so help a directee to go beyond one's guilt feelings to acquire a more peaceful heart.

Dorothee Soelle in her book 'The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance'³⁹⁴ says that through their example of perceiving, understanding, and acting in the world mystics can help us achieve a new way of becoming one with God. Soelle says that mystics show us that "the world is deeply connected within the Divine Reality."³⁹⁵ So to achieve a mystical journey, Soelle suggests joy, letting go, and

³⁹⁰ Emilie Griffin, *Wonderful and Dark is This Road: Discovering the Mystic Path* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2004), 191.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid., 151.

³⁹⁴ Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 325.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

resisting as three effective tools within the trend of globalization and individualization which imprison our culture.³⁹⁶

In reinterpreting the monastic vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, Soelle recommends “ego-lessness,” “possessionlessness,” and “nonviolence” as modern vows for a modern mystic. She says that unless we liberate our ‘consumer ego’ from power, possessions, and violence we cannot get rid of the “common blind captivity to the world.”³⁹⁷ Soelle ends up her book talking about “resistance” and her insights can enhance a lot the guilt healing process. She considers resistance as the “long-term praxis that is learned in the Babylonian exile: refraining from eating the fruits of apartheid, publicizing the profits of arms manufactures and traders.”³⁹⁸ So leading a directee towards this type of resistance means empowerment and achieving a new beginning in a free world.

Frederick C. Bauerschmidt in his book ‘Why the Mystics Matter Now’³⁹⁹ shows how mystics can be helpful in our contemporary life journey especially when facing challenges and struggles like guilt feelings. For Bauerschmidt, “mysticism” is a journey to God through purification, illumination, and union, and the tools needed for such experience are “seeing” and “receiving.” He says that when we listen to the message of the mystics they can “open a space in our self-confidence”⁴⁰⁰ and enable us to understand that being loved by God both in life and death is our most fundamental reality. So “seeing” entails listening and understanding and “receiving” entails a sense of openness to God’s loving grace which are both essential tools for an effective guilt healing process. Bauerschmidt presents mystics as relevant guides to our ordinary life in a confusing world and their spiritual reflections can surely ease a guilty conscience. By illustrating Thomas Merton’s life, Bauerschmidt talks about the need of confessing the loss

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 97.

³⁹⁷ Soelle, *The Silent Cry*, 97.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 204.

³⁹⁹ Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, *Why the Mystics Matter Now* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2003), 154.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 21.

around us (the path we are on) and the loss within us as the only way to overcome our problems in life and be able to see God in our dark moments while understanding that life is a gift from God.⁴⁰¹ Confessing the loss is surely a beneficial spiritual tool in a guilt healing process. While considering Thomas Merton as the heart of mysticism, Bauerschmidt, says that all mystics show us that “we see best when we see our blindness; we walk most confidently by letting ourselves be led, by relinquishing our plans and programs, by living our lives as a gift received rather than a prize won.”⁴⁰² Such emphasis on ‘letting ourselves to be led’ can surely serve as a spiritual insight to mould a guilty conscience, accepting and opening more to God’s love and grace.

Bauerschmidt concludes saying that in today’s contemporary life, mystics matter because “they can carry us into the depths of divine love” and “can help us see and receive the deep mystery that pervades the world.”⁴⁰³ In fact Evelyn Underhill calls mystics as “expert mountaineers” which are lamps to our feet, helping us to discover God’s love.⁴⁰⁴ She considers mystics as those who passionately witness God’s great love which they experienced throughout their lives.

4.1.1 MYSTICISM AND GUILT FEELINGS

However, there are times when we get so burdened with our day-to-day responsibilities that becoming a mystic becomes alien to our daily lives. C.S. Lewis says that many people today look for a deep relationship with God but they consider the mystic path far beyond them and too demanding. So Lewis recommends that we should not approach spiritual life under high expectations but as ordinary men and women chosen by God to experience his intimacy in our

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 152.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁰⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: New American Library, 1955), 448.

hearts and in so doing we can become “gods” and “goddesses” in after life. In fact Lewis says: “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses.”⁴⁰⁵

Also modern Catholic thinkers, like Thomas Merton and Karl Rahner insist on ordinary life mysticism through Christ’s incarnation which sanctifies all humanity. Merton calls ordinary or hidden mysticism as “masked contemplation” which entails a close friendship with Christ expressed in the love of neighbour.⁴⁰⁶ As sometimes a “masked contemplative” life entails having not enough time for silence and solitude, Merton recommends a mystical encounter with God through daily service to the poor which can also make our mysticism authentic.⁴⁰⁷ So when feeling guilty for not having enough time for silence and solitude, Merton’s reflections offer a better understanding of a mystical life within an active world.

On the other hand, under the concept of ‘Anonymous Christians’, Karl Rahner sets no limits on God’s call for mysticism and he says:

in every human being...there is something like an anonymous, unthematic, perhaps repressed, basic experience of being orientated to God, which is constitutive of man in his concrete make-up (of nature and grace), which can be repressed but not destroyed, which is ‘mystical’ or (if you prefer a more cautious terminology) has its climax in what the older teachers called infused contemplation.⁴⁰⁸

Without saying that human beings can equally recognize and respond to God’s call, Rahner holds that God is everywhere and one can achieve a mystical experience in many ways and aspects of life. Such reflection can help a lot a

⁴⁰⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 18.

⁴⁰⁶ See Robert G. Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1989).

⁴⁰⁷ Harvey Egan, *What Are They Saying About Mysticism?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 58-60 and *Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984), 236-237.

⁴⁰⁸ Egan, *Christian Mysticism*, 246-247.

directee to understand that one can discover God even through one's own guilt feelings as for Rahner, Jesus comes to meet us in our loneliness, our rejections, our unrequited loves, and our faith in the face of death.⁴⁰⁹

Like Rahner, Caroline Stephen insists on St. Paul's words to the Athenians saying that: "God... is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:27- 28) and in one of her definitions of a true mystic she says:

A true mystic believes that all men have, as he himself is conscious of having, an inward life, into which as into a secret chamber, he can retreat at will. In this inner chamber he finds a refuge...from the multitude of cares and pleasures and agitations which belong to the life of the senses and the affections; from human judgments; from all change, and chance, and turmoil, and distraction. He finds there, first repose, then an awful guidance; a light which burns and purifies; a voice which subdues; he finds himself in the presence of his God.⁴¹⁰

For a guilt healing process, such reflection is not just an effective spiritual tool but also a spiritual refuge where a directee can experience some peace and sense of healing through God's light and loving grace.

4.2 HEALTHY STEPS TO OVERCOME GUILT

After going through all these spiritual tools which can ease a guilty conscience and enhance a guilt healing process we have to analyse now practical steps needed for an effective guilt healing process. We have already seen spiritual insights, ways and methods in overcoming guilt feelings through a Grief Healing process and through Christian mystics. However, psychologists and professional spiritual counsellors offer specific practical and schematic steps to ease guilt feelings which they themselves found to be effective in their therapy and spiritual

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Emilie Griffin and Douglas V. Steere, *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 2005), 122.

healing sessions with people suffering from guilt. Notwithstanding all these healing steps, there are no precise formulas to heal a person from feeling guilty and so the spiritual director's professionalism and discretion is always required. Spiritual directors should be intelligent and keen enough to choose and adopt the proper healing steps needed for their particular case study using proper professional skills.

The following practical healing steps are worth considering and applying during the guilt healing process:

4.2.1 ADMITTING THAT WE ARE GUILTY

The first step needed to overcome guilt feelings is to stop denying such feelings while admitting that there is a problem. MacNutt says that guilt feelings turn so painful and harmful in our lives because we deny our problems and so they affect us all throughout our lives.⁴¹¹ Denial is the result of our defence mechanism against unwanted wishes which can turn very dangerous to our self-esteem.⁴¹²

Freeman says that denial is adopted because guilt feelings can lead a person to experience lack of love, low self-esteem and humiliation and so it turns less painful denying our guilt than admitting and facing consequences.⁴¹³ In denying guilt feelings a person might think that one got rid of all his inner bad wishes which are hostile, greedy, envious, murderous and lustful.⁴¹⁴ However, MacNutt says that denying guilt feelings will lead a person to experience anxiety and anguish⁴¹⁵ as wishes caused by guilt remain strong risking falling in depression and rage.⁴¹⁶ MacNutt quotes Freud saying: "To be completely honest

⁴¹¹ Francis Mac Nutt, *Healing*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1966), 45.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴¹³ Lucy Freeman, *Search for Love* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books/World Publishing Co., 1957), 67.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴¹⁵ MacNutt, *Healing*, 56.

with oneself is the best effort a human being can make” and if being completely honest with ourselves turns very difficult in life at least we do our best to understand our feelings in our particular circumstances.⁴¹⁷ MacNutt holds that the denial of guilt will lead a person to seek partial outlets in many different ways like blaming others instead of blaming himself.⁴¹⁸

However, Stein says that admitting that we are guilty means realizing that wishes and fantasies (leading us to opt for bad deeds causing us guilt feelings) are part of our fragile humanity and rooted in our dark self primitive nature.⁴¹⁹ So for a guilt healing process, Stein recommends first the understanding of our unwanted wishes causing us anxiety.

Denial of guilt implies the denial of our human fragility which can love and hate in the same time. So MacNutt says that until we face and acknowledge our hate feelings and recognize their effect we cannot overcome our guilt.⁴²⁰ To acquire healing we have to admit that we are not saints though we may be doing our best to become.⁴²¹

Anderson says that being a saint means becoming more human and therefore accepting the fact that we are sinners and fragile beings in the same time. Referring to St. Augustine’s great guilt over his hedonistic life, Anderson says that it was his understanding of his sinful life that led him to struggle so hard to achieve healing and spiritual purity.⁴²²

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁴¹⁹ Edward V. Stein, *Beyond Guilt* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 83.

⁴²⁰ MacNutt, *Healing*, 97.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 99.

⁴²² Camilla M. Anderson, *Saints, Sinners and Psychiatry* (Portland/Oregon: The Durham Press, 1962), 167.

Confession of our misdeeds and wrong doings lead us to achieve truthful understanding says Baumeister, and to ease our guilt feelings we need to admit and apologize for our actions.⁴²³

4.2.2 ADMITTING THAT WE ARE NOT PERFECT

The second healthy step needed for a person to overcome guilt feelings is to accept one's imperfections.⁴²⁴ Horney says that the more we become aware of the fact that perfectionism in ourselves and others is a 'fantasy' the more we are able to heal our guilt feelings and uplift our self-esteem. The more we understand how unrealistic perfection is the more we will manage to ease our self demands and overcome guilt feelings.⁴²⁵

Anderson holds that if we assure ourselves that we are neither perfect beings nor saints we will be able to reduce guilt and anger in our lives. Understanding the fact that we can't earn everyone's love and that even saints have enemies in life is very therapeutic throughout a guilt healing process.⁴²⁶

The more one manages to face reality in life with all one's personal weaknesses the more one loves oneself and acquires admiration from others. However, Horney says that if we cannot understand our human weaknesses we risk self-destructive behaviours.⁴²⁷

Admitting that we are not perfect entails searching the causes of our guilt and in doing so Freeman recommends lots of honesty. The more honest one is

⁴²³ R. F. Baumeister, A. M. Stillwell and T. F. Heatherton, "Personal narratives about Guilt: Role in Action Control," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 17 (1995): 173-198.

⁴²⁴ MacNutt, *Healing*, 199.

⁴²⁵ Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950), 111.

⁴²⁶ Anderson, *Saints, Sinners and Psychiatry*, 63.

⁴²⁷ Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, 103.

with oneself the more honest one is in finding the causes of one's inner guilt feelings.⁴²⁸ Horney says that honesty will surely strengthen us and uplift our self-esteem⁴²⁹ so the more honestly we face our guilt the more we lift up our self esteem and we blame others less for our own failures.⁴³⁰

Tangney holds that when negative perfectionists do not succeed in an endeavour, they see this as a failure of the person (shame) rather than a failure of performance (guilt).⁴³¹ Though Kaufman and Pattison admit that there are moments when perfectionism can heal shame and guilt by compensating for defective feelings, it always fails as it is never fully achieved.⁴³² Research study by Lutwak and Ferrari⁴³³ applying the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale⁴³⁴ shows that perfectionism tends to create more guilt than shame in men and both shame and guilt in women.

However, facing guilt entails a lot of inner courage as we are filled with what Freud calls "the demons of hell." So the more we admit that we are not perfect the more we weaken these inner "demons" and be able to face our true fragility and imperfection.⁴³⁵ Draper says that the less courageous we are to discover our weakness (which causes guilt) the more difficult it becomes to overcome our guilt

⁴²⁸ Freeman, *Search for Love*, 88.

⁴²⁹ Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*, 82.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid*, 221.

⁴³¹ J. P. Tangney, "Perfectionism and the Self-Conscious Emotions: Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment, and Pride," in *Perfectionism: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, eds. G.L. Flett and P. L. Hewitt (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002), 199–213.

⁴³² Cf. G. Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1996); S. Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴³³ N. Lutwak and J. R. Ferrari, "Moral affect and cognitive processes: Differentiating shame from guilt among men and women," *Personality and Individual Differences* 21/6 (1996): 891–896.

⁴³⁴ P. L. Hewitt and G. L. Flett, "Perfectionism in the self and social contexts: conceptualization, assessment, and association with psychopathology," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60/3 (1991): 456–470.

⁴³⁵ Sigmund, Freud, *The Problem of Anxiety*, trans. Henry A. Bonker (New York: The Psychoanalytic Quarterly Press and W. W. Norton, 1936), 89.

feelings.⁴³⁶ So for Draper a person should never fall in the illusion believing that one must live a life persecuted by guilt but instead should face the reality of guilt in order to acquire happiness.⁴³⁷

4.2.3 TAKING CARE OF OUR SELF-ESTEEM

Another important healthy step needed to overcome guilt feelings is taking care of our self-esteem. According to Allport a hurt self-esteem is very painful especially when feeling rejected. So understanding the causes of guilt is highly beneficial to reclaim back self love.⁴³⁸ Fromm says that if we acknowledge our narcissistic wishes and come to terms with them we will not suffer guilt from other narcissistic people who always try to blame others for their misdeeds.⁴³⁹

However, thinking about our past childhood pains will not help easing our guilt feelings and so Fromm recommends that we forgive those who inflicted pain in our lives. The more we understand human fragility and limitations the more we lessen our inner anger and heal guilt feelings.⁴⁴⁰ So Fromm says that harbouring hate in our hearts for those people who try to look down onto us will bring more anger followed by guilt feelings.⁴⁴¹ Through his theoretical, clinical and research perspectives, Rudden holds that anger leads to guilty feelings and the more anger we host the more self-directed we turn resulting in low self-esteem and a cycle of narcissistic vulnerability and anger.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁶ Edgar Draper, *Psychiatry and Pastoral Care* (Englewood Cliffs/NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 171.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴³⁸ Gordon W. Allport, *The Person in Psychology: Selected Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 67.

⁴³⁹ Eric Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 133.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁴² M.G. Rudden et al., "Panic disorder and depression: a psychodynamic exploration of comorbidity," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84 (2003): 997–1015.

Therefore accepting the fact that there are jealous people in life who can't admire us or love us as much as we wish is less frustrating. The fewer expectations and demands we put on others the happier we live and the more we expect love and respect from others the more frustrated we become.⁴⁴³

4.2.4 LISTENING TO OUR INNER SELF

Listening to the inner voices is another healthy step needed to overcome guilt feelings. Blee's says that unless we differentiate our inner parent's voices from our own voices we cannot lift up our self-esteem and overcome guilt. Very often we turn guilty because we find our inner voices against our parent's voices and so we need to act on our self voice and be less possessed by our parent's inner voices.⁴⁴⁴

Recent study research by Aunola shows that when parents adopt higher levels of guilt-inducing parenting on their children, high levels of distress and anger result in their children. By guilt-inducing parenting, the parents adopt psychological means rather than direct limit setting to control their child's behaviour. Example of psychological means is when parents remind their children continuously how much hard they work for them and so how ashamed they feel when they don't abide by their rules. Aunola considers this type of parenting as the result of distress and exhaustion (from the parent's side) which in turn causes more distress in their children.⁴⁴⁵

Blee's holds that to heal our guilt feelings we need to evaluate how much we are affected consciously and unconsciously by our parent's inner voices.⁴⁴⁶ Having

⁴⁴³ Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, 169.

⁴⁴⁴ Robert A. Blee's, *Counseling with Teen-Agers* (Englewood Cliffs/NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 91.

⁴⁴⁵ See K. Aunola et al., "Psychological control in daily parent-child interactions increases children's negative emotions," *Journal of Family Psychology* 27/3 (2013).

⁴⁴⁶ Blee's, *Counseling with Teen-Agers*, 74.

different inner views from our parents' values doesn't mean that we are betraying our parents because as human beings we got the right to have different opinions and views. Blee maintains that our happiness does not depend onto our parent's values but on our ability to think for ourselves and feel free to take important decisions in life without being conditioned by others.⁴⁴⁷

Mowrer says that knowing ourselves and acknowledging that we can have different attitudes and characteristics from our parents will make us freer and freely love more our parents. Freedom from our parent's inner voices eases our guilt healing process.⁴⁴⁸

4.2.5 ACCEPTING THE SENSE OF LOSS

Overcoming the sense of loss is another healthy step to overcome guilt feelings. Bachmann says that the many losses we experience in life can lead us to experience feelings of loneliness, anxiety, anger and guilt. When we feel humiliated, unloved or rejected we experience a sort of loss which surely affects our self-esteem.⁴⁴⁹

Bachmann holds that unless we acknowledge our sorrows and anger over losses we cannot overcome guilt. Repressed emotions over the losses will not facilitate our acceptance of the loss itself. So experiencing a grief-healing process after the loss of our loved ones is needed to release emotions and acquire grief healing.⁴⁵⁰

A grief-healing process can help a person be in touch with both grief and anger helping him to accept the loss of his loved ones while replacing that loss

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 144.

⁴⁴⁸ Mowrer, *Learning Theory and Personality Dynamics*, 111.

⁴⁴⁹ Bachmann, *Ministering to the Grief Sufferer*, 84.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 88.

with love.⁴⁵¹ However, Bachmann says that each time we repress our grief and anger we get inflicted with guilt feelings.⁴⁵² Therefore we need to be very honest in expressing our hidden repressed emotions over our loss and the more we acknowledge and understand our repressed feelings the more we overcome the loss and guilt that follows.⁴⁵³ In fact shedding tears and crying are a means to express and relieve our feelings of sorrow, anger and guilt over losing our loved ones.⁴⁵⁴

Bachmann holds that the less we blame ourselves over our losses the more able we are to ease guilt.⁴⁵⁵ Through his research study, Rudden⁴⁵⁶ shows evidence that if we don't step over our subsequent failures, losses or rejections we risk inadequacy and damage throughout our life.

4.3 DESTRUCTIVE ESCAPES FROM GUILT

While spiritual directors need to be equipped with practical/effective spiritual tools to heal guilt feelings, they must always be aware of self-destructive ways adopted to release guilt. When self-destructive symptoms occur, spiritual directors must be prudent and responsible enough to consider psychiatric referral at once.

In this regard Moon and Benner say:

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 89.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁵⁵ Bachmann, *Ministering to the Grief Sufferer*, 186.

⁴⁵⁶ Rudden, "Panic disorder and depression," 997–1015.

A referral to a mental health professional could allow the person to deal with some of the basic human struggles that he or she has without inordinately taxing the director. When these issues are resolved, the director could help the seeker deepen her relationship with God... Second, some situations are simply beyond the director's knowledge, experience and ability... each of these situations needs the healing touch of God, with which the spiritual guide can help. But for full healing an experienced professional is invaluable.⁴⁵⁷

Though neurotic guilt cases are to be referred, a spiritual director requires the adequate knowledge to recognize self-destructive behaviour. But how is a spiritual director going to recognize the directee's symptoms of self-destructive behaviour? Could self-destructive tendencies uplift one's life?

Self-destructive feelings are a collection of beliefs, cognitions, emotions and tendencies that can lead to patterns of self-abuse. Orbach holds that self-destructive processes are active and provocative, behavioural and ideational operations affecting the person's interest. They tend to destroy one's sense of well-being, self-love, interpersonal relationships and harmony with reality.⁴⁵⁸ Consequently, Shneidman says that such destructive effects can cause mental pain leading a person to opt for suicide.⁴⁵⁹ Through his recent studies, Joiner contributed greatly to a better understanding of suicidal behaviour. He observes a link between self-destructive processes and suicidal behaviour from theoretical, empirical and clinical perspectives⁴⁶⁰ helping spiritual directors to recognize suicidal tendencies.

Such studies contribute greatly to a guilt healing process as guilt feelings can turn neurotic causing strong anxiety leading to self-destructive behaviour. A

⁴⁵⁷ Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Westmont, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 52.

⁴⁵⁸ I. Orbach, "A taxonomy of factors related to suicidal behaviour," *Clinical Psychology: Science Practice* 4 (1997): 208–224; J. Davila et al., "Poor interpersonal problem solving as a mechanism of stress generation in depression among adolescent women," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 104 (1995): 592–600.

⁴⁵⁹ E. S. Shneidman, *The suicidal mind* (New York: Oxford University, 1996), 6, 41.

⁴⁶⁰ T. Joiner, "Depression's vicious scream: Self-propagating and erosive processes in depression chronicity," *Clinical Psychology: Science Practice* 7/2 (2000): 203–218.

self-destructive process can lead to suicidal behaviour caused by a specific mechanism and repetitive compulsion of self-destructive tendencies - guilt feelings, suicide, melancholia, masochism and sadism.⁴⁶¹ Freud maintains that self-destructive processes can lead to depression and suicide,⁴⁶² symptoms which he associates to pathological mourning. In pathological mourning the mourner's anger becomes an inward form of self-punishment/sadistic feeling for losing his loved ones. In due course, Freud says that the superego punishes the ego unconsciously with guilt and creates impulsivity towards death feelings. Thus this psychological mechanism leads Freud to associate suicidal behaviour with a sense of loss, ambivalent feelings, guilt, self-hate and aggression in order to reunite with the lost ones.⁴⁶³

Stolorow⁴⁶⁴ says that masochism and self-destructive behaviours can serve to uplift our self-esteem and self-value by enhancing a sense of self-continuity in time, and provide a sense of self-cohesion and boundaries between self and non-self.⁴⁶⁵

On this same line of thought, Sacksteder⁴⁶⁶ considers self-destructive behaviour as a form of negative identity which one would better have than not having any identity at all. He considers the death instinct as a wish to reunite in fantasy with the lost loved ones in order to achieve love and uplift our self-esteem. Also Shneidman⁴⁶⁷ says that a person wishes a suicidal act in order to fulfil a specific need in life, which need requires healing before it can turn fatal.

⁴⁶¹ S. Freud, "Mourning and melancholia," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey, vol. 14 (London, England: Hogarth Press, 1957), 237–254.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ R.D. Stolorow, "The narcissistic function of masochism (and sadism)," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 56/4 (1975): 441–448.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ J.L. Sacksteder, "Thoughts on the positive value of negative identity," in *Masochism: The treatment of self-inflicted suffering*, eds. J.D. Montgomery and A.C. Grief (Madison, Conn.: International Universities, 1989), 105–121.

⁴⁶⁷ See E.S. Shneidman, *Definition of suicide* (New York: Wiley, 1985).

Now we shall go through some adopted self-destructive escapes (affecting ourselves and others) to overcome guilt feelings.

4.3.1 FALL INTO BLAMING OTHERS

Moser says that guilt feelings can easily lead a person to self-despair and self-recrimination which affect negatively our personality.⁴⁶⁸

As guilt tends to wear many masks, the adopted healing methods we use to heal our guilt feelings are more important than guilt itself. So for Moser, learning from guilt feelings is more effective than fleeing from the over-powering oppression of guilt.⁴⁶⁹

However, spiritual directors must recognise the fact that sometimes (as part of our psychological defence mechanism) people blame others for their wrong doings and project their own guilt onto others to overcome their own self guilt feelings. Moser says that blaming others can ease temporarily our guilt feelings but it can later turn more deeply painful to our personality.⁴⁷⁰

Simon says that people who play the blame-game are very talented in finding excuses to blame others especially when unable to solve their own problems or when their affairs don't work out. By blaming others, people who feel guilty tend to make others feel guilty too for their wrong doings.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Leslie E. Moser, *Counseling: A Modern Emphasis in Religion* (Englewood Cliffs/NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 156.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁷⁰ Moser, *Counseling: A Modern Emphasis in Religion*, 163.

⁴⁷¹ See G.K. Simon, *In Sheep's clothing: Understanding and dealing with manipulative people* (Little Rock: A.J. Christopher and Company, 1996).

4.3.2 FALL INTO MASOCHISM

According to Wedeck people tend to be all “morally” masochistic but in neurotic cases people blame themselves for the wrong doings of others while wishing punishment.⁴⁷²

Quoting Freud, Wedeck says that moral masochism (like physical masochism) is a form of compensation for our guilty feelings or acts. Long and intense masochistic suffering or pain can enable us to heal our guilt feelings but only temporarily. Then we must punish more ourselves in a vicious way to compensate for our guilt feelings.⁴⁷³ Simon says that masochistic people shift their guilt onto others by adopting various kinds of emotional blackmail and mixed messages. So Simon holds that with these people you are never fully sure of what was said or expected.⁴⁷⁴

As sadist people tend to hide their fears, Wedeck says that masochists hide their sadistic feelings by keeping them secret.⁴⁷⁵ Guilt feelings can turn so strong sometimes that a masochist person can plan punishment for oneself if others won't punish him. Destroying deep friendship ties can also be the result of such planned punishment to satisfy the masochistic feelings.

Sadistic fantasies can sometimes turn so dangerous that the need for self punishment turns more important than guilt healing.⁴⁷⁶ Wedeck seeks the origin of masochism in our childhood with the wish to acquire revenge on our parents who hurt us or caused us pain in some way or another.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² Harry E. Wedeck, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Northvale, NJ & London: Jason Aronson Inc. 1993), 145.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁷⁴ See Simon, *In Sheep's clothing*.

⁴⁷⁵ Wedeck, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 91.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

Theodor Reik⁴⁷⁸ sustains that the need of a witness is a characteristic of masochist behaviour. Such need offers a purpose to the masochist in making others suffer while seeing one in pain. In fact Reik describes the masochist as: “The lambskin he wears hides a wolf. His yielding includes defiance, his submissiveness, opposition. Beneath his softness there is hardness. Behind his obsequiousness rebellion is concealed”.⁴⁷⁹

Reik says that despite all the passivity that sadistic wishes create in a masochist, the person tends to be a psychologically active person.⁴⁸⁰ Then the masochist feels guilty for all this psychological activity within oneself leading one to hurt his real or imagined enemy through his own sufferings or pain.⁴⁸¹

Reik says that masochism is reflected in self-destructive ways like adopting addiction, accident proneness, psychosomatic illnesses and depression making the person wishing that one was dead. So this mechanism turns the masochist into an angry person turning one’s anger onto oneself through sadistic wishes.⁴⁸²

Research studies carried by Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton⁴⁸³ conclude that “empirical work has largely failed to demonstrate that guilty people wish to suffer or be punished.”⁴⁸⁴ However, recent study research carried out by Nelissen and Zeelenberg shows that there is a link between guilt and self-harm.⁴⁸⁵ Other studies by Bastian, Jetten and Fasoli proof longer self-harm pain when guilt

⁴⁷⁸ Theodor Reik, *Masochism in Modern Man*, trans. Margaret H. Beigel and Gertrud M. Kurth (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 78.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁴⁸² Reik, *Masochism in Modern Man*, 82.

⁴⁸³ R. F. Baumeister, A. M. Stillwell and T. F. Heatherton, “Guilt: An interpersonal approach,” *Psychological Bulletin* 115/2 (1994): 243–267.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁸⁵ R. M. A. Nelissen and M. Zeelenberg, “When guilt evokes self punishment: Evidence for the existence of a Dobby effect,” *Emotion* 9/1 (2009): 118–122.

is the result of hate or dislike in relationships.⁴⁸⁶ But though such study research shows a link between guilt and self-inflicted pain, it does not prove that guilt automatically leads to self-destructive behaviour⁴⁸⁷ which means that other negative emotions can lead a person to self-destructive behaviour.

4.3.3 FALL INTO DEPRESSION

If a person lacks reasonable confidence in oneself, one tends to fall into depressive feelings causing him low self-esteem. By self-esteem, Edward Stein means “reasonable confidence in the self”⁴⁸⁸ which if lost depressive feelings cause him anger and guilt.⁴⁸⁹ Harter says that a badly affected self-esteem in our childhood affects later on in life our mental health. Low self-esteem leads to social dysfunctions and mental pathologies like anxiety and depression.⁴⁹⁰ However, though positive self-esteem is considered psychologically healthy, Hartup observed social dysfunctions in peer relations emerging from high self-esteem.⁴⁹¹

Magda Arnold holds that a person suffering from depressive feelings seeks continuous praise and constant attention and when such needs are not fulfilled one can turn aggressive towards others. However, if trained not to expect much from others one can ease both anger and guilt feelings.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁶ B. Bastian, J. Jetten and F. Fasoli, “Cleansing the soul by hurting the flesh: The guilt-reducing effect of pain,” *Psychological Science* 22 (2011): 334–335.

⁴⁸⁷ Bastian, “Cleansing the soul by hurting the flesh: The guilt-reducing effect of pain,” 334–335.

⁴⁸⁸ Edward Stein, *Guilt-Theory and Therapy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 186.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁴⁹⁰ S. Harter, “The development of self-representations,” in *Handbook of child psychology*, ed. N. Eisenberg, vol. 3 (New York: Wiley, 1997), 646-718.

⁴⁹¹ W.W. Hartup, “Peer relations,” in *Manual of child psychology*, eds. P. Mussen and E.M. Hetherington (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983), 103-196.

⁴⁹² Magda B. Arnold et al., *Emotion and Personality*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press 1960), 197.

Magda Arnold says that proneness to depressive feelings is very common especially when we cannot satisfy our wishes or get things our way. So when such things happen we tend turning our aggressive feelings towards those keeping us from fulfilling our desires and who do not recognize our personal true qualities and capabilities.⁴⁹³ Then as we cannot blow out our anger onto these people we turn such anger onto ourselves. This leads the depressive person to be insensitive to the needs of others and so falling into narcissism. As we cannot punish those who frustrated us so we punish ourselves by falling into depression.⁴⁹⁴

So Magda Arnold recommends friendship relationships to fill the emotional vacuums created within depressive personalities. As depressive personalities feel continuously frustrated and rejected, they need friendship ties making them surer of themselves while offering them more trust and love. Sometimes this sense of rejection is real and rooted in their childhood as they might have experienced lack of love from their parents and unsatisfied pleasures.⁴⁹⁵

Early psychoanalytic theories have seen a strong link between depression and anger and such theories consider anger as the source of a person's proneness to depression, triggering intense guilt and self-criticism.⁴⁹⁶ Throughout their study research, Bush, Rudden and Shapiro observed more tolerance in people admitting their unconscious anger easing both guilt and depressive feelings.⁴⁹⁷

Though Becker and Lesiak⁴⁹⁸ see no correlation between depression and clear/open hostility, they observe a correlation between severe depression and

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 199.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 203.

⁴⁹⁵ Arnold et al., *Emotion and Personality*, 209.

⁴⁹⁶ F.N. Busch, M. Rudden and T. Shapiro, *Psychodynamic Treatment of Depression* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 2004), 204.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ E.W. Becker and W.J. Lesiak, "Feelings of hostility and personal control as related to depression," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 33 (1977): 654–657.

feelings of guilt, resentment, irritability and suspicion. Other studies carried out by Goldman and Haaga⁴⁹⁹ show that difficulties with character assertiveness in relationships reflect a depression and anger tendency in people. Such people show a very low assertive character due to their low self-esteem, guilt and fear of punishment which increase more their low self esteem. These people find it very hard to express their anger feelings and if they manage to express them they do it in a very passive or aggressive way. In other studies, Brody and Haaga,⁵⁰⁰ observe that many people in order to safeguard their relationships with others are afraid to express their anger feelings. However, they say that the more people learn to identify and accept their anger the more assertive they become and the more able to present boundaries and limits to others. This will then improve their relationships and increase their self-esteem.

4.3.4 FALL INTO EUPHORIA

Guilt feelings due to lack of love and unsatisfied pleasures rooted in a rejected childhood experience, create self-destructive feelings. Thomas Shipp says that depressive feelings crop up each time we try to escape the suffering and painful memories of a rejected childhood.⁵⁰¹

So aiming to ease depressive and guilt feelings, a person might resort to alcohol. Alcohol can temporarily ease our depression as it allows past memories to crop up in our mind while temporarily hide our guilt feelings. For a short while alcohol can increase our self-confidence, offering us false courage and no fear.⁵⁰²

According to studies carried out by Potter-Efron, though a person can deal

⁴⁹⁹ L. Goldman and D.A.F. Haaga, "Depression and the experience and expression of anger in marital and other relationships," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 183/8 (1995): 505–509.

⁵⁰⁰ C.D. Brody et al., "Experiences of anger in people who have recovered from depression and never-depressed people," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 187 (1999): 400–405.

⁵⁰¹ Thomas J. Shipp, *Helping the Alcoholic and His Family* (Englewood Cliffs/NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 22.

⁵⁰² Shipp, *Helping the Alcoholic and His Family*, 67.

with shame and guilt through excessive drinking, such addictions will then inevitably provoke and worsen these emotions. He refers to addiction as a 'downward spiral' which lessen the strength to keep up our self esteem.⁵⁰³

Though under the effect of alcohol a person might feel more self-confident, friendly, loving and less hostile, Shipp says that the conscious censors get weak leading the person to be more in touch with his angry feelings.⁵⁰⁴ While alcohol can ease guilt and anxiety, exteriorized anger can then humiliate the alcoholic person leading him to feel guiltier than before.⁵⁰⁵

Admitting that we are guilty is a step forward for healing but escaping guilt through addiction denies guilt and leads to self-destructive behaviour. Shipp says that the harmful effects of addiction and denied guilt leads to loss of energy, low emotional stability, lack of creativity, no interest in sex and cause physical ailments, in extreme cases death. So Shipp considers addiction as the most dangerous escape (euphoria) from our guilt feelings.⁵⁰⁶

4.3.5 FALL INTO ILLNESS

A person can try to escape guilt feelings by falling into physical illness – a process which Freud calls “conversion.” In such process a person converts his emotional sensations and thoughts into physical illness.⁵⁰⁷ In bringing out this theory, Freud was inspired by the hysterical case of Anna O., whose proper name was Bertha Pappenheim; she was Freud’s friend. Bertha’s case is documented in more detail by her family physician Dr Josef Breuer who says that suddenly

⁵⁰³ Ronald Potter-Efron, *Shame, Guilt and Alcoholism - Treatment Issues in Clinical Practice* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2002), 237.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁰⁶ Francis I. Frellick, *Helping Youth in Conflict* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 11.

⁵⁰⁷ Sigmund Freud, “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. IX (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis 1953-74), 119.

Bertha got her legs and arms paralysed, experiencing terrible headaches, hallucinations, persistent cough and refused to eat.⁵⁰⁸

It is then that Freud realised that Bertha's induced guilt feelings resulted in bodily ailments.⁵⁰⁹ In fact Breuer explains this process through examples saying that a man can start having symptoms of nausea and vomiting to punish him for his induced guilt feelings about sexual fantasies. Also a woman can start feeling symptoms of terrible migraine to cover her hate towards a harsh employer while a child can feel a painful paralysis of his right hand to overcome his guilt feelings about his wish for masturbation.⁵¹⁰

In the psycho-somatic "conversion" process, Freud says that a person represses his conscious wishes to avoid an intense inner guilt feeling. So as the mind gets frustrated with these repressed wishes, the body comes to the rescue of the mind by leading the person to feel such psycho-somatic symptoms. Freud says that for the sake of our physical and mental health both body and mind work together. Through his psycho-somatic pain a person compensates for his induced guilt feelings which might lead to a sense of temporary healing.⁵¹¹

Breuer says that psycho-somatic 'conversion' symptoms tend to be very common with children as some of them hide anger when feeling hurt. So instead of expressing their anger they express psycho-somatic symptoms like catching a cold, sweating, turn red faced, have breathing difficulties, persistent cough and suffer painful stomach aches. Getting physically ill will comfort them as they attain more attention from their relatives and friends.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* (London: Hogarth Press, 1954), 144.

⁵⁰⁹ Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices," 119.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁵¹² Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, 178.

Generally, though pain results from an external source, Engel says that there are instances when pain results from a psychological phenomenon.⁵¹³ He says that significant guilt, unsatisfied aggressive impulses, history of defeat and of real or imagined loss can all lead a person to suffer from chronic pain.⁵¹⁴

Recent study research carried out by Asmundson says that people suffering from chronic pain acquire a sense of fear of pain. This fear of pain can result from either a fear of injury or re-injury or from a fear of anxiety feelings linked with painful episodes.⁵¹⁵ However, other recent studies by Vlaeyen insist on healing treatment to help people to manage both pain and anxiety in the same time.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ G. Engel, "Psychogenic pain and the pain-prone patient," *American Journal of Medicine* 26/6 (1959): 899-918.

⁵¹⁴ G. Engel, "The need for a new medical model: a challenge for biomedical science," *Science* 196 (1977): 129-136.

⁵¹⁵ See G. J. G. Asmundson, J.W. S. Vlaeyen and G. Crombez, *Understanding and Treating Fear of Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵¹⁶ J. W. Vlaeyen et al., "The treatment of fear of movement/(re)injury in chronic low back pain: further evidence on the effectiveness of exposure in vivo," *Clinical Journal of Pain* 18/4 (2002): 251-261.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that guilt feelings arouse when people experience a sense of regret when their actions come into conflict with their own conscience and beliefs.⁵¹⁷ Guilt feelings will then affect our physical and mental state of life causing many social consequences.⁵¹⁸ Guilt feelings have also been proven to be a good motivator to people leading them to distinguish between what is good from what is bad. So there are times when guilt can turn into a good motivator to overcome conflicts in life.⁵¹⁹

However, as guilt can provoke self-destructive feelings⁵²⁰ affecting both self and others, overcoming guilt feelings turns out to be a very important need. So all the psychological, theological and pastoral reflections (offered in this study) about guilt can serve as an effective tool to overcome guilt feelings in spiritual direction. While psychological counselling offers a client-oriented healing based on observation of behavioural aspects, spiritual direction offers a more God-oriented process making healing possible through listening to God's will in prayer and discernment.⁵²¹

This study has been a journey showing the different types of guilt feelings and how they threaten one's psyche and self-esteem. It showed how guilt feelings can affect people in different ways and means depending on personalities and social backgrounds while affecting their daily life communication and relationships with others. So overcoming guilt feelings is needed to ease and safeguard our

⁵¹⁷ D.L. Mosher, "Interaction of fear and guilt in inhibiting unacceptable behaviour," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 29/2 (1965): 161–167.

⁵¹⁸ American Psychiatric Association (APA) in *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*, 4th edn, text revision, (2000): 430.

⁵¹⁹ R. F. Baumeister, A. M. Stillwell and T. F. Heatherton, "Guilt: An interpersonal approach," *Psychological Bulletin*, 115/2 (1994): 243-267.

⁵²⁰ S. Freud, "Mourning and melancholia," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth, 1947), 237–254.

⁵²¹ Paul V. Robb, "Conversion as a Human Experience," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 14/3 (May, 1982): 5.

daily communications and relationships in life.⁵²² Spiritual direction can help greatly in the overcoming of guilt feelings by helping the directee accept real guilt as a motivator in life while getting rid of neurotic guilt feelings. Notwithstanding all the effective ways and means to heal guilt feelings, spiritual direction doesn't offer a prescribed set of fixed rules for everyone to attain guilt healing. However, if spiritual directors apply the appropriate ways and methods of healing according to the particular case in study, guilt healing can be experienced through God's grace and forgiveness. This process entails an examination of the directee's inner self conflicts between his guilt feelings and real self, between the superego and his true conscience.⁵²³ Spiritual direction aims at helping the directee discover his own true conscience which derives from the real self while calling for correction of deviations from his proper path in life. In doing so this study highlights the need of listening and discernment⁵²⁴ through spiritual direction in order to enhance a guilt healing process. Listening and discernment help the directee to discover his true Self while discovering what violates his true nature leading him to experience guilt feelings.

Spiritual direction is needed to help the directee discover whether his incurred guilt is real or neurotic and how it affects daily life. This study shows how real guilt can be helpful in life, helping us to face and admit our bad deeds and failures in order to acquire growth and freedom. However, neurotic guilt needs to be acknowledged and referred to more psychological competencies when necessary.⁵²⁵

This study encourages directees to admit and seek healing of their guilt feelings so they can become more capable to love and more receptive to love.

⁵²² P. Gilbert, "The evolution of social attractiveness and its role in shame, humiliation, guilt and therapy," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 70/2 (1997): 113-147.

⁵²³ Janet Ruffing, *Uncovering Stories of Faith: Spiritual Direction and Narrative* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 117.

⁵²⁴ George Aschenbrenner, "Consciousness Examen," *Review for Religious* 31/1 (1972): 14-21. Reprinted in David L. Fleming (ed.) "Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola," in *Review for Religious* (St. Louis/MO, 1983): 175-185.

⁵²⁵ Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Westmont, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 52.

When we seek to overcome guilt, we experience freedom from hate while acquiring more the ability to love as “Love makes us happy, hatred makes us unhappy” says Reuben Fine.⁵²⁶

Learning to face and admit our guilt feelings makes us less punitive towards ourselves and others.⁵²⁷ Notwithstanding all our efforts to face and overcome guilt in life we can still experience both hate and love in the same time so we need to admit that we are not perfect beings⁵²⁸ and that perfection is a myth.⁵²⁹

However, if love leads us to happiness and guilt leads us to unhappy life we should then struggle to overcome guilt as this is a major obstacle to love. Guilt feelings surely affect our emotions, particularly our ability to love others and so facing guilt eases our expression to love more honestly and expressively.⁵³⁰

To be able to face guilt in order to express more our love for others we need spiritual direction to help us verbalize more our incurred guilt feelings and acquire healing through God’s love,⁵³¹ grace and forgiveness.⁵³²

Spiritual direction can help us to face guilt while acquiring a true concern for ourselves and others enriching and stimulating us more for love.⁵³³ D.W.

⁵²⁶ Reuben Fine, *The Meaning of Love in Human Experience* (London: Hogarth Press 1962), 88.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵²⁸ Lutwak and J. R. Ferrari, “Moral affect and cognitive processes: Differentiating shame from guilt among men and women,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 21/6 (1996): 891–896.

⁵²⁹ Fine, *The Meaning of Love in Human Experience*, 58.

⁵³⁰ J.P. Tangney, “Situational determinants of shame and guilt in young adulthood,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 18 (1992): 199–206.

⁵³¹ Gerhart Piers and Milton B. Singer, *Shame and Guilt: a psychoanalytic and cultural study* (New York: Norton, 1971), 11.

⁵³² Loughlan Sofield, Carroll Juliano and Gregory M. Aymond, *Facing Forgiveness, A Catholic’s Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2007), 10.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 17.

Winnicott⁵³⁴ describes concern as “a word used to cover in a positive way a phenomenon covered in a negative way by the word ‘guilt’.” He adds, “A sense of guilt is anxiety linked with ambivalent feelings and implies a degree of integration in the individual ego that allows for retention of love along with hate.”⁵³⁵

When we learn to face our daily guilt we become more able to love and show more care for others. In few words we turn less egoistic learning to focus more onto the sufferings of others while investing more energy in the consideration and compassion for others.⁵³⁶ The caring person turns less egocentric while thinking more of others in order to acquire healing.⁵³⁷

This study shows that overcoming guilt feelings means that we wish others to suffer less and be happier in life as when afflicted by guilt we knew what suffering is.⁵³⁸ So the more we seek to ease our incurred guilt feelings the more we feel concerned and thoughtful about our choices affecting both ourselves and others.⁵³⁹

So the process of overcoming guilt feelings through spiritual direction turns into a journey towards freedom away from the compulsion of anxiety. It is a journey which opens our horizons making us more cautious and prudent in our daily decisions and choices in life. We learn to free ourselves from anger and anxiety while seeking contemplation and reflection.⁵⁴⁰ Then when we fail in life we learn from our mistakes while avoiding repeating the same mistakes and errors.⁵⁴¹ Theodor Reik comments saying, “When the candle is down to a nub we recognize

⁵³⁴ See D.W. Winnicott, “The Development of the Capacity for Concern,” *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* (1963).

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 56

⁵³⁶ Fine, *The Meaning of Love in Human Experience*, 48.

⁵³⁷ Winnicott, *The Development of the Capacity for Concern*, 57.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

- too late - that we have led a kind of half existence. Is this life, or is it mere vegetating?"⁵⁴² Seeking to overcome guilt feeling through spiritual direction aims at realizing how much guilt managed to suffocate our true existence while discovering the violations to our freedom. In fact Reik says: "To injure others is certainly wrong, but it is equally wrong to sabotage and injure oneself. It is not only more realistic but also more dignified to acknowledge our violent and sexual needs."⁵⁴³

Throughout this study I hope I managed to help people experiencing guilt to regain their dignity by feeling more worthy, noble and acquire more self-respect while seeking healing through spiritual direction. In facing and seeking guilt healing we lose nothing but regain the conviction that we are in charge of our lives and choices that lead us to greater happiness. The more we uncover guilt the more we gain control of our reactions to the ups and downs of life.⁵⁴⁴ As we understand guilt and seek the proper ways and methods to overcome our guilt feelings we free ourselves of the past torments⁵⁴⁵ while finding new joy in life from the experience of 'letting go' and 'healing.'

⁵⁴² Theodor Reik, *The Need to Be Loved* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963), 67.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁴⁴ R. F. Baumeister, A. M. Stillwell and T. F. Heatherton, "Personal narratives about Guilt: Role in Action Control," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 17 (1995): 173-198.

⁵⁴⁵ Michael Lewis, *Shame the exposed self* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 2, 6.

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