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La Salle University
School of Arts and Sciences
Graduate Program in Theology

A Dissertation

THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE IN ONE'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TOWARDS AUTHENTICITY:
A CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS TRUTH AS REVEALED THROUGH
PSYCHOLOGY, HISTORY AND MYTH

By

Kyle William Thompson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree

Doctor of Theology

May 2021

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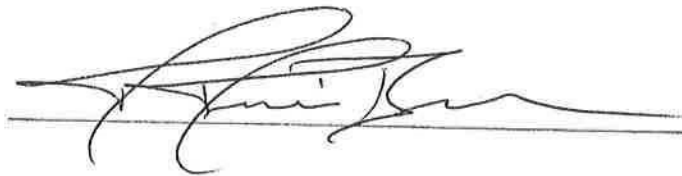
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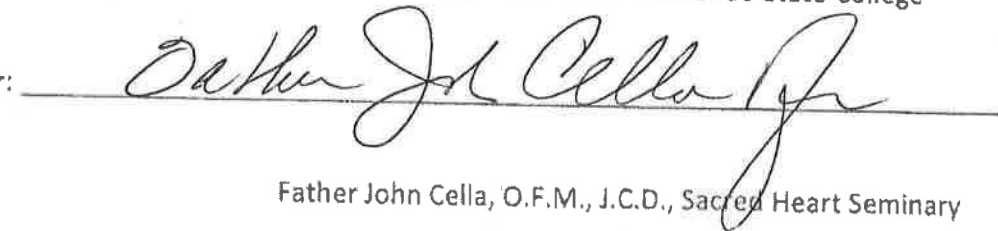
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When the opportunity to pursue this degree was presented to me, I remember being full of excitement as it had always been a dream of mine. However, many people tried to insist I would not be able to bring this to reality. From my continued struggles with learning disabilities, to the financial burden it would bring, I knew this would be a hard road, but also one that I felt called to take. Despite the fear that this brought me what frightened me even more was presenting this desire to my father. Fortunately, that dread was immediately overcome by shock from the encouragement that he provided me. He has not only encouraged me to pursue my dream, but he has stood by throughout the entire process and continued to remind me to keep moving forward regardless of how slow the journey may seem. Thank you Dad, for always supporting me. I will remember these moments always and do my best to reflect this love and understanding with my own children.

While not my father, a Father (or rather "Padre") of another kind has been both a mentor and friend for almost two decades. From the early days of meeting with him before every class until now, he has always been my, "Jedi master." Hopefully by now he understand

what that means (yeah he's one of those rare individuals who's never seen Star Wars). Thank you for humbly walking alongside me on this journey, always leading and guiding me. You have challenged me in so many ways and I certainly would not be the man I have become without you.

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Abstract

In the modern era there appears to be a growing exodus of individuals leaving organized religion. The introduction of the internet, and the near instantaneous access of information that it provides, has deluded many to believe that they can acquire any answers they seek and no longer need guidance or directions from anyone other than, "Google". This prideful notion causes many concerns, particular when it comes to the development and flourishing of one's spiritual growth, as they journeys towards authenticity. In order to combat this ever growing mentality one must be able to breakthrough these prideful barriers to recognize the dangers of exploring one's spirituality on their own.

As emphasized by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell myth can be a manner in which truth is revealed and relayed. By utilizing the modern *Star Wars* mythos, particularly surrounding the training and development of the Jedi, one is able to relay the importance of having proper spiritual guidance, as well as the dangers when one's spiritual exploration goes unchecked. Exploring modern myths like *Star Wars* allows one to not only further grasp these truths, but also relay them in a manner that can be understood by those with little, or no, religious upbringing. While this ability to relay truths through story telling is something that has been done since the beginning of time the importance of having individuals to help one disseminate the meaning and interpretation of these truths is a tradition that is also founded in reality.

The great Christian sages of the past like, Augustine, Benedict, Francis and Ignatius all understood the dangers of taking this journey alone. As revealed through an analysis of the rules they developed for their communities, alongside Ignatius' development of the spiritual

exercises, we discover not only the importance of seeking guidance from others, but the necessity of being obedient to the direction they provide. For if one is without proper guidance, one will be in danger of misunderstanding already revealed truths and traveling down the path of relativism, or as the Jedi would say down the path of the dark side.

Through an understanding of the spiritual training of the Jedi one is able to recognize the value and necessity of not only having a trained spiritual guide, but also see the pitfalls when one is not properly spiritually educated and directed. Utilizing this pop culture imagery not only relays this message, but also has the possibility to encourage one to seek out spiritual guidance. This helps prevent one from traveling down the dark path of ignorance where they only receive a distortion of the truth. A reality that many in the 21st century have begun to disregard.

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Introduction

As the renowned philosopher Heidegger proclaimed, we are beings thrown into the world. We have no choice in the matter and our very nature consistently pushes us perpetually forward, a reality that can cause many to be extremely anxious. Similarly, as one enters, or is thrown, into the world they also are thrust into their own unique quest. A journey they had no choice in taking and one that is only able to be completed by them. From the moment of our birth, to the moment of our death, we are all on a journey. A hero's journey that we all must take, a quest full of trials and mysteries which must be faced and wrestled with. This quest is both, external; as one travels through the perils of life, struggling to survive and thrive in the time and place they are thrown into, and internal; as one ponders the great mysteries surrounding God, the ultimate meaning of life, and one's purpose and value within it. Pondering these profound mysteries and navigating a means to contemplate them is the journey toward the Holy that we all undergo, even if it is subconscious. Even for those who may seem to reject an intentional quest for the Holy, it is unconsciously pursued. For this quest for the Holy is synonymous for one's journey for authenticity, and one that we all work and strive to embrace and accomplish.

Certainly this journey we are thrown into at the moment of life is not easy. One will face both external and internal struggles, and challenges, which many will not be able to overcome on their own. These unavoidable perils and obstacles can come in many forms, and if not for the success of those who previously traveled along this Holy journey, others would not hope to be as successful. For it is not only the success that these individuals achieved that provides one

hope that their own quest can be accomplished, but rather a tradition of obedience to another that allows the passing on of the wisdom and guidance required for one to complete their own journey. The essential value of the sage in one's quest for authenticity is a tradition that is so old that individuals like Carl Jung have argued it is embedded in our own subconscious.

Guidance is a necessary part of our life journey and no one will grow much or come to fulfill all they can accomplish without individuals to provide knowledge, wisdom, and structure. This truth also is presented through the works of Joseph Campbell whose extensive study of myth, and his analysis of the hero's journey, shows how this pervasive theme rises up out of our subconscious, and into the conscious mind through the telling of myths. Myths not only of old, but also current myths like the ever popular and multigenerational mythos of *Star Wars*.

Spanning over 40 years *Star Wars* has grown beyond just a pop culture sensation. Its popularity has wavered over the years, but the *Star Wars* mythos has survived the test of time and in many ways has become something greater than just an entertaining story, or classic movie. Since its inception in 1977 George Lucas' magnum opus has taken on a life of its own and has become not just a house hold name, but a passion that has led some to even adopt the spiritual truths that is revealed through its ever increasing mythos. Storytelling and mythmaking have always been a critical part of how we as a society, or culture, reveal truths, so it is no surprise that the *Star Wars* mythos also illustrates these fundamental truths. One such truth and the one that will be analyzed through the lens of psychology and religious life is that of the value and necessity of the sage in one's quest to live an authentic life.

As one journey's through their life they are faced with numerous obstacles and challenges that will often distract or dislodge one from their quest towards the Holy, a journey that is synonymous with one's quest for authenticity. This journey towards one's authentic self is reflected of the Jedi's journey in the Star Wars universe. Like the Jedi we are called to an authentic existence that balances our need to connect to the Other, i.e. the Force, with our call to live in solidarity with each other. This path to achieve authenticity is wrought with difficulty and perils and navigating a balance of pursuing, understanding, and living God's will alongside other who may not be willing, or even desire to know and live according to this will can be a difficult balance to achieve. However, while this path is wrought with both internal and external obstacles, tribulations and persecutions, we, like the Jedi, have a means to be supported and navigate through these perils. Obedience to another is essential if one wishes to learn and embrace the wisdom needed to take agency in our life. This agency allows one to take responsibility for their actions and the wisdom one gains from another will inadvertently provide one with the tools necessary to construct the means to navigate these obstacles.

The necessity of obedience is not a new, nor unique, concept. It is a concept that has been embraced since humanity began taking this existential journey we call life. It has been illustrated in ancient myths as well as the myths of the modern era. We find this same truth illustrated in sacred religious texts in the call to be obedient to the will of God, or to His law. It is a fundamental truth that has seems to resonate with each of us on an unconscious level, and one in which appears to be necessary if completion of this existential quest is to be reached. This fundamental truth is one that has been embraced and developed by those living as

religious through the Rules that these groups developed over a thousand years ago. Rules that have continued to be utilized and continued to produce successful outcomes.

In an age where the existential crisis of finding the ultimate meaning and purpose of life seems to be on the rise, many have seemed to give up this call to obedience. One's quest to live an authentic life, a Holy life is often pursued without direction or vetted support. Individuals may seek the guidance of others, but a commitment, or obedience, to another seems to be avoided despite one's desire to achieve the goal of living an authentic life. Every individual should work to achieve independence, and in doing so many may feel led to be autonomous in this quest. Unfortunately, this level of autonomy does not seem to lead to the desired results of a meaningful and authentic life. Analyzing Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell we discover the notion of the archetype of the sage and our subconscious drive to seek out one who will assist us in our quest for authenticity, a quest for the Holy. This fundamental truth is further illustrated in the Rules developed for religious life and the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, as well as its progression into the practice of spiritual direction. Along with the historical and classical embrace of obedience this same truth also rises up in the modern mythos of Star Wars. This further illustrates that the role of the sage and obedience is a truth that is necessary to embrace if one wishes to complete their quest for the Holy, and embrace the journey towards one's authentic self.

Chapter 1 - Towards a Definition of Myth

In the modern secular era of logic and reason, myth and mythology is often a fantastical story that is considered purely fiction, and associated only with entertainment. As a result, many have begun to disregard the value and truths that are found within them. While the very definition of myth denotes that it is a fictitious story, there is also a strong assertion by individuals such as Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell that these myths have strong universal truths, and a value that should not be disregarded. Through the telling and evaluation of myths, one is able to understand and grasp the universal truths that are being revealed within them. Myths help society disseminate and articulate truths to individuals in a manner in which they can comprehend and pass on to others. Their value should not be undermined by the fact that they are relayed through a story that is not literally true. We as a society should be looking for more universal myths to assist us in the relaying of these truths in order to help preserve the realities they reveal.

Through the demystification and devaluing of myths, many of the underlying truths relayed through these myths, have begun to be devalued and ignored. One such truth that has begun to be ignored, and overlooked, is the role and value of the sage. The importance of seeking wisdom and guidance from wise men and women, of the past, or turning to gurus during one's current struggles is no longer viewed as necessary. With the advent of the internet and the seemingly unlimited access of information, many no longer turn to their religious leaders, or sages, for knowledge or wisdom. This do it yourself attitude, and belief that one can discover all the answers to the mysteries of the universe on their own, has led to a popular

statement that everyone has heard, “I’m spiritual but not religious.” This simple statement may seem benign but, the reality is, there is a danger in believing that you have all the answers, or that you can come up with these answers on your own. There is a value in humbling yourself to spiritual leaders and directors who have studied the history and ideology of their beliefs. Even the great religious orders, like the Benedictines and Franciscans, were structured in order to protect and ensure that the members were being guided and driven forward. Proper leadership and guidance ensures that individuals do not deviate too far from the path to truth and holiness. Along with the benefits of ensuring one remains on the path of righteousness, it also protects against the dangers of one’s arrogance and belief that one can achieve everything on their own.

With the realization that there is a value in seeking out the guidance of the sages, past and present, along with a danger of rejecting them, more people will once again turn to their religious leaders for direction. This will allow one to see the value of being both religious and spiritual, and the danger of being solely spiritual without any religious boundaries. Reevaluating myths and rediscovering them through a lens which emphasizes the core values and truths they reveal can allow one to utilize current mythologies to aid in relaying truths. Through the metaphorical and symbolical truths revealed through myths and archetypal images, one is better able to instruct others and present these truths in a matter they can recognize and embrace. By utilizing these myths and their imagery to break down these truths one can often more easily understand them. Recognizing the inherent and intrinsic value to myth, while also turning to an updated and more modern myths, like that of Star Wars, can help to reestablish

the necessity of sagely guidance, and consequently move individuals forward along their quest for authenticity.

As with most concepts and ideas, when discussing and interpreting myth one initially gravitates to determining a proper definition of the word. This, as we will see, can be a difficult endeavor. There unfortunately does not appear to be a clear and concise understanding of what a myth is, nor a myth's intrinsic value. As defined by a theological dictionary,

Myth (Gr. 'fable', 'story'). A symbolic story about ultimate realities. *Myth* has often been understood to be a story about purely fictitious persons, events, and things. While *logos* offers a rational and true account of reality and its causes, an imaginative *mythos* (e.g., about the scandalous activities of gods) may be entertaining but is essentially false...The human mind, however, does not operate on the basic abstract concepts alone. It needs symbolic-imaginative language to find and express the truth about our existence. In his dialogues Plato (427-347 B.C.) at times skillfully uses myths to guide his reader toward the truth.¹

Even within this definition there is conflicting information. It begins by emphasizing that myths are purely fictitious accounts, but ends alluding to an understanding that myths can point one to truth. This definition also draws upon the great philosopher Plato who, as indicated, utilized myths, such as his allegory of the cave, to illustrate truths that would otherwise not be embraced or understood. It is important to recognize that while definitions of myth can often be unclear, or conflicting, from a theological perspective defining myth and mythology as anything but false may be difficult, or in some cases heretical. However, this understanding of myth, even from a religious perspective, has conflicting views.

¹ Gerald O'Collins, S.J. and Edward G. Farrugia, S.J., *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 2000) 170.

Exploring beyond this perspective and moving into a more psychological one, we begin to see a different outlook on the meaning of myth. As explained by Yahyazade, "...myth is a story and adventure of in which usually its origin is not clear but it is a description of action belief and institution or natural phenomenon that is altruism and at least some part of it is taken from customs and has a permanent relationship with religious beliefs."² There is an interesting contrast between these two definitions, particularly with regards to Yahyazade's incorporating religious beliefs into his understanding. While our first theological definition seems to emphasize the fictional aspects of myth, in an attempt to separate them from the truths found in religion. The second definition insinuates that myths inherently have these religious truths imbedded within.

As one explores other individuals' understanding of myth and what a myth can be classified, or categorized, as we discover that for some, the definition begins to take on aspects of both fact and fiction. As described in an essay written by the renowned psychiatrist Carl Jung,

The myth in a primitive society, i.e., in its original living form, is not a mere tale told but a reality lived. It is not in the nature of an invention such as we read in novels today, but living reality, believed to have occurred in primordial times and to be influencing ever afterwards the world and the destinies of men... These stories are not kept alive by vain curiosity, neither as tales that have been invented nor again as tales that are true. For the natives on the contrary they are assertion of an original, greater, and more important reality through which the present life, fate, and work of mankind are governed, and the knowledge of which provides men on the one hand with motives for ritual and moral acts, on the other with directions for their performance.³

² Mozhgan Yahyazade, "Myth from a Psychological Point of View," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no 5 (2013): 68

³ C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5.

This explanation of myth goes beyond an explanation of distinguishing it as a fictional tale or religious metaphor and expands its understanding to include both. Through this definition, one begins to see that myths go beyond just an entertaining fictional story or religious tale whose purpose is to relay a divine truth. Rather we see that myths are not simply contained in just one of these definitions, but have the function of encompassing both these qualities. So often today, individuals that are seeking the truth and desire to greater understanding, wish a simple yes or no answer. Unfortunately when it comes to discovering deeper psychological or theological meanings, this is rarely the case. As expressed by Richard Rohr, this dualistic view is actually detrimental to one's spiritual progression and one needs to move towards a both/and mentality if they wish to really understand and grasp greater truths. He writes,

Dualistic thinking works well for the sake of simplification and conversation, but not for the sake of truth or the immense subtlety of actual personal experience. Most of us settle for quick and easy answers instead of any deep perception, which we leave to poets, philosophers, and prophets. *Yet depth and breadth of perception should be the primary arena for all authentic religion.* How else could we possibly search for God?⁴

Like many psychological or theological concepts, finding a comprehensive definition of myth is far more difficult than one would surmise. As G.S. Kirk identifies, "There is no one definition of myth, no Platonic form of a myth against which all actual instances can be measured, Myths as we shall see, differ enormously in their morphology and their social function."⁵ The fact that the nature of myth, or its definition, cannot be narrowed down to one idea only helps to assert that its value is broad reaching. By not being confined to viewing myth

⁴ Rohr, Richard, OFM "The Dualistic Mind," *Center for Action and Contemplation*, retrieved from <https://cac.org/the-dualistic-mind-2017-01-29/>

⁵ G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 7.

as simply a fantastical story, or a truth hidden in a metaphor, one can begin to evaluate its real purpose and true value. Broadening ones perception on the role of myth, increases the potential value of myths and assists one with utilizing them to their full and intended purpose. A purpose driven to emphasize the greater truth found and revealed through these mythological stories.

Since the conception of myth, individuals have fought to preserve them. Some have even dedicated their lives studying them and drawing out their intrinsic value. Two renowned and respected individuals that devoted their life to this passion were Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. Focusing on the recurring symbolism found within both ancient and modern mythology, these two pioneered a new and radical manner in which to view myth. For them, these seemingly random and unrelated stories that have been shared throughout the ages and documented throughout history were very much related. These myths held many unifying themes. Themes that tell us more about who we are as individuals and members of the greater society. Breaking down their views and the values they place on myth can open one's eyes to the impact that myths, along with the archetypal components found within them, have on us, our interaction with one another, and how it shapes the ideology of the society they are embraced in.

1.1 - Call of the Cosmos

The use of symbols and myths is a cornerstone of Carl Jung's psychology. For Jung the psyche is something that continuously develops. It has been developing since the beginning of time and will continue to develop till the end of time. Focusing primarily on understanding the

unconscious, as well as what he labels as the collective unconscious, he develops a psychology focused on becoming in sync with this unconscious. Jung's assertion of the unconscious is vital to his psychology. For him if one denies this assertion they are insinuating that they have a complete understanding of the psyche as a whole. This prideful assertion of a complete understanding of the psyche is something that Jung refuses to make and plainly refutes this notion in his writing,

Whoever denies the existence of the unconscious is in fact assuming that our present knowledge of the psyche is total. And this belief is clearly just as false as the assumption that we know all there is to know about the natural universe. Our psyche is part of nature, and its enigma is limitless.⁶

As Jung indicates, our psyche has never been, is not, nor will ever be, completely known. He understands that like the natural universe, or the Divine itself, one will never gain complete knowledge of it within their lifetime. However, like the natural universe we also need to learn from the past knowledge that has been collected. Psychology, while a soft science, should also be built upon like the hard sciences and one should utilize past experiences and understanding to further understand the psyche.

Just because Jung believes that a complete understanding of the human psyche cannot be achieved, does not mean that he feels we should not study it, or continue to attempt to reach a greater understanding of what the psyche is. Like humanity's drive to understand the unknown, Jung contends that despite the fact that we can never fully grasp the fullness of what the psyche is, we should never stop striving and moving toward more than what we currently know. This passionate belief and drive toward a greater understanding, is not only shared by

⁶ Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1964), 6.

the scientific community, but the religious community as well. The desire to gain a greater understanding of the unknown, has driven humanity forward in their scientific understanding, but also in our understanding of the Divine; the Other that is perpetually reaching out to us to be known. Jung believed this drive toward the unknown was an innate drive found within each of us at our core. Clifford Mayes expresses this desire indicating that, "... it is clear that Jung did believe that life lived in hopeful response to 'the lure of the transcendent' is not only possible but necessary for the individual, who must respond in his own way to this call issued by the cosmos."⁷ This drive towards the unknown helps drive us towards a greater understanding of ourselves. This drive is supported and further fueled by the study of the psyche, myth, and the Divine. In many ways these studies overlap. Together they explore the role of the collective unconscious, and the value of the archetypes found within.

We are all called to answer this call from the cosmos, the other, the Divine, or whatever label one may place on it. For it is this call that drives us forward towards our authentic self. When we answer this call, we not only gain a greater understanding of that which we seek, but we also supply additional knowledge and understanding for future individuals who will continue this journey. Building upon the knowledge of the past allows us to move further forward in our understanding of both the hard and soft sciences, which includes psychology and religion. If we do not learn from the past, we are bound to repeat mistakes while also inhibiting our progression into the future. Jung's understanding and explanation of the collective unconscious, is not only one of his greatest psychological achievements, but also a means to

⁷ Clifford Mayes, *An Introduction to the Collective Works of C. G. Jung* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 2016), 17.

express how the psyche passes innate and past knowledge to all of humanity. It allows all of us to share in this knowledge and continue the advancement of disciplines like psychology and theology.

1.2 - Key Concepts of Jungian Psychology

To understand how this occurs, one must understand a few key elements of Jungian psychology. The unconscious, for Jung, is the core and center to the psyche. Without an understanding, or inquiry, of this element we cannot fully grasp Jung's contribution to the greater understanding of the psyche. Walter Shelburne, a student of Jungian psychology identifies this and agrees this must be the starting point of anyone who wishes to understand the contribution that Jung has made to this scientific field of study. He writes, "...it is only when we consider the attribution of an unconscious dimension to the psyche that a full characterization of what Jung intends by his psychic construct can be completed."⁸ The recognition of the unconscious and its incorporation into our psyche is vital to Jung's psychology. This concept is essential if one wishes to explore and understand the contribution Jung made to this field of science.

Jung began as a student of Freud and thus his first exposure and understanding of the unconscious came through the lens of Freud's understanding. Freud utilized the unconscious to expose repressed desires or traumas to his patients. This allowed Freud to attempt to help address these traumas within his patients in order for them to grow from them and become

⁸ Walter A. Shelburne, *Mythos and Logos in the Thought of Carl Jung* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 27.

happy and productive individuals. This process allowed the patient to understand the detrimental aspects of one's psyche that may be hidden, stifling development, or hindering a peaceful existence. In many ways Jung approached his understanding of the unconscious in the same fashion. However, for Freud these repressions were predominately linked to issues of a sexual nature. Unlike Freud, Jung did not solely emphasize the sexual repression of his patients and consequently enhanced the value and therapeutic usefulness of exposing and addressing the unconscious.

For Jung, the unconscious is something that stores not just experiences of a sexual nature, but is the storehouse of a plethora of experiences that have been forgotten or suppressed for any number of reasons. Jung recognizes that anything one experiences gets stored within our psyche. While these experiences may be painful and traumatic, it does not exclude them from being stowed away in the recesses of our mind. Jung writes,

... everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness: all this is the content of the unconscious.⁹

Jung's understands the psyche as a store house for all that one has experienced. For Jung those experiences which are known are found within our consciousness, and those which are forgotten or hidden, as a result of trauma, are located within our unconsciousness.

Jung understood that one's psyche never truly forgets or erases experiences. Rather one's psyche utilizes the unconscious to protect oneself from painful and traumatic experiences

⁹ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1989), 401.

by placing them into our unconscious. These experiences are unrecognized by our consciousness, but none the less are still present within our unconscious. Expressing this understanding of these experiences, Hill, a student of Jungian psychology explains, “They do not disappear from the psyche, for nothing that has been experienced ceases to exist. Instead, they are stored in what Jung called the *personal unconscious*.”¹⁰ Our personal unconsciousness is like a vessel that keeps the culmination of all the negative and traumatic past experiences that one does not wish to, or is unable to, confront. Even though one may wish to completely forget or ignore a trauma that one experienced, the reality is that these experiences and memories will never fully disappear. Beyond those experiences that one may want to forget, or dismiss, the unconscious also maintains those experiences that have occurred which are completely outside one’s recollection.

Jung’s understanding and expansion of the personal unconscious was his first step in developing and enhancing the realm of psychology. Through this understanding of the personal unconscious, and his sessions with numerous clients, he began to realize that beyond just personal experiences, there were also other things hidden within the recesses of the psyche. He discovered that hidden within the depths of his clients psyche were concepts and ideas that were outside the client’s own individual experiences. It was from these experiences and the information he gathered from his clients that he develop an even broader aspect of the psyche, an understanding of what he called the collective unconscious.

¹⁰ Calvin Hall and Vernon Nordby, *A Primer of Jungian Psychology* (New York, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999), 35.

Jung's advancement and development of the personal unconscious not only advanced psychological understanding it also led him to an even greater achievement. This achievement was the understanding that beyond the personal unconscious, there is another aspect of the unconscious that connects all of humanity. His study and understanding of the unconscious grew as he discovered there were things hidden within the depth of one's psyche beyond their own experiences. He began to understand the psyche on a greater level, one that goes beyond the individual. From this understanding, his view of the psyche expanded and he began to recognize a universal component to the psyche that is found within every individual, one that is connected to all of humanity. As identified by Ilona Bloclian,

Jung introduced a new range of the concept of the unconscious: it is not only individually valid, but also anthropologically important as a common thread of the human mind, the most essential factor determining a collective level of human life and a philosophically conceived basis for the whole development of reality.¹¹

Expanding his understanding of the unconscious to grow beyond just the individual was a new and unique concept for the psychological field of his time. Like the personal unconscious, that held dormant experiences from an individual's life, there was also another unconscious level to the psyche that was hidden within everyone's psyche. This universal component to the psyche is shared by all of humanity and is identified by Jung as the collective unconscious, "The collective unconscious is common to all;"¹² Giving a further explanation to this concept Shelburne, using Jung's own words, states,

Jung thus uses the term 'collective' to mean the opposite of personal or individual: 'I have chosen the term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual

¹¹ Ilona Bloclian, "Philosophical and Psychological Aspects in Jung's Concept of Myth. The Schellingian Influence," *Studia Religiologica* 48, no 3 (2015): 218-219.

¹² Jung, 138.

but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals.¹³

Unlike the unconscious of an individual, which allows a once conscious psyche to lay dormant in an individual, the collective unconscious is something that was never conscious within the individual. As indicated by Calvin Hall and Vernon Nordby, "The personal unconscious is composed of contents that were once conscious, but the contents of the collective unconscious have never been conscious, within the lifetime of the individual."¹⁴ There is an important distinction to be made here. One's unconscious is connected to their personal experience within their own lifetime. The collective unconscious, while also lying dormant within one's psyche, connects one to the universal consciousness that is shared by all. There is a need to delve into one's own personal unconsciousness to assist one with a deeper understand of their own personal psyche, and the experiences that have been misplaced or hidden with it. One also, however, needs to tap into the collective unconscious to gain a greater understanding of the connection their psyche has to greater universal truths that they have not experienced, but are still present within us all.

Diving into one's personal unconscious helps to bring to the surface past experiences and traumas in order to help discover why they have been hidden. Bringing these to the surface allows one to address them and consequently strengthen the psyche of the individual. Avoiding to address what one has hidden in their unconscious can lead to drastic consequence and can endangered one from appropriate psychological development. The collective unconscious, on the other hand, is not something connected to one's personal experience. Rather, the collective

¹³ Shelburne, 29.

¹⁴ Hall, 39.

unconscious derives from the universal truths and experiences of all of humanity. These truths found within the collective unconscious serve a greater function. While these truths may not be experienced firsthand they are still relevant and vital to be known by the individual. Similar to the truths one discovers in their personal unconscious the truths found within the collective unconscious, typically begin to surface when they are ignored. As a result, while one may never have experienced something personally, they are able to tap into this storehouse to obtain the benefits of what they have revealed to other individuals of the past and what they will continue to reveal to all throughout history.

The relevance of the collective unconscious is immense. It becomes a hard drive of vital information that everyone has access to. As humanity has progressed, important and essential information has been stored within the collective unconscious. This collection of information helps prevent a regression to previous less developed ages and assist all in the progression of their psyche. As explained by Hall and Nordby, the collective unconscious becomes this storehouse for the psyche, which connects us all to the collective truths humanity has revealed. They explain it as,

A reservoir of latent images, usually called *primordial images* by Jung. *Primordial* means “first” or original; therefore a primordial image refers to the earliest development of the psyche. Man inherits these images from his ancestral past, a past that includes all of his human ancestors as well as his prehuman or animal ancestors¹⁵

The collective unconsciousness allows one to gain a greater insight into one’s own psyche by gaining a greater understanding of its connection to humanity as a whole. As Jung explains it, the collective unconscious, like the personal unconscious, brings to light truths that the

¹⁵ Nordby, 39.

individual is unaware of. These truths are then thrust upon the individual, in order to make one aware of these truths, truths they may have lost sight of. Jung writes,

The fact is that certain ideas exist almost everywhere and at all times, and they can even spontaneously create themselves quite apart from migration and tradition. They are not made by the individual, but rather happen – They force themselves upon the individual's consciousness.¹⁶

The collective unconscious provides an insight into the core of our psyche, our being and how we as humans are all interconnected. Not only does it show us how we are connected but, according to Jung, it also will begin to bring this interconnectivity to the surface if it is not recognized, or if it is being ignored. Through this insight and understanding, one begins to understand how disconnecting from these early images, within the collective psyche, can disrupt their current psychological development. There is a sense that the collective unconscious provides us with an internal drive pushing our psyche forward. Thus it is the symbols and archetypes found within the collective unconscious that assist one from digressing to an age of less understanding and allows one to progress forward.

1.3 - Symbols and Archetypes

Before moving forward, one should first take a moment to explore Jung's understanding of symbols and the relevance they have to the psychological truths he reveals. In expressing Jung's understanding of a symbol Skublies writes, "A symbol he defines as the 'essence *and* image of psychic energy'.¹⁷ From Jung's understanding, a symbol is directly connected to one's psyche. By identifying a symbol as the essence, there is no way that one can separate it from

¹⁶ C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1966), 4.

¹⁷ Ernest Skublies, "Psychologically Living Symbolism and Liturgy," in *Carl Jung And Christian Spirituality*, ed. Robert C. Moore (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 208.

their psyche. By identifying a symbol as something that is at the core of one's psyche one must explore the role these symbols play in psychological development to truly understand Jung's theory and explore its relevance to one's personal, as well as collective unconscious.

Identifying and addressing what he means by a symbol, or more specifically what it takes for something to be symbolic, Jung states, "Thus a word or image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning."¹⁸ For Jung a symbol is anything that provides a deeper meaning than what it presents itself to be at face value. Understanding this fact is vital to exploring Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, his ideas about archetypes, and the roles archetypes play within the collective unconscious. Through an exploration of symbols, and their deeper meaning, one gets a glimpse into Jung's psychology and the important and essential role these concepts play within his psychology.

Symbols and their underlining meaning, allowed Jung to further develop his concept of an unconscious. Through his discovery that symbols have a universal nature and influence across cultural and geographical boundaries, Jung began to develop a deeper understanding of the unconscious, and the universal nature that it held. Realizing that symbols and their deeper meaning, crossed these boundaries, he began to see how they were shared universally. This realization led Jung to assert that they also connect all of humanity to what he defines as the collective unconscious. Walter Shelburne expresses Jung's understanding of this connection writing,

Symbols function as interconnecting links between the conscious and the collective unconscious, as they bring into consciousness in representable form the otherwise

¹⁸ Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1964), 4.

unknowable archetypes. The symbols mediate the experience of the archetypes and because of the unavoidable personal characteristics due to embodiment in an individual consciousness are products of both the collective unconscious and consciousness.¹⁹

This connection between symbols and the collective unconscious is essential in understanding Jung's psychology and the development of what he labels as archetypes. It is out of the universal symbols that he discovered amongst his clients, that he establishes the idea of archetypes. From his understanding of the relevance of symbols and archetypes within the unconscious he began to understand the connection they had to the collective unconscious in conjunction with an individual's consciousness.

When looking for the meaning of a symbol, one cannot simply look to their conscious self and academically discover its meaning. For Jung symbols are something that never fully represents themselves, rather they allow one to dive deeper into its true meaning. A meaning that lies beyond what it's simply presented. For if the symbol encompassed the fullness of the meaning it is relaying it would no longer be a symbol, but rather a sign. Expressing this Jungian sentiment, Shelburne states,

The symbol for Jung is to be sharply distinguished from the reference function of signs. Signs are representatives of known things. The trademark of a company, for example, simply represents the company itself. Symbols, on the other hand, cannot be said to be logically equivalent to their referents. The symbol points beyond itself to an unknown.²⁰

This distinction is essential when studying Jung, his view of symbols, their relationship to archetypes, and the role they play within the collective unconscious. If one is unable to look beyond an image to see what it symbolically represents, one misses its true meaning and purpose. Take the cross for example. Some would say that it is simply a sign of the Christian

¹⁹ Shelburne, 43.

²⁰ Shelburne, 43.

faith, however, this is far from the fullness of what it represents and the truth that is revealed through it. The cross has a deeper symbolic meaning, steeped in sacrifice, forgiveness and love. Understanding it simply as a sign of Christianity one misses its full meaning and does it a grave disservice.

While one must admit that the cross is certainly a sign of one's faith, one also needs to understand that it is more than just a sign. It also has a far deeper meaning and thus moves into the realm of being a symbolic representation of something greater. When one begins to contemplate and meditate on this meaning, they begin to move through the sign and into the symbolic truth it represents. It is important to note that when this occurs and one begins to delve into the symbolic understanding, or truth, that is revealed through it, it also continues to remain a sign. As articulated by Skublies,

A symbol and its way of "getting across" is not simply an affair of the intellect. While addressing our conscious, it points beyond it, to an obscurity that would be completely inaccessible to us were it not for the symbol. The symbol mediates between conscious and unconscious, known and unknown, rational and irrational, intellectual and emotional, concrete and abstract. It always belongs to both of these respective realms simultaneously.²¹

Many times we like to put things in one category in the hopes of understanding them. This is not how Jung understands our psyche, nor how he understands how our psyche reveals itself. Symbols that are revealed to us through our psyche often rise out of the unconscious into our consciousness so we can begin to grasp the immense nature and truth that it wished to expose. Without our ability to see beyond the symbol as just a sign we limit our ability to grow in our understanding of the greater truth the symbol represents. Diving into a more profound

²¹ Skublies, 209.

understanding of these symbols allows one to move closer to the absolute truth these symbols have the capacity to reveal.

Understanding Jung's concepts of symbols provides a solid foundation for his concept of archetypes. This is another essential topic one must explore when one desires to examine Jungian psychology and understand his view and construction of the psyche. For Jung, the symbols found within one's unconsciousness reveal a great deal about the individual and the struggles, or psychological setbacks, they may be experiencing. In his process of psychoanalyzing his patients he did a fair amount of dream analysis. While exploring his patients' dreams, he consistently discovered symbols emerging. Symbols that were both recognizable and unrecognizable to the individual. Through the therapeutic process, he exposed these symbols and utilized them to assist and guide his patients to psychological health, and a deeper understanding of their own psyche.

One way the use of symbols that arise from one's unconscious can be beneficial to an individual is their ability to motivate and provide hope for that individual. This idea is expressed by Eugene Bianchi who writes, "Thus symbolic images arising from the unconscious have the teleological function of aiding a person to pursue goals and meaning in life."²² As identified by Bianchi, the symbols found within one's unconscious can provide one with a very real and practical value. Exposing and identifying these symbols is an essential component in assisting one with progressing toward, not only a healthy psychology, but a productive life as well.

²² Eugene C. Bianchi, "Jungian Psychology and Religious Experience," in *Carl Jung And Christian Spirituality*, ed. Robert C. Moore (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 18.

Exploring Jung's understanding and development of symbols, and their impact on the unconscious, reveals another concept and aspect of our psyche. This is the concept of the archetype. One may believe this term to be synonymous with symbols. However, while they are connected, their definitions, and application, are unique and distinct from one another. As expressed by Jung,

Symbols are the means by which archetypes, themselves unconscious, communicate to consciousness. Each archetype requires an infinite number of symbols – as many symbols as there are dimensions of archetypes. Archetypes are transmitted by heredity; symbols, by acculturation. Archetypes are the same universally; symbols vary from culture to culture."²³

While symbols and archetypes are closely related in many ways, for both relay truths to individuals, there is a big distinction that is established by Jung. One essential difference that cannot be ignored is the fact that symbols are not universal. Symbols, while relaying truths to the individual perceiving them, only relay these truth if they are culturally significant and thus recognized by the individual perceiving them. An archetype, however, is the universal truth that is revealed through the perception of the symbol. It is through the recognition and understanding of symbols that one is exposed to the archetype. It is through our conscious recognition of symbols, that the archetypes that lay dormant within our unconscious rise to the surface. This is why the modern mythology of Star Wars is so valuable. As a result of this tale becoming an international sensation the symbols found within them can be utilized across the globe to reveal the archetypal truths that they relay.

²³ C. G. Jung and Robert A. Segel, *Jung on Mythology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 40.

Exploring the symbols that begin to arise out of one's personal unconscious is important for numerous reasons. Primarily, it allows one to explore the psychological distress that has occurred during one's life as a result of personal experiences that were suppressed. Alternatively, they also link one to the archetypal truths that are found within the collective unconscious. These truths are often ignored, and thus can cause an arrested development in one's psyche. These archetypes are, in a way, absolute truths that have been revealed, understood, or learned by humanity since the beginning of time. Stored in the warehouse of our psyche our collective unconscious gives us access to these truths. John Welsch enlightens his readers to this certainty by defining these truths as archetypes, "Within the collective unconscious are pre-existent forms which Jung called *archetypes*. The archetypes are primordial images common to all humankind."²⁴ Along with the collective unconscious, which connects humanity's psyche together, are images that allow us to begin to identify and understand these universal truths and connections. If we view the collective unconscious like a warehouse for our psyche, holding a collection of the universal truths that have been expressed and held by societies across the globe, we can understand Jung's archetypes as the specific individual items stored within. Thus, the collective unconscious is available to all of mankind and by accessing its contents and archetypes, one is able to understand the universal truths that have been implanted in it since the beginning of time. These archetypes, which make up the collective unconscious, is our link to the essential and primordial truths that all of humanity share. Truths that humanity has been gathering since the beginning of time. As identified by Hall, "The

²⁴ John Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1882), 73.

contents of the collective unconscious are called *archetypes*. The word archetypes means an original model after which other similar things are patterned. A synonym is *prototype*.²⁵

Through the archetypes found within the collective unconscious, we are able to glimpse into the primordial blueprints that not only make up an individual's psyche, but also form the foundation of all of humanity's psyches. Joseph Campbell, an individual who has studied Jungian psychology and its connection to mythology, has this to say about Jung's development of archetypes,

Archetypes are biologically grounded, whereas the Freudian unconscious is a collection of repressed traumatic experiences from the individual's lifetime. The Freudian unconscious is a personal unconscious, it is biographical. The Jungian archetypes of the unconscious are biological.²⁶

Reasserting Jung's discovery, Campbell not only identifies the differences in Freud's psychological understand, but also asserts the expansion of Jung's. Identifying archetypes as biological, expands their influence to grow beyond an individual's personal experience to something that is ingrained within each of us. It would appear that Freud's understanding of archetypes are more in line with Jung's understanding of symbols. Symbols that have a personal significance to the individual experiencing and identifying them. Moving beyond a biographical understanding of these archetypes to a biological one, takes the foundation of these out of one's life experience, and places them into something that all of humanity has access to regardless of personal experience. Being hard coded into our psyche these archetypes become accessible to every human being around the globe. These archetypes represent universal truths

²⁵ Nordby, 41.

²⁶ Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers* (New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 60-61.

that are valid and vital for all of humanity. Truths that if stifled can, cause psychological distress, and when understood can allow one to achieve psychological peace and personal growth.

As previously stated by Welsh, and reiterated by Campbell, archetypes are universal to all. Thus by studying these archetypes, we can begin to understand the universal images that we all share and the role they play in our development. As explained by M. Euther Harding, "...the archetypes are the forms or patterns of a psychic nature, inherent in every man, that correspond on the psychic level to the pattern underlying the instincts that determine human behavior on the physiological level."²⁷

Along with assisting one with understanding their personal drives, archetypes can also help one with overcoming psychological distresses and struggles that may be holding one's psychological development back. Expressing this understanding, John Welch writes, "The archetypes provide patterns of meaning and guides to growth for the developing personality."²⁸ These archetypes, hidden within the recesses of the collective unconscious, are an invaluable tool toward the development of one's psyche. It is through recognizing them, and developing a deeper understanding of their importance and influence on our psyche, that enables one to move forward towards healthy psychological development and growth as a human being.

1.4 - Myth and Truth

Identifying these archetypes is essential to understanding the universal blueprints that make up one's psyche. Being unaware or ignoring these blueprints, can be extremely

²⁷ M. Euther Harding, "The Cross as an Archetypal Symbol," in *Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality*, ed. Robert C. Moore (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 1-2.

²⁸ Welch, 73.

detrimental. Fortunately for us, these blueprints, or archetypes, are imprinted into our psyche and over the course of human history have exposed themselves to us through different means. One main way that our collective unconscious has spoken to us and revealed these archetypes to mankind is through myth. In fact, it was Jung's study of myth, and the themes they revealed that lead him to the understanding of archetypes and the theory that he developed surrounding them. Welsh emphasizes this fact by stating,

Jung arrived at the theory of archetypes as he discovered common patterns and themes in the dreams of present day patients as well as in the fairytales and mythology of history. The specifics of images and stories differed according to individuals and cultures but the underlying patterns and meaning were the same. Such studies led him to assume a transpersonal level of psyche which was fundamental for human development.²⁹

Since the beginning of time, mankind has utilized myths in an attempt to reveal truths. While most simply view these myths as an ancient society's means to explain the mysteries of the world they are not scientifically equipped to understand, they also provided an even greater value. These myths provided their culture an even greater value, a way to relay moral and ethical truths. Reiterating this expression of myth, Clifford Mayes turns to Alasdair MacIntyre stating, "The modern ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre has observed that mythology as a moral exemplum is at the heart of a culture and is its primary mode of education into 'virtue'. In its myths a culture's value system is most clearly discernible."³⁰ While there is value to studying myths and mythology in attempt to understand the culturally relevant morals of the society they were written, an even greater value to myths arises when you recognize the

²⁹ Welch, 73.

³⁰ Mayes, 41.

Jungian psychological truth of the collective unconscious, and the role that myth plays in its development and expression into archetypes.

Understanding myths have a moral or ethical truth relayed within them already places a value in studying them for they provide one with an insight into the morals and ethics of said culture. However, when one begins to accept the notion that Jung has put forth concerning the collective unconscious and the interconnectivity that we all share through it, one can begin to see the greater impact and importance of these mythological tales. Accepting this truth allows myths to break out beyond its cultural boundaries to become relevant to every culture throughout history. For Jung, myths are a result of the collective unconscious coming to the surface and exposing the archetypes in a manner one can understand. As Robert Segal puts it, "Myth for Jung functions not merely to announce the existence of the unconscious but actually to enable humans to experience it."³¹ Through the development and expression of myths, humanity is able to get a glimpse into the collective unconscious, and consequently, the archetypes that are found within it. Through myths, the archetypes are exposed in a digestible manner, and in a fashion that can be recognized and embraced.

Myths attempt to reveal truths and explanations of the unknown to the societies they are expressed in. They also expose a deeper inner truth. Beyond the endeavor to relay an understanding of the external world to those living within their society, myths also reveal a deeper truth about what lay hidden within the abyss of our mind. Jung discovered through a broader study of myths that the mythological stories, which were relayed and spoken

³¹ Jung, 18.

throughout the world, share many common themes. Despite the different cultures or communities that they are created in, there are universal ideas found within them that they all express. As indicated by Bloch, "Myths are similar because they come from the universal anthropological structure of the psyche. The mythological imagery and so-called primitive mentality express some kind of human species data."³² When viewing these universal ideas through the lens of Jung's understanding of the collective unconscious, one begins to evaluate myths beyond just a story with a morally relevant meaning to the culture it was developed. Myths begin to expand beyond the confines of the culture in which they were created and expressed, growing exponentially to become relevant and connected to all of humanity. With an understanding that myths have surfaced from our unconscious, or rather the greater collective unconscious, one cannot help but realize that the truths revealed through them are universal truths.

Referring to these truths as universal, can be a bit misleading. Many might begin to view these mythological stories as something along the line of divine revelation, but this is certainly not the case. These mythological stories hold within them archetypal truths that are revealed when one begins to evaluate, and examine them alongside other myths. Through this evaluation, one discovers the parallels between myths and leads to archetypes being formed and defined. It is through the archetypes, discovered within myths that we begin to understand the universal element to myths. Joseph Campbell, one of the leading experts on myths and the

³² Bloch, 223.

truths revealed within them, expressed this understanding of the connection between the psyche, archetypes and myth stating,

The psyche is the inward experience of the human body, which is essentially the same in all human beings, with the same organs, the same instincts, the same impulses, the same conflicts, the same fears. Out of this common ground have come what Jung has called the archetypes, which are the common ideas of myth.³³

From Campbell's study of myth, his understanding and evaluation of the universal archetypes that are found within them, one can begin to understand what is being revealed through these myths. As a result, the value myths offer our psyche, and the truths they reveal to society as a whole, becomes exponentially important.

³³ Campbell, 60.

Chapter 2 - Joseph Campbell

Joseph Campbell was an American mythologist who, like Jung, utilized mythology to gain an understanding of the connection that myths have with our psyche. He studied their connection to religion and the themes they share. Influenced by Carl Jung and Jungian thought he studied mythology throughout history and embraced the fact that all these myths had a universal connection to them. He discovered many patterns and similarities between the truths they presented despite the geographical, cultural and historical boundaries they may have had. In addition, a major part of his studies focused on the similarities that myths shared in their structure. Through this evaluation, he discovered that the structure of myths all seemed to follow the same guidelines and that the hero of these myths all shared a common journey. Like Jung, through this process and an analysis of the similarities, Campbell began to see archetypes rising to the surface. Expressing this ideal Campbell writes,

It is obvious that the infantile fantasies which we all cherish still in the unconscious play continually into myth, fairy tale, and the teachings of the church, as symbols of indestructible being. This is helpful, for the mind feels at home with the images and seems to be remembering something already known.³⁴

Campbell also associates church teachings with myth and fairy tales. While many might think this may insinuate an invalidity, or falsehood, to these teachings, this is not the case.

Campbell makes it abundantly clear that despite many coming to understand myths as fiction with no ability to reveal truths, theirs is an invalid understanding of myth. In fact he asserts the exact opposite. Expressing the intrinsic truth myth provides Campbell states that,

Although the word is popularly used to denote falsehood, myth is actually a perennial vehicle for expressing truth. Human beings have always been told, in mythic forms, the

³⁴ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York, New York: Princeton University Press, 1973), 177.

stories they want to be remembered and passed on – such as the Arthurian legends or the enduring biblical tales – to distinguish them from fashion fads or the constantly changing facts of almanacs or the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Myth and symbol are fundamental and essential properties of all religions; they are the special language of religious experience.³⁵

For Campbell, myths are actually a manner, or language, in which truth is revealed. Mythology is a linguistic form that is necessary to reveal the truths found within religion, and a form that the archetypes of our collective unconscious can be expressed and understood.

In order to properly understand myths and the truths revealing through the symbols they utilize, one must understand the archetypes that are represented within them. When one begins to grasp these archetypes and the universal truths they reveal, one will also begin to understand the interconnectivity that humanity shares with one another. Missing this vital concept disavows myth as simply man made fictional stories with no true relevance. Additionally, one also misses out on an even greater truth that humanity has struggled with since the beginning of time, the truth of acceptance. Joseph Campbell understands this unifying value to myth as Robert Segal asserts writing, “Campbell declares that myth, rightly understood, preaches acceptance rather than rejection of the everyday, physical world. Myth, he says, espouses a Jungian – like balance between physical reality and deeper, psychological or metaphysical reality.”³⁶ Through a deeper study of myths, and the archetypes that are hidden within them, one reveals universal truths that can assist with psychological health. Additionally, myths also have the capacity to create a bridge to other cultures. Utilizing myths can create a

³⁵ Joseph Campbell, *Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2001), 102.

³⁶ Robert Segal, “Joseph Campbell: Theory of Myth,” *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 17, no 4 (1987): 11.

connection with others, and aid in explaining and expressing the universal truths that all of humanity share. When one begins to understand myths as an avenue to relay truths that are shared by all, one can also utilize them to find connections and similarities within cultures that appear to have drastic ideological differences. This, however, can only be done when one moves beyond the symbols that are utilized in these myths and to the archetypes that they represent.

When one exclusively focuses on the symbols found within myths, rather than the archetypes they represent, one creates instant division between cultures. On the other hand, if one is able to evaluate these archetypes and truths one is then also able to identify the similarities behind the meanings of these seemingly different tales. This creates a connection with those of a different culture, rather than causing deeper divisions. In the modern age where knowledge is at one's fingertips and science is valued over religion, the mythological tales told around the camp fire have become so devalued that they are on the verge of extinction. This tragic reality is unfortunately for if more embraced the truths found embedded with myth there would be a greater opportunity for individuals to see our connectedness with one another, regardless of one's individual culture or belief.

Understanding that mythology represents something greater than a fictional tale opens the door to the usefulness of myth. Like Jung, Campbell attaches a profound importance on symbols and focuses on their roles in myths. He believed that, as a result of the decline in our use of mythology there has consequently been an increase in psychological distress. He asserts this stating,

It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back. In fact, it may well be that the very high incidence of neuroticism among ourselves follows from the decline among us of such effective spiritual aid.³⁷

Jung's analysis of dreams revealed that hidden within one's psyche were symbols representing archetypes that were not being recognized. By bringing these from the unconscious to the surface, he was able to assist his clients work towards a healthy psyche. If not for his vast knowledge of mythology and the symbols found within them, he would have struggled to understand the truths that his client's unconscious were attempting to reveal. His grasp of these myths are what allowed him to provide the support and direction his client's needed. The interconnectedness that myths have made on our unconscious is something that should not be ignored. When the symbols imbedded in myths are revealed and analyzed, they can assist one in understanding the psychological distress one is currently going through, and can also be a source of ongoing growth and support.

Recognizing that myths relay symbols which hold archetypal truths, makes the passing on of these myths invaluable. As shown by Jung, through his concept of the collective unconscious, the symbols found within these myths have been imprinted in our psyche to help lead us to the archetypes they represent. Through understanding and recognizing these, one is able to work through the psychological distress they are experiencing and find peace, motivation and purpose for themselves. As a result, the value of myths, along with the importance of recognizing the symbols embedded within them should not be suppressed or

³⁷ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York, New York: Princeton University Press, 1973), 11.

viewed as irrelevant, but rather should be emphasized. These myths not only serve as a means to address and progress through distress they also provide guidance for healthy living.

Joseph Campbell is recognized as one of the most renowned mythologist and he is not only recognized for the truths found within myths, but also identified the archetypes that were shared by them. Like Jung, who discovered these archetypes emerging out of one's unconscious, Campbell discovered these archetypes also emerged out of all great mythological tales. Through his analysis of myths, he began to identify common themes among them and the roles and paths that every great hero within these myths took. From an analysis of myth, he identified what he called the hero's journey, which was the blue print of every great myth. After discovering this cross cultural or universal theme, he began to identify the path ever hero takes in their personal journey or quest. When identifying this universal themes he breaks down the journey into three parts,

...whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit above described: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return.³⁸

It is interesting and vital to note that while Campbell certainly could have referenced the stories within the Bible as myths, he distinguishes them as legends. This is important because, while myth and legends share many similarities, there is one unique difference between the two. The major difference is that Legends are based on historical figures, while myths are not. Campbell utilizes this distinction to validate the historical claim to these biblical legend.

³⁸ Campbell, 35.

2.1 - "The Hero's Journey"

Encompassed within the parts of the hero's journey emerges even more similarities and universal themes. As Campbell further analyzed these, he developed a blueprint that showed the pattern that every hero took during his journey. This blue print, or what Campbell identifies as a monomyth consists of 12 stages. These stages as identified by Campbell are; the ordinary world, call to adventure, refusal of call, meeting the mentor, crossing the threshold, tests, approach of inmost cave, ordeal, reward, road block, resurrection, and finally return with elixir. All great heroes make this journey. While the focus of this paper will be on the archetype of the mentor or sage, found within the meeting the mentor stage, a brief overview of the entire journey is important to understand the relevance and necessity of this archetype to the journey of an individual.

The first, or preliminary stage, is the ordinary world. This is where all individuals find themselves and also where the hero finds him or herself before making their journey. This is the world that we all live in and the world that the hero will return to, if and when their quest is completed. It is from this ordinary world that either, through a call by another or through the discomfort or disconcerting nature that they find within this ordinary world, that one is moved or summoned to go beyond it. The call to adventure, Campbell explains, "-signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown."³⁹ Every hero reaches a point, either by a summons from another, or from within, which they feel compelled to move beyond the ordinary world, outside

³⁹ Campbell, 58.

their comfort zone and into the unknown. It is at this point, that the individual is then faced with their first challenge, should they answer this call.

When the hero is faced with the prospect of having to leave the comfort of the ordinary world and pursue the calling, an internal one or one that has been thrust upon them by an outside source, they are moved into the next stage of their journey, the rejection or refusal of this call. After being called to begin their journey the individual begins to contemplate whether or not they should actually take this journey with all the possible obstacles. The fear of the unknown and the challenges that surround this journey cause trepidation and uncertainty. As Campbell expresses,

...in the myths and popular tales, we encounter the dull case of the call unanswered; for it is always possible to turn the ear to other interests. Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into the negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or 'culture,' the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved.⁴⁰

The hero, at this point must make a choice. Do they continue on their journey towards a lofty goal or do they remain back in the ordinary world. Continuing with the status quo, the individual gives up the journey and assimilates back into that which he was initially motivated to move beyond. However, in doing so, the hero once again feels the same calling that pushed him to contemplate the journey in the first place. Campbell describes this writing, "His flowering world becomes a wasteland of dry stones and his life feels meaningless..."⁴¹ While this feeling of meaningless does not always motivate the individual to move forward on their path, the return of this emptiness or void revitalizes their initial motivation and thrusts them

⁴⁰ Campbell, 59.

⁴¹ Campbell, 59.

forward. In some instances, this revitalization can be from an outside force or event beyond their control.

As the hero, either by choice or as a result of the choice being thrust upon them, moves through the stage of refusing their call and progress on their journey. While progressing through their doubts, they are met by a mentor or sage, which will help guide and assist them on their journey. Campbell explains, "For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass."⁴² It is this stage that the individual is presented with a mentor who will guide and support them through their journey, assisting them in one form or other on their quest. This mentor, according to Jung, and the purpose of this paper, is where the archetype of the sage arises. This sage is essential to the development of the hero. It provides them with what is necessary to complete their journey and be successful on their quest. As indicated by Campbell,

In fairy lore it may be some little fellow of wood, some wizard, hermit, shepherd, or smith, who appears, to supply the amulets and advice that the hero requires. The higher mythologies develop the role in the great figure of the guide, the teacher, the ferryman, the conductor of souls to the afterworld.⁴³

While this mentor or guide can appear in a plethora of forms, the universal purpose for them is to provide the hero with the assistance that is necessary to complete their quest. With the intervention and interaction with this figure, the hero would not be able to continue on their journey, and ultimately complete the quest that they have made the decision to undertake. It is

⁴² Campbell, 69.

⁴³ Campbell, 72.

this archetypal persona of the sage that this paper will mainly focus on after the overview of the entire journey and the stages that the hero ventures through.

Upon meeting their mentor and the reception of their guidance and aid, the hero continues on their path entering the next stage which is identified as, the crossing of the threshold. Once again, the hero is faced with the unknown of their future and they must now cross another even more treacherous threshold. Besides facing the unknown before them when they initiated this journey, they are now faced with a realization that their path takes them into darkness and challenges that they are completely unaware of. Campbell expresses this portion of the journey writing,

With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance of the zone of magnified power....Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and the beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe.⁴⁴

By facing the fears of the unknown, the hero is able to progress past this stage of their journey and continue on the path that must be taken in order to reach its summit and completion. They must take this proverbial leap of faith into the unknown. By trusting in their personal motivation and belief in the quest, along with the guidance provided by the sage, they will progress forward into the next stage. This next stage lies completely outside of their comfort zone and into an arena of unknown trials and tribulations.

As the hero moves out of their comfort zone, beyond the confines of the ordinary world they summon the courage, through the support and encouragement of a sage, and

⁴⁴ Campbell, 77-78.

crosses the threshold into unknown territory. Upon entry into this unknown territory, the hero then faces new challenges and trials that are beyond what they expect or contemplate. These trials are the next stage in his journey as Campbell describes, "Once having traversed threw threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials."⁴⁵ The manner of these trials vary immensely and the hero must rely on the advice and tools that have been provided to the hero by his mentor, and sage that he encountered before crossing the threshold. Campbell expresses this truth stating that, "The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper who he met before entrance into this region."⁴⁶ With the aid of their sage, the hero is prepared to face the trials ahead of them. Their journey continues within the world beyond their comfort zone, outside the ordinary, and the tribulation continues as the hero enters into the next stage.

Within the next stage, the approach of the innermost cave, the hero faces new challenges and struggles. During this stage the hero faces more challenges that are deeper and often times in this stage the individual is faced with truths that attempt to shake their resolve. These obstacles tend to be on a more psychological or spiritual level. They not only become a set back towards the completion of their quest, but challenge the validity and righteousness of their quest all together. Within this stage the hero is exposed to truths unrecognized within the ordinary world. These truths can only be experienced when they cross the threshold and face the trials beyond the ordinary and within the extraordinary. As expressed by Campbell,

The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long road and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination.

⁴⁵ Campbell, 97.

⁴⁶ Campbell, 97.

Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed – again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land.⁴⁷

The hero must battle through this stage in preparation of what they are about to face. Without successfully completing this stage, they would have ill prepared for making it through the next stage, the ordeal.

Moving through the inner most cave, the hero arrives at another pivotal moment of their journey where they must face a great trial. Campbell identifies the stage that this challenged is faced as, the ordeal. This should not be confused with the climax of the journey, but rather as the midpoint of the hero's adventure. As described by Campbell, "This is the nadir, the zenith, or at the uttermost edge of the earth, at the central point of the cosmos, in the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart."⁴⁸ It is at this moment that the hero is confronted with his darkest and most tumultuous moment, which will cause a metamorphosis within the hero and change him forever. Only by going through this ordeal, will the hero obtain what they have been searching for and what motivated them to make this journey in the first place.

Upon the success of overcoming the ordeal, the hero is then presented with an object or an epiphany and it is this moment that they reach the next stage. The next stage is known as the reward. Every individual that takes a journey, is driven by something. If not for some inner yearning, or an external desire for an object of value or purpose, there would be nothing to motivate the individual to leave the comforts of the ordinary world and enter into the unknown

⁴⁷ Campbell, 109.

⁴⁸ Campbell, 177

world full of trials and tribulations. It is at this stage that the hero reaches and obtains the goal that they initially set out to achieve. While this reward may take the form of an object, the reward received goes beyond just the item obtained and becomes a symbol of the trials the hero overcame and what they gained internally through these trials. Campbell explains this relating that, "As he crosses threshold after threshold, conquering dragon after dragon, the stature of divinity that he summons to his highest wish increases, until it subsumes the cosmos."⁴⁹ Upon achieving their goal and receiving their reward the hero actually moves beyond what they set out to accomplish. This reward is greater than what they realized when they set out on their journey and the responsibility they gain through the reception of said reward has increased.

This leads the hero to the next stage in their journey. Once the reward is achieved, the hero then moves on to the next stage in their journey, their return to the ordinary world. The hero needs to understand that the journey to obtain this reward is not fully complete until they return to the world in which they left. Campbell writes,

When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds.⁵⁰

Even though the hero has obtained the reward, along with the power and knowledge that comes with its reception, their journey and trials do not end. They face more challenges as they

⁴⁹ Campbell, 190.

⁵⁰ Campbell, 193.

return from the world they entered to receive their reward and attempt to return to the ordinary world. This stage is adequately identified as the roadblock, for the hero is confronted with obstacles as they venture to return to the ordinary world. The hero may not only face physical trials on their journey back to the ordinary world. Some may also face psychological trials as well. Now that they have experienced the extraordinary world, they are tempted to remain there and continue the spiritual and mental bliss it provides. Campbell expresses this when he describes that trepidation the Buddha himself had upon reaching enlightenment, as he felt that the world would not be able to understand or embrace the truth that he had discovered.⁵¹

Battling through the threshold of the extraordinary or spiritual world back to the ordinary world, the hero emerges into the next stage of his journey. This stage, known as the resurrection, is where the hero is reborn, in a way. They move out of the extraordinary world and return to the ordinary world that they travelled beyond. It is during this stage that the hero begins to realize that the reward they received, is beyond the physical object they received. The true reward is obtained through the journey as one travels from the ordinary world, through the extraordinary world, and back again. Along with whatever reward the hero earned they also obtained knowledge and wisdom that they could not gain anywhere else but through this journey. Emphasizing this fact Campbell writes,

The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know. And the exploration of that dimension, either willingly or unwillingly, is the whole sense of the deed of the hero. The values and distinctions that in normal life seem important

⁵¹ Campbell, 193.

disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what formerly was only the otherness.⁵²

Emerging back into the ordinary world, the hero recognizes the fact that the truths revealed through the journey in the extraordinary world have been forgotten and those within the ordinary world need to be reminded and exposed to these truths once more.

Realizing the ordinary world is immersed in darkness and in need of an awakening, the hero enters the final stage of his journey. It is in this stage, known as the return with elixir, which the hero provides the world with the reward that he received during his ordeal. Though this goes beyond just providing an object for the world, the hero realizes that the true elixir that he returns with, is the knowledge and wisdom he gained from the journey. Thus the hero realizes, that this stage is just the beginning of his ongoing journey, where he must relay what he has learned and experienced back to the world, so they too, may get a glimpse of the extraordinary. Campbell expressing this truth writes,

That is the hero's ultimate difficult task. How render back into the light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark? How represent on a two-dimensional surface a three-dimensional form, or in a three-dimensional image a multi-dimensional meaning? How translate into terms of "yes" and "no" revelations that shatter into meaninglessness every attempt to define the pairs of opposites? How communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses the message of the all-generating void?⁵³

This becomes the greatest challenge of all for the hero. Even though he returns with his reward, the elixir to share with the world, he cannot force anyone to drink it. They must utilize all they have learned through their journey to help educate and motivate others to understand and seek the truth that is found beyond the ordinary world. Through this process, the hero hopes to

⁵² Campbell, 217.

⁵³ Campbell, 218.

spark in others the desire to take a journey themselves to venture on their own quest and receive the reward that we are all called to receive. For the more individuals that take this journey and return with their own elixir to share, the more that world gains and is exposed to the extraordinary that calls to us all.

While focusing on the archetype of the Sage, which emerges during the fourth stage of Campbell's monomyth, it is important that one understands the entire journey that a hero goes through. As the hero makes their journey, the Sage provides the hero with guidance and direction. While this primarily takes place in the fourth stage of the journey, the influence from the Sage is essential throughout the entire journey. It is only through the Sage's guidance, direction, advice and tools, which the hero is able to overcome the obstacles they face. Through the influence of the Sage, the hero is provided with what is necessary to move through numerous stages of the journey, so that they can reach and overcome their ordeal. However, the influence of the Sage does not stop there. It continues as the hero returns from the ordeal, and back into the ordinary world, to pass on the elixir obtained during the process of the journey to the world.

2.2 - Universal Archetypes

When dissecting, and evaluating, Joseph Campbell's monomyth, one immediately recognizes the direct influence Carl Jung's psychology had on Campbell's theories, particularly in regards to archetypes. One should also recognize that the universal pattern expressed by Campbell's description of the monomyth provides a parallel to Jung's notion of archetypes and the influence that it has on one's psyche. Harding expresses this truth when describing

archetypes, indicating that, "...they exert an inescapable influence on the motivation of human behavior and inner subjective experience. Down the ages they have been expressed in legends and myths..."⁵⁴ Embracing the notion that, within myths, the archetypes and truths that are revealed play an important and pivotal role to our psyche, increases the value of the archetypes found within them. With an understanding that these archetypes have value and relevance, one is able to look deeper into what they represent and have to offer one's psyche for the betterment of the individual, as well as society as a whole.

When reflecting on the role of the sage in Campbell's breakdown of the monomyth and its connection to Jung's concept of archetype, one begins to realize that the sage is not just an essential role for the hero to complete their journey, but also for one's psyche as they seek to find meaning and purpose in life. For both Jung and Campbell this external quest is a mirrored reflection of the journey one takes as they probe one's own psyche. Before evaluating the archetype of the sage and their invaluable role in one's life, one must first embrace the essential nature of striving for meaning, purpose, and authentic living. This is important because it helps to establish the fact that conversely, if one is not striving for this, they are being inauthentic. Describing Jung's notion of these individuals, and their drive to understand a deeper meaning in life Robert Doran writes,

The authentic person is the person who pursues understanding, who seeks truth, who responds to what is really worthwhile, and who searches for God and his will. The inauthentic person is the person who flees understanding, who runs from

⁵⁴ M. Euther Harding, "The Cross as an Archetypal Symbol," in *Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality*, ed. Robert C. Moore (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 208.

the truth, who resists further questions about his or her decisions, and who tries to escape God.⁵⁵

As described by Doran, Jung believes that the only means in which to live an authentic life is to search for truth and understanding in a world that seems to have no meaning. Not only must one seek these truths, but they must also seek the Divine behind the truth and strive to live according to its will. Alternatively, by avoiding shying away from this journey toward truth, and consequently God's will, one moves away from living a truly authentic life. While Jung may not assert the reality of a metaphysical God, he certainly emphasizes the truth of the God archetype. An archetype that for Jung leads one to strive for truth and to live an authentic life, which for him is one way to ensure a healthy and stable psyche. By avoiding this or moving away from this truth, we further damage our psyche, and as a result, become less than what we are meant to be.

In the modern era, the notion of pursuing truth and finding purpose, appears to be devoid of any connection to myth and is moving away from traditional religious beliefs and practices. It would seem that many feel that the only valid means to discover any meaningful truth is through the pursuit of science. While scientific exploration and the pursuit of scientific knowledge is certainly a means to discover many known truths and an understanding of the physical world we live in, it does not necessarily provide one with a deep sense of meaning or purpose in the fashion that is described by Jung. It is only through a pursuit outside of science that one is able to discover the meaning that one longs for internally. It is through the study of and embracing the truths found within myths that allow one to move beyond the physical

⁵⁵ Robert M. Doran, "Jungian Psychology and Christian Spirituality: 1," in *Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality*, ed. Robert C. Moore (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 208.

truths of science and into the spiritual truths, that our psyche longs for. Jung expressed this fact stating, “Just as music has a meaning that is satisfying in the sense that every meaningful whole is satisfying, so every true mythologeme has its satisfying meaning. This meaning is so hard to translate into language of science because it can be fully expressed only in mythological terms.”⁵⁶ While this truth may be one that modern individuals struggle to accept it does not make it any less relevant.

2.3 - Science Without Myth Leaves One Unfulfilled

In an era where it seems that those in societies with the most privilege are also the most despondent, maybe this truth needs to stop being overlooked and individuals need to embrace the fact that science cannot answer all the woes we experience. With the advancement of science and modern medicine, and the growing belief that science has all the answers, one would think that there would be a decrease in issues such as depression and feelings of hopelessness. This, however, does not appear to be the case. In fact, the trends seem to be moving in the opposite direction. Doctors, Mark Olfson and Steven Marcus, have studied depression in the United States and have discovered that,

Among the psychotropic drugs, antidepressants are the most frequently prescribed medications. In 2005, antidepressants surpassed antihypertensive agents to become the most commonly prescribed class of medications in office-based and hospital outpatient-based medical practice.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ C. G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3-4.

⁵⁷ Mark Olfson, MD, MPH and Steven C. Marcus, PhD, “National Patterns in Antidepressant Medication Treatment,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 66, no.8 (2009): 848.

Even beyond the realm of psychotropic drugs, the use and prescription of antidepressants has risen in the United States. Ramin Mojtabai states, "Over the past two decades, there has been a marked increase in antidepressant use. Antidepressants are now the third most commonly prescribed medication class in the United States."⁵⁸ With the obvious rise in the use of antidepressants, that scientific data and observation has proven to be true, one must begin to wonder why this rise is occurring, particularly in a country that does not suffer from the issues associated with those of a third world nation.

It is very telling that one of the most progressive, secular, and well-off countries in the world, has such a large issue with depression. Individuals that are feeling so lost and hopeless are seeking medication to help them deal with woes of the world or their internal subconscious issues. One must contemplate if there is a connection between the increase of depression and the decrease of religiosity. As indicated by Jeannine Gramick, a writer for the *National Catholic Reporter*,

It is no secret that Christianity is in decline in the West. A Newsweek cover story in March 2009 reported that 86 percent of the U.S. population self-identified as Christians in 1990. By 2009, the percentage dropped to 76 percent, while the number who claimed "no religion" doubled to 16 percent in that same period. Among those under the age of 30, the figure declaring "no religion" was close to 30 percent.⁵⁹

As the discontent of the world increases while those who believe or seek a higher power or religious practice decreases, it is not out of the realm of possibility to think that there is a relationship between these two trends.

⁵⁸ Ramin Mojtabai and Mark Olsson, "Proportion of Antidepressants Prescribed Without a Psychiatric Diagnosis Is Growing," *Health Affairs* 30, no.8 (2011): 1434.

⁵⁹ Jeannine Gramick, "As More Take the Spiritual Route, Religions Decline," *National Catholic Reporter* 48, no.15 (2012): 15.

Beyond just observing this trend one should also inquire if there is any evidence to support a correlation between one's religiosity and being content. Research conducted by Erich Gundlach and Matthias Opfinger's appears to indicate that this correlation is valid. They state, "Religious behavior does not generate a direct financial reward to believers, but it cannot be questioned that religious activities generate subjective happiness. Hence religiosity appears to be a plausible determinant of happiness."⁶⁰ Reflecting on the fact that there is a correlation between happiness and religion, along with the fact that antidepressant use continues to rise as religious beliefs fall, one should ponder why this is occurring. More importantly, beyond the why, one must also begin to contemplate how to combat this trend, because certainly the answer should not be pumping individuals full of medication.

2.4 - Moving from Science to Myth in the Search of Truth

While individuals may struggle to accept that truths can be relayed outside of hard scientific backing we have discovered through scientific means, that there is a growing issue that needs to be addressed. If we wish to prevent the continued growth of hopelessness and discontent amongst a growing population, we cannot ignore this truth, nor avoid accepting the solution, even if it means that solution comes from something other than pure science. It may be difficult to embrace, but there is a real possibility that the truths we need to hear may be truth that cannot be proven through science. Rather these truths may solely be found within one's search for God and religious understanding. As previously indicated by Jung, one finds a sense of purpose and meaning through the drive to know and understand the Divine and is

⁶⁰ Erich Gundlach and Matthias Opfinger, "Religiosity as a Determinant of Happiness," *Review of Development Economics* 17, no.3 (2013): 523.

fulfilled by their pursuit of this knowledge. Campbell's description of the monomyth, the hero's journey, shows how one pursues this knowledge and illustrates how myths have been utilized to subconsciously influence us and guide us towards our goal of the Divine. Accepting this, one can then dive further into this journey and the archetypes that are found within. This allows us to move forward and begin to address the concerns of dissatisfaction with life and their individual lack of meaning, along with solutions to these concerns.

As expressed by Jung, individuals have an inner drive and desire towards a purpose driven life, a meaning that propels one forward. While sometimes this is a subconscious desire, and the individual is unaware of the longing, the truth remains that the longing is still present. After a prolonged discontent with life that has no apparent cause, individuals will begin to seek psychological assistance to help discover the root of their dissatisfaction. Seeking psychological assistance during a time of duress is a wise decision and one that should be pursued. However, one should be cautious of a quick diagnosis of depression, followed by a prescription of antidepressants. This may not provide the meaning that one is actually seeking. One's desire to achieve contentment and meaning, amidst a society that claims it is reached through earthly success, can cause increasing difficulty. Even though obtaining psychological assistance and guidance should be pursued, and can be beneficial, it also can become a distraction to what one is truly searching for, a sage.

Through the lens of Jung, we are all searching for meaning. Like Victor Frankl, the famed psychotherapist that created and developed Logotherapy, asserts, our journey in life is one that pulls us towards meaning and purpose. A purpose that inevitably can be found within, and can

be achieved despite any situation, even the most traumatizing. Through an evaluation of our unconscious and subconscious one can discover what is holding us back from achieving our goals and achieving this meaning and purpose in one's life. Taking a look through another lens, given to us by Joseph Campbell, we also realize that in order to discover this meaning, we as individuals must take a journey to achieve our goals. The hero's journey, as outlined by Campbell and utilized by all great myths, is actually an allegory for each of our own personal journey. When we put these two lenses together, and wear them like a set of glasses, we begin to see the full picture more clearly.

All people desire purpose and all people must journey to achieve that purpose. Only by taking this journey and moving through the stages of said journey is one able to attain and realize the peace they seek in this world. With the over emphasis of hard scientific proof, along with the modern understanding that we can do everything on our own, many have avoided a key component to Campbell's hero's journey. Connecting with and opening one up to the guidance and direction of a sage is essential in this journey. It appears that, as a result of the need for some scientific backing, many may subconsciously be seeking a sage when they approach a psychological treatment. Again, one should not disavowal the role of mental health treatment, however as mentioned previously, it appears that these services are not achieving its purpose. Many who are seeking relief from their discontent are only receiving it through medication. This medication only masks the discontent and is unable to provide the individual with the meaning that has driven them towards treatment initially.

While pursuing mental health services may not be the answer to that drive that spurs one forward on their journey towards meaning and purpose, it does show the unconscious desire for some direction and support. As we progress further into a secular society, individuals are drawn to more secularized answers, to the internal questions that they cannot seem to find answers for. This drive leads them to pursue direction from a source they feel, or are being told, can assist them with their journey toward meaning. The fact that one has the subconscious desire to pursue assistance from another illustrate, that we cannot do everything on our own and as we progress on our own journey, we will need others to assist us along the way. Accepting that we gravitate towards some outside direction only further illustrates the truth that Jung asserted, through his understanding of archetypes, and Campbell asserted in his breakdown of the monomyth. Accepting this truth, one has an obligation to evaluate the details of the role of this archetype so that one understands its value and ensures that the role is being filled appropriately.

2.5 - Examining the Sage - Mentor over Medicine

Evaluating the role or archetype of the sage one should first examine the importance and relevance of this individual for the hero on their journey. As previously mentioned, our modern secular world has led to an increase of individuals seeking out psychological or psychiatric treatment, along with an increased reliance on medication to treat the ills of these individuals. Joseph Campbell recognizes this growing trend and alludes to the fact that these mental health professionals are not necessarily equipped to address the needs of everyone who comes through their office door. He states,

I have attended a number of psychological conferences dealing with this whole problem of the difference between mystical experience and the psychological crack-up. The difference is that the one who cracks up is drowning in the water in which the mystic swims. You have to be prepared for this experience.⁶¹

First, it should be expressed that Campbell in no way is disavowing the importance of the mental health field or the role of a psychologist or psychiatrist. Rather, he is expressing that many seek mental health assistance when they are really seeking a different type of guidance. The symptoms of one struggling through their personal hero's journey may look a lot like a psychological break down. However, what they are actually experiencing is a sense of being lost and without direction. This is where we begin to see the importance and need for the archetypal role of the sage.

Campbell said, "You have to prepare for this experience."⁶² It is this statement that really asserts the truth. One who is moving along their journey, and who is seeking a greater understanding of how and if they can complete it, will often find themselves lost and without any guidance. This is emphasized and illustrated through the stages of the hero's journey like meeting one's mentor, or the introduction of allies. As the individual struggles to find direction, they begin to realize they are unable to find the guidance on their own and their distress begins to rise. It is at this moment that the individual may appear to be on the verge of a psychological breakdown. They are unable to move forward in their journey and feel lost and trapped. They are unable to progress despite the desire to do so. This is the point in which they are considered drowning and many, unaware of what they are experiencing, may reach out to receive direction from the mental health field. However, this is not always the answer. Utilizing

⁶¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers* (New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 16.

⁶² Campbell, 16.

Campbell's analogy of drowning, the individual may be rescued from the experience through mental health treatment, but what the individual is searching for is not to be rescued, but rather to learn how to swim. It is through the interaction of the archetypal sage figure that the individual is provided with the instructions and tools needed to swim.

It is only through one's interaction with the sage that one is prepared for the experience and able to undertake the experience. Without this instruction, the individual is ill prepared and unable to continue their journey. As indicated by Clifford Mayes, "The archetype of the savior and archetype of the wise old man or woman are crucial to how we understand our place in the world *sub specie eternitatis* – as creatures of eternity."⁶³ We as individuals, in a world ruled by time and space, must rely on others to help us understand the world we live in and help us navigate through it. This is not an option that one may take, but rather a necessary part of one's journey if they wish to complete their quest. One must accept this fact and embrace the assistance of another if they wish to have a chance in progressing forward.

Accepting that this archetypal figure is essential for any individual who wishes to progress on their journey establishes that they are not only important but also essential. Understanding this truth, does not always make discovering a valid and qualified sage involuntary. In the setting of a story or myth, these individuals appear to be placed on the path of the hero during his journey. This does not always transpire in the course of real life and one needs to be aware of the importance of the roles and responsibilities of this archetypal figure.

⁶³ Mayes, 88.

Only through embracing the necessity of this role and importance of this figure on one's journey, will one be allowed to seek out this guidance and ideally follow their direction.

A significant point that Campbell makes concerning the value of the sage and importance of having access to this individual before one begins to delve into their journey is that, without a guide one can become lost. As previously indicated, one can feel as if they are drowning without the proper support. Campbell extends his exertion of obtaining a guide before one commences on their journey, for through this acquisition, one will be better equipped and prepared to manage the experience. Campbell states, "If you undergo a spiritual transformation and have not had preparation for it, you do not know how to evaluate what has happened to you..."⁶⁴ It is in this statement that Campbell is expressing the dangers of progressing through one's journey without the proper support and guidance. Too often today, with the advent of the internet and the ease of access to information, individuals believe they can do everything on their own. This self-sufficient attitude may be beneficial in many areas of one's life, but one needs to be aware that there is a greater value in turning to a sage, or a mentor, when attempting to sojourn into unknown territory. An individual's inability to see the value of this archetypal role, can be psychologically damaging to those attempting to take this journey alone. Recognizing the importance of humility in one's journey, and relying on another, can be the difference between a psychological breakdown and a spiritual breakthrough.

Relying on the insight and knowledge of an individual is not a value that should be undermined nor diminished. This is the pattern for all advancement of knowledge and without

⁶⁴ Campbell, 18.

building upon the understanding that others have gained in the field of science would remain stagnant. Why should this notion be different in any other intellectual endeavors? The pursuit of understanding, via science, should not be any different than the pursuit of understanding in the field of psychology or when an individual is on a more personal spiritual pursuit. In fact, embracing the scientific model, i.e. building upon the truths and facts already established by previous experts, should only help to validate one's personal endeavors as they proceed on their journey. Mayes embraces this progression of knowledge and asserts the importance of the passing on of knowledge and wisdom that a sage has gained from their previous journey. He not only stresses this importance, but also indicates a sense of responsibility that the sage has in providing this information to those who wish to partake in a quest of their own.

Now, learning so much from so many of life's trials, traps, and temptations, the wise elders had emerged and could engage in an inner journey while at the same time seeking ways to contribute to their culture. Indeed, these inner and out projects enriched each other. As severely tested and finally proven elders of the community, these wise ones were both empowered and obligated to hand down to that community their peerless wisdom. The sage elder shows up universally in the sacred stories of cultures of all times, stimulating his or her culture's evolution."⁶⁵

Logic dictates that one would want to avoid any potential pitfalls or dangers they can on any journey they are undertaking. An individual motivated to journey towards a deeper understand of themselves, or the world as whole, need not be waylaid by previously identified stumbling blocks. Not only will these individuals need the assistance of those who have made the journey before them, but these sages have an obligation to assist others on their journey. Just as scientist have documented their experiments to assist the scientist that follow behind

⁶⁵ Mayes, 65.

them, individuals in the field of theology and philosophy have also documented their successes and failings for the same reason.

The sages of the past documented their realizations and disappointments, and they have also recognized the importance of passing this knowledge on to others who share their pursuits. This responsibility is so important to this journey that rules have been created to ensure that the role of the sage is embedded into the process. Amongst religious orders and other spiritually driven societies, this necessary component has always been emphasized and many have taken steps to ensure that this role permanently remains in place.

With the ease of access of information many have come to believe that they can simply google the answers they are seeking. Obtaining answers and receiving guidance unfortunately are two different things and while the internet may provide one with the knowledge they seek it will not provide one with the wisdom as how to apply it in their life. There is an obvious bias that one has when they believe that they can judge themselves and refuse to seek the counsel of another. No matter how self-aware an individual may be, they will always miss certain shortcomings, or deny aspects of their character they are uncomfortable addressing. Individuals are not wired to consistently focus on their own failures. It is detrimental to the psyche and one will naturally avoid addressing certain areas of their life they are uncomfortable admitting the need to be evaluated or adjusted. Sister Burrow, a Carmelite nun, addresses this point, specifically concerning issues surrounding the spiritual dimension, stating, "...we will need wise counsel for we are not good judges of our own motives. Our Lord wills us to seek light and guidance."⁶⁶ We

⁶⁶ Ruth Burrows, *Ascent To Love: The Spiritual Teaching of St John of the Cross*, (New Jersey: Dimension Books INC., 1987, 28.

all need assistance in addressing those issues in our life that require growth and change, including those within the spiritual arena. Individuals seeking medical treatment or in need of mental health services would be ridiculed for believing they could simply turn to the internet or even the library for the answer. Any sound and able minded person would direct them to a professional for guidance and direction, why should one believe this is any different when it comes to one's spiritual needs. Not only is it good practice to seek out a sage for guidance, as Sister Burrow has pointed out, it is also willed by the one whom the individual is seeking.

Chapter 3 - The Tradition of the Sage

To understand and embrace the value of the sage in our spiritual growth one must begin by tracing its roots in history. Through our understanding of Jung's collective unconscious and Campbell's hero's journey one may grasp the theoretical significance of a sage, however without practical and tangible support of this role in history many may continue to believe they are unnecessary, outdated, and unimportant. Now a days there are more people than ever that attend College to gain a quality education in order to prepare themselves for their future. Once in the real world they quickly come to discover that what they learned in school is not so easily translated into the work field. Theory and practice rarely match up and one must figure out how best to convert the knowledge they have obtaining into practical applications in the real world. It is here that the role of the sage becomes invaluable and essential.

The role of the sage is not to impart knowledge on an individual, but rather the wisdom on how to apply it in their daily living. This is something that has been understood since the dawn of time and, as Jung has expressed, is imbedded in our psyche. But again, theory and practice do not always match and thus it is necessary to understand how this role has transpired throughout history. For while one can assert that a sage is needed, if one does not provide an explanation as to how, or why, they are relevant, how can one hope to convince anyone of their significance. Without practical example of how this has transpired through the ages one can be left with doubts there is truly a value in seeking guidance from another. Consequently, they will rely solely on seeking knowledge, knowledge that they will struggle to apply to their life. Fortunately, individuals have understood this truth and have sought to

ensure its application is continued from one generation to the next. This not only ensured that practical wisdom is passed on, but that the body of knowledge continues to grow deeper and is also transferred on to future generations to build upon. Through the growth of knowledge from one age to the next there also grew a store house of wisdom from this knowledge.

Building upon the wisdom and guidance of the past is an invaluable asset when one is on a spiritual journey. Individuals have been taking this journey since the beginning of time and as a result there is a wealth of knowledge, and experience, can assist one on their own journey. As with any tradition, or spiritual practice, one should continue to look to the past to assist on in their journey in the present, and for guidance into the future. Debra Farrington, a writer and retreat leader, expresses this sentiment when discussing monastic rules and developing a personal rule for one's own journey. She writes,

Before working specifically on developing your rule it may be helpful to learn a bit about the history and development of rules, for the struggles you probably face in living a life centered on God – while they may be new to you – are not new to humankind.⁶⁷

Through this continued cycle, we can gain a greater understanding of those things previously unknown, along with how they can be applied in our life. It is this transference of knowledge and wisdom that helps to ensure that we continue to progress forward, by not overlooking the trail of our spiritual fathers, and regressing to a previous age.

⁶⁷ Debra K. Farrington, *Living Faith Day by Day: How the Sacred Rules of Monastic Traditions Can Help You Live Spiritually in the Modern World* (New York, New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2000), 5-6.

3.1 - St. Augustine and the Foundation of a Rule

One of the earliest individuals to help ensure that this passing of wisdom and understanding continues is St. Augustine. Living from 354-430 AD, St. Augustine advanced from a priest to a bishop, but regardless of these titles he was above all a monk. He understood and embraced the values of living a religious life and treated his episcopal home in Hippo as a monastery. Modern western monastic life developed from, and were greatly influenced by his letters, writings and the spiritual guidance they provided. It is through his writing that the foundation of western monasticism is built upon. As indicated by Sister Agatha Mary, “Augustine of Hippo...was regarded in the Middle Ages in Western Europe as a monastic legislator...”⁶⁸ While St. Augustine himself did not label his writings as a “rule,” it was his writings that were later reflected on, and referenced, to help establish the rules of practically every future orders. In fact, the understanding of what St. Augustine was developing as a “rule” did not culminate until after his death. As described by George Lawless, O.S.A. in the forward of *The Monastic Rule*,

The use of this word to describe a monastic genre, it should be noted, was a late arrival in western Latin vocabulary. In this instance, Eugippius of Lucullanum (now Pizzofalcone near Naples), was the first to label the document a *Rule* and to affix Augustine’s name to it.⁶⁹

While it may not have been St. Augustine’s intent for his writings to become a foundation for future monastic rules, and a guideline for living a monastic lifestyle, his contribution to western monasticism cannot be ignored. His writing created a foundation for

⁶⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *The Monastic Rule: Augustine of Hippo*, trans. Sister Agatha Mary, S.P.B., and Gerald Bonner (New York: New City Pres, 2013), 23.

⁶⁹ Augustine, 10.

future generations and influenced the development of numerous other religious order's rules.

Expressing the importance of Augustine's impact on monastic life John Fortin writes,

His thought and writings on this unique aspect of Christian life eventually came to exert an extraordinary influence down the centuries on numerous religious legislators and practitioners. Monks, nuns, and secular clergy in Augustine's own time and afterward have come under the sway of his teachings.⁷⁰

Fortin's appreciation for St. Augustine's writing goes beyond just being an influence on future monastic life. He portrays St. Augustine as the lone pioneer that began a movement, which influenced other orders in the development of their own unique rules and guidelines. According to Fortin, St. Augustine's writing were not only influential on future orders, they became the standard for all future orders and what they referenced when developing their own rule.⁷¹

As with any great sage, St. Augustine's knowledge and wisdom reaches beyond his lifetime. His contribution to the development of spiritual advancement has transpired to aide future generation. His writings continue to be read and are just as relevant today as they were when he wrote them. His influence is so great that it will also continue to be felt in future generations. Like Fortin, Andrew Hofer understood this influence, however for him it goes beyond just being a significant resource to the development of other monastic rules. St. Augustine's writings are more than just suggestions or a standard to follow, they are authoritative. Hofer indicates, "Augustine's Rule has special significance not only for its antiquity, but also for its continued authority for many religious communities..."⁷² It is because of this profound influence and authority that we begin our look into monastic rules with St.

⁷⁰ John R. Fortin, "Saint Augustine's Letter 211 in The Rule of the Master and The Rule of Saint Benedict," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*; Baltimore 14, no.2 (2006): 225.

⁷¹ Fortin, 226.

⁷² Andrew Hofer O.P., "Looking in the Mirror of Augustine's Rule," *New Blackfriars* 93, no.1045 (2011): 264.

Augustine. Without him, and his writings, monastic life would not have been established in the fashion that it is today. Therefore, it only makes logical sense that we begin with him as we evaluate monastic life, the role it has on the development of religious life, the sages formed within these orders, and the manner in which they pass on wisdom to future generations. St. Augustine's profound influence on others' spiritual journeys is not something that anyone should be surprised by. As the author of, "The Confessions," the first western autobiography that surrounded spiritual life, St. Augustine has been influencing and providing guidance to individuals on their spiritual journey since 400AD.

While he was a Carmelite himself one can recognize and appreciate the influence that St. Augustine had on other fathers of the Church, like the great mystical father, St. John of the Cross. Born about twelve hundred years after St. Augustine, he too embraced the value and need of a sage in one's journey. St. John was successful in moving towards a greater unity with God and understood the value of relaying to another in achieving this success. St. John recognized that while we all experience the inner call to take this journey, most will be unable to complete it. It is a journey that is wrought with trials, and obstacles, to overcome, and like any journey one will need assistance to complete it. This assistance is most valuable when given by one who has set out on a similar journey themselves and is one who can be trusted. As St. John recognized, not just anyone can assist you on this journey and a proper sage can be difficult to obtain. Ruth Burrows, a Carmelite nun, reiterates this truth expressed by St. John writing,

Readily it is assumed that the path of contemplation will be sunlit, unambiguous. Not so, says John. It is a path beset with trouble, distress, temptation; it is obscure, bewildering.

Few interpret the way aright and reliable guides are rare....Many set out and make progress but very few go far, and one of the principle reasons, says John, is lack of proper guidance.⁷³

Sagely guidance is essential when undertaking the quest to understand the Divine. One needs direction and leadership to assist with understanding how to apply the knowledge and wisdom, passed on to us.

This leadership should not, and cannot, be provided by just anyone. For if not properly given it will not lead to the desired outcome. It is this sentiment that St. John cautions us about, for one needs to trust their sagely advisor and be obedient to them if one desires to complete their journey. One way in which this trust is built is by the past results they have produced in others. Without sagely advice and leadership that is vetted, tested, and shown to be valid, how can one be confident that they will be led on the right path? One needs to be confident in the direction they are receiving, and trust it will provide them with what is necessary to overcome the trials they will face. Without this confidence, one will struggle to obediently follow the sagely advice and direction that is provided, and obedience is essential if one desires to progress on their journey.

3.2 - St. Augustine and Obedience

St. Augustine placed a strong emphasize on obedience which not only can be seen through his rule, but also is reiterated throughout all his writings. He asserts this truth emphatically and as a result the establishment of trust and obedience became essential to all future rules that are developed. While one must be cautious when seeking a sage, for many are

⁷³ Burrows, 4.

inadequate, when one comes upon one that is an exemplar, they should embrace them and relent to their authority. As indicated previously, one's success on their journey is dependent on the guidance provided by the sage. If one truly desires to overcome future obstacles, one will need to recognize the sage's authority, and relent to their direction. In fact, when one enters into religious life, they do more than just take a vow, they are actually received into obedience. This notion of being received is an indication that the community, as well as the individual making the vow, are both participating in this call to obedience. They are truly in it together, and there is a sense of trust, comfort, and freedom in embracing this. The individual is not just vowing to be obedient, but is also being lovingly received by the order in which they will be obedient to.

In order to be successful on one's quest, or journey to move closer to the Lord, one must first be willing to be obedient. Showing obedience to another would not have been a new concept to St. Augustine. It is reiterated numerous times throughout the Bible and is essential to Christ's message. It is also the foundation of all Christian teaching and doctrine. Luke 6:46-49 states,

Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck the house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete (Luke 6:46-49 - NIV).

Obedience is vital to living a Christian life. This point, which is reiterated throughout the New Testament, where Paul writes,

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete (2 Cor 10:5-6).

Again, obedience is emphasized in the book of Hebrews. It expands upon our understanding of whom one should be obedient to. The author of the letter to Hebrews argues,

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (Heb 13:17).

Illustrated by Jesus in his parable, the key to a firm spiritual foundation is one's obedience in His words and teaching. Additionally, Paul emphasizes the importance of obedience and the repercussions of one's disobedience. This further encourages one to relent to the authority of Christ, and His teachings. The author of Hebrews takes the importance of obedience and increases the sphere of influence. Individuals are now called to not only relent to the authority of Christ, but also to relent to those that have studied and dedicated their lives to His teaching.

Scripture is the core and center of Christian life and it is from the scriptures that the monastic orders developed. Understanding and embracing the parable presented by Christ, St. Augustine, as well as others who followed after him, structured their religious rules based on Christ's teachings, and the importance of being obedience to Him. They recognized that without this foundation, the structure that they wished to build would certainly crumble beneath the instability caused by disobedience. Obedience is key to anyone wishing to walk this spiritual journey and seek the truth about the Divine. This is true not just for the Christian tradition, but for practically every major religion. In fact the word "Islam," literally translates to

absolute submission to Allah. Obedience is neither optional nor avoidable, on one's faith journey. Sister Burrow expresses this central truth indicating that,

Obedience in the gospel sense is essentially obedience to the Father as his will manifested to us. It is obedience to our transcendent destiny. To be disobedient is to refuse our destiny, to decide for ourselves what is for our good, how our lives should be arranged, what we have a right to. It is an expression of non-faith and an assertion of the ego. Obedience cuts right through this. If we would be utterly obedient to the 'upward call' then we must learn how to submit ourselves to other, to circumstance, to the community welfare.⁷⁴

Obedience is core, and central, to obtaining that which one is seeking on their journey towards the Divine. This was a foundation set down by Christ, which was emphasized by His followers in the New Testament, and expanded on to include being obedient to the sages assisting one on their quest. The necessity of obedience is the foundation for one's spiritual journey and continues to be essential even in the modern, do it yourself, era. It is no wonder that learning to submit to another's authority is something that is the bases, and foundation, of all religious rules.

When one reads and analyzes the documents that make up the Rule of Augustine, it becomes apparent that St. Augustine understood the need for obedience, and the relevance of relenting to authority. It is human nature to resist relenting control to another, consequently, it is vital that trust is established. It is one's sage, or superior, that aides one in their development and advancement. If one cannot trust these individuals, the aide will be stifled and one's progress will be limited. One often views authoritative behavior as a means to control, but this is not true of authentic sages. The support offered by authentic religious authority is provided

⁷⁴ Burrows, 41.

not from a place of control, but rather a commitment to provide one with the direction one needs to progress on their journey. By understanding and embracing this truth one learns to appreciate the direction that is provided, and that the authoritative nature of the order is one of love and teaching. In describing St. Augustine's monastic ideology Sister Agatha Mary states it, "...can only serve to indicate the spirit of Augustine's monastic legislation, with its emphasis on mutual love and respect for the superior."⁷⁵ It should be noted that while there is a call for a deep respect for one's superior, there is an understanding of it being mutual. This love and respect is reciprocated between the individual being directed and the one performing the direction. The spiritual journey is undertaken together and the relationship is built on trust, not one based on a dictatorship, which is followed out of fear.

St. Augustine's emphasis on authority is repeated throughout his writing. He reiterates the need of continual guidance from others and recognizes that the main roles, and benefits, of living a monastic life is its function as an institute of learning. In describing St. Augustine's sentiment, Sister Agatha emphasizes this point stating,

The only important thing in his eyes is the 'vertical' relation uniting the brothers to their superiors, the deans and, above all, the abbot. This is the sense in which the monastery was for him a school, a place where disciples received the instructions of qualified masters....First and foremost the monastery was a school, an institution where individuals were assembled for a time for educational purposes...⁷⁶

Anyone wishing to receive an education, or obtain knowledge from another, should understand that they must first be willing to surrender themselves to the individual who will be providing the knowledge they seek. This is even more relevant when it pertains to seeking wisdom and

⁷⁵ Augustine, 55.

⁷⁶ Augustine, 65.

spiritual guidance. One must embrace the reality of their own ignorance and submit to another if they wish to rise out of this ignorance and into understanding. Through this humility one will be open to the direction they receive and embrace the wisdom that will assist them on their journey toward spiritual growth, and enlightenment. It is this reality that motivates Augustine to reiterate the necessity of relenting to authority in his numerous writings and letters.

While St. Augustine's *Confessions* may be his most recognizable and referenced text, it is his letter and writing that influenced the development of religious life. It was through these writings that he developed his rule and influenced the rules of future religious orders. Through an examination of, *The Ordo Monasterii*, *The Praeceptum*, *The Obiurgation*, and *The Resularis Informatis*, one is able to see the foundation that he set for future religious orders and how he influenced the rules put in place to guide the religious living within their boundaries.

Before diving into the context of these texts, it is important that one first understands the role that each had in the development of the religious community which was being developed and directed by St. Augustine. The *Ordo Monasterii*, is a relatively short document of about 400 words. It provides guidelines for the daily living within a male religious community, and direction regarding the behaviors of the members within that community. The *Praeceptum*, is what modern male followers of Augustine observe, it is concerned with the life of the community, and is so revered that those that have chosen to live by it have made minimal additions to the guidance it provides. Along with guiding male communities he also provided direction for women religious as well. This can be seen in the *Obiurgation*, is a letter addressing a group of nuns who rebelled against their superiors. In this letter St. Augustine reprimands

these nuns and their disobedience. Finally, the *Resularis Informatis* is the version of the *Praeceptum* that is used within the female religious communities who were dedicated to following St. Augustine's directions.⁷⁷ Examining these documents, along with some additional writings of St. Augustine, allows one to begin to understand the influence he had on the development on modern religious communities. Through these writings he set the foundation for the religious orders that grew out of them. They asserted the importance and necessity of relenting to authority, and establish the significance of seeking continuous direction from one's superiors.

In the *Ordo Monasterii*, St. Augustine provides direction to those living the religious community he founded. Answering the call to enter into religious life is not something to be taken lightly. Individuals give up much of their freedoms and surrender themselves to the authority of the order, and their religious superior. Augustine establishes that capitulation is necessary, and vital, when entering a religious order. One must relent control and agree to follow the rules of their order and their religious superior. St. Augustine establishes this necessary element of entering religious life in the *Ordo Monasterii*, "Let them obey faithfully. Let them honor their [spiritual] father next to God and submit to their superior *as becomes saints*."⁷⁸ While St. Augustine asserts the necessity of submission, one also needs to recall that there is a mutual trust that is established when one enters into religious life. This trust is essential to promote the growth of the initiate, along with the overall guidance within the

⁷⁷ Augustine, 22.

⁷⁸ Augustine, 107.

order. If trust is not established, and mutual love not felt, many would be reluctant to follow the directives of their superior.

Entering into religious life one must relinquish all control to the order, and by proxy the Abbott who oversees their community. When entering into the order one must vow to obediently follow the rules of said order as expressed through the Abbott. Establishing a trusting, and loving, relationship with those within the order, particularly one's superior, is crucial to one's ability to faithfully follow the directions of their superior. Similar to any relationship with long-term potential, rapport must be built. While this type of rapport takes time St. Augustine also incorporated instruction in the *Ordo Monasterii* to help ensure that this is felt and realized. Augustine writes, "If anything is needed, their superior should take care of it."⁷⁹ Meeting the needs of those entering into religious life is not only vital to the survival of those who have relinquished control, and authority, over to the religious order, but it also assists with establishing a trusting relationship within its rigid structure. Trust is key to any relationship and once it has been established it makes moving forward with that relationship easier. This trust is essential particularly during times of turmoil, or when disciplinary actions are required.

Living within community is a sacrifice, and despite the pure and faithful motivation that bring individuals to this life, turmoil does, and will continue, to occur. As with any institution comprised of numerous people there will come a time when disputes, and disagreement will occur. When individuals are living within close proximity of one another this can happen more

⁷⁹ Augustine, 107.

frequently. When issues, and concerns, arise they will need to be settled, and inevitably times will occur when disciplinary actions need to be taken. As with most things within religious communities this responsibility falls on the superior. St. Augustine expresses this sentiment and emphasizes the important of holding one accountable to their superior in *The Praeceptum*. He writes, "If indeed he is actually proven guilty, he must accept such correction as will help him to amend, according to the judgement of the superior or of the presbyter who has power to give direction and make judgment."⁸⁰ When one answers the call to live a religious life they do so with an understanding that they are making a commitment to the community. A commitment that is emphasized through the vow of obedience that one takes.

Surrendering oneself to authority is pertinent if one wishes to gain direction, and one should not allow their pride to interfere with their ability to take direction or be disciplined. While no one likes to be disciplined, when instilled properly correction is actually a form of love. As a child we rebel against being punished and resist relinquishing control to those that have authority over us. However, when one disciplines and punishes a child out of love it becomes a teaching mechanism that allows the child to learn and grow. This appreciation for discipline and punishment should not be disregarded as we grow into adulthood, particularly when it comes to our spiritual growth and development.

Beyond providing direction for one's spiritual growth the superior is also responsible to ensure that the physical needs of the community are being met and their physical health maintained. Often as adults one becomes distracted by their own ambitions and being driven

⁸⁰ Augustine, 116.

by goals and desires one can forget to maintain their physical health. Augustine addresses this concern and emphasizes the responsibility of the superior to monitor and preserve the health of those they are responsible for, he writes, “Even if he does not want it he must, at the command of the superior, do what has to be done for his health’s sake.”⁸¹ Sometime when individuals are so focused on their spiritual growth and the calling they have answered, they forget the importance of maintaining their physical needs. When this occurs individuals need to be reminded, and encouraged, to maintain their physical needs. Additionally, when these gentle nudges do not work individuals may need a more direct and authoritative approach to ensure that one’s health does not deteriorate. Increasing the amount of authority superiors have over those they are responsible for not only helps to ensure the physical health of those living in community it also aids with establishing a trusting and loving relationship that is essential to positive spiritual growth.

Despite the number of rules and abundant guidance that St. Augustine provides to establish a productive, peaceful and focused religious communities, inadvertently issues and conflicts will arise. In his infinite wisdom Augustine had the forethought of addressing this within his rule. While ideally no issues between members of the community would arise, Augustine understood the necessity of addressing any conflicts that arose, and the need to come to an amicable solution in a timely fashion. Dissidents and turmoil within the community will only lead to distractions, and disrupt the true mission of the community. This was to be avoided whenever possible, however when individuals live and work together arguments

⁸¹ Augustine, 118.

inevitably arise. Consequently, St. Augustine establishes the need to address any issues within the community immediately. This is necessarily in order avoid growing tension or negative emotions. He writes, “Do not have quarrels, or at least bring them to an end as quickly as possible, lest anger grow into hatred...”⁸²

St. Augustine wanted the community to live peacefully and in harmony with one another. Understanding that turmoil may arise between those that lived together, he stressed the importance of addressing any issues that arose without delay. This would aid in the potential anger or resentment that could fester, and increase, and lead to dissidents amongst the community. This did not always occur. In fact, in one particular case this anger grew against the community’s superior. Reaching out to St. Augustine the sisters of the community believed that Augustine would aid them in their dispute, hoping he would back their opinion and force a change with their superior. The response they received from him was the antithesis of their expectation and further illustrates the importance of respecting and relenting to the authority of those that are providing you sagely guidance.

Whenever there is a change in leadership, there can be issues with those that fall under this new leadership. Change is difficult for everyone, however within a community that requires a relinquishing of complete control to their superior one would imagine this would be an even great challenge. After establishing routines and becoming comfortable with one’s superior it may become difficult when a new superior is appointed and prior established routines and roles within the community begin to change. Despite this change individuals who have entered into

⁸² Augustine, 119.

religious life must maintain their vow of obedience. St. Augustine reminds the sisters of their obedience in his letter written in response to their complaints. Emphasizing the purpose of this letter Fortin writes,

The principal purpose of Letter 210 was to address the concerns of the community that arose over the appointment of a new superior. It summoned the sisters to reconciliation and to a revival of the communal life to which they were called.⁸³

Despite their attempt the community of sisters are redirected and reminded of their commitment to their calling, and the vow of obedience they voluntarily made. St. Augustine reestablishes order by asserting the truth of relenting to correction. He writes, "Ought we not therefore to rebuke and correct a brother lest he go down to death in a false security?"⁸⁴ While no one may like the idea of being held accountable by another, St. Augustine consistently reiterated the importance of there being an authoritative power overseeing the progress of those living within the community. This level of obedience and devotion grew out of the traditions of the desert fathers. In fact, those entering religious life during the early and medieval years of religious life viewed this life as one of obedience. There was a sense that when one entered, and was received, into religious life they were also being received into obedience.

St. Augustine not only establishes the basis for monastic hierarchy and the importance of respecting and adhering to this hierarchy he also places the onus of ensuring that this hierarchy is followed on those who are in charge. Writing this within the rule itself Augustine states, "It is chiefly the responsibility of the superior to see that all these instructions are

⁸³ Fortin, 227.

⁸⁴ Augustine, 124.

complied with.”⁸⁵ This instruction is important for those living in religious life to remember, particularly during a change in leadership. For those that take their leadership role seriously it may appear that their directions are harsh and uncompassionate, however in reality they are simply adhering to their responsibilities.

One should be reminded of the fact that while this rule may be ancient in its creation its content is one that can be seen as progressive, particularly for its time. St. Augustine’s belief in this rule and the structure it provides had no gender bias. This can be seen by how little changes are made to when he writes the rule for religious sisters. Upon writing *The Praeceptum*, in which he provided directions to the brothers living in community, he then went on to write *The Regularis Informatio*, for the sisters who have answered the call to live a religious life as well. Not only does he provide guidance and direction for both, the rules he provides are almost identical, changing only the pronouns so as to address the group appropriately. Concerning the obedience to one’s superior Augustine writes in *The Praeceptum*,

You should obey your superior as you would a father, with respect for his office, lest you offend God who is in him. This applies still more to the presbyter who has responsibility for you all.⁸⁶

Comparing this to his writing in *The Regularis Informatio* one can see how identical they are,

You should obey your superior as you would obey your mother, with respect for her office, lest you offend God who is in her. This applies still more to the presbyter who has responsibility for you all.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Augustine, 120.

⁸⁶ Augustine, 120.

⁸⁷ Augustine, 143.

It is apparent that St. Augustine's rule and direction for individuals living in community is the same regardless if you were a brother or sister. He consistently reiterates throughout his rule the importance of relenting to authority and following the direction of those that have been put in place to guide one to a deeper relation with God, and a greater understanding of His divine wisdom. His rule did not only cross genders, guiding both men and women, it also has been influential, and foundational, to other religious communities. Communities like the Dominicans, who also profess this Rule and adhere to the structure it provides.

St. Augustine created a foundation for living within a religious community and placed a great amount of responsibility on those in charge of following his rules. He also echoed, throughout his writings, the importance of those living within a religious community to follow their direction and submit to the guidance of their superior. However, it is important to recognize that the rules put in place by St. Augustine were for the entire community. This included those that were placed into position of authority and were responsible for implementing and enforcing the rules. Augustine address the superiors in *The Praeceptum* stating, "He himself should keep these instructions gladly and so give them their due weight."⁸⁸ Again in due fashion he reiterates this to the women religious in *The Regularis Informatio* stating, "She herself should keep these instructions gladly and so give them their due weight."⁸⁹ Both the men and women placed in control of their religious orders were entrusted with ensuring their rule was followed, but more importantly that they themselves were held by the same standards. The value of any set of rules increases when those who are enforcing them

⁸⁸ Augustine, 121.

⁸⁹ Augustine, 143.

also adhering to them. St. Augustine understood that a guide, or sage, must humble themselves and follow the same guidance they are providing. This is vital for the rules to be respected and the superior's guidance to be beneficial. The wisdom that is passed on can easily be ignored if the individuals providing it is does not living according to it themselves. Augustine understood that when one is placed in a position of power and authority pride can easily creep in, so he stressed the importance of everyone humbly following the rules placed before them.

Along with expressing the necessity of proper guidance and relenting to authority Augustine also warns of the danger of allowing one's pride to make one believe one can accomplish their spiritual goals on their own. Picking up on this truth Sister Agatha elaborates on St. Augustine's notion indicating that, "No moral theologian sets a higher value than Augustine on humility and the danger of pride, 'for every other vice prompts people to do evil deeds; but pride lies in ambush even for good deeds in order to destroy them'"⁹⁰ Humility is the key to growth, and essential for individuals journeying on a quest to greater understanding. Augustine emphasized this within his rule by consistently reiterating and elaborating on the necessity of relating to authority.

Augustine was not the only one who understood the dangers of pride, and the value of humility, when one is seeking greater wisdom and a deeper understanding of the divine. Thomas Kempis, the author of one of the most popular and established books on devotion also emphasizes the virtue of humility. Kempis writes,

If you think you know many things and understand them well enough, realize at the same time that there is much you do not know. Hence, do not affect wisdom, but admit

⁹⁰ Augustine, 97.

your ignorance. Why prefer yourself to anyone else when many are more learned, more cultured than you?⁹¹

Kempis, like Augustine, realizes that without humility there can be no growth. If one believes themselves to be the master of knowledge and wisdom their pride can prevent them from leaning on others to aid in their advancement of the Divine. By allowing one's pride to inhibit them from seeking guidance, they inadvertently subvert their own goal and desire to increase awareness of the Divine. Reiterating this notion Kempis points out,

Furthermore, who is so wise that he can have full knowledge of everything? Do not trust too much in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to those of others. If, though your own be good, you accept another's opinion for love of God, you will gain much more merit; for I have often heard that it is safer to listen to advise and take it than to give it.⁹²

It is only through humbly accepting that one is incapable of grasping all, that one is able to move forward on their journey. Seeking out another to aid in this quest is essential in its completion, and relenting to the authority of the sage is vital towards obtaining what is necessary to not only continue their journey, but completing the quest they have embraced.

St. Augustine desired for his followers to relinquish their control and relent to one who can help them move beyond their own capability. His understanding of the importance of allowing the collective knowledge of the past to shape the wisdom of the present, pushed individuals forward. By continuing this pattern of disseminating insight the wealth, and pool, of knowledge, and wisdom, continues to grow. Through this ongoing process future generation will be privy to a greater storehouse of information, and guidance, which will help other in their

⁹¹ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton (New York: Dover Publication, INC., 2016), 2-3.

⁹² Kempis, 7.

spiritual journey. Through this continued cycle our ability to obtain the wisdom necessary to overcome spiritual roadblocks and barriers will increase exponentially. Fortunately, this foundation, which he put in place, was passed on and embraced by other religious leaders. The rules developed by the founders of other orders have utilized his rule as a template, and consequently ensured that this pool of knowledge and wisdom continued to push others forward.

Born fifty years after Augustine's death St. Benedict follows in his predecessor's footsteps in developing a religious order. Like Augustine before him, Benedict embraces the importance of submitting to authority and humbly leaning on others for sagely wisdom. It is from the foundation of Augustine's rule that Benedict develops his own. While differences are apparent, it is the similarities in Benedict's emphasis on humility, and the value of relenting to another, that continues to show the value of the sage and importance of turning to others to help guide one on their journey. Benedict's rule further develops the importance of direction and obedience to another in one's journey, and further illustrated the necessity of a sage in this journey.

3.3 - Obedience and Benedict

While written over 1500 years ago, the Benedictine Rule has stood the test of time and, like the Augustine Rule, is equally as relevant today as it was when the text was first written. This rule forms the basis of religious life for the Benedictines and assist them in their journey toward a deeper spiritual understanding of the world we live in. Joan Chittister, O.S.B., a Benedictine nun, and author, offers a more contemporary evaluation of the Rule of Benedict

and provides individuals with practical means to apply his rule to one's modern journey towards the Divine. She describes these rules for monastic living stating that, "The Rule of Benedict is concerned with life: what it's about, what it demands, how to live it. And it has not failed a single generation."⁹³ This bold statement illustrates the value that St. Benedict's rule has had for over fifteen hundred years. From her statement it would appear that it goes beyond just being relevant to those living within a religious community, and is truly a means in which one can be shown the value of life, and how to live according to God's will.

Like St. Augustine, St. Benedict begins by asserting the importance and necessity of obedience, one must give up their own will and follow the will of another if one wishes to gain a deeper understanding of the Divine. Benedict writes, "*This is the advice from one who loves you; welcome it and faithfully put it into practice. The labor of obedience will bring you back to God from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience.*"⁹⁴ Establishing the necessity of obedience is the initial manner in which Benedict asserts the value of relenting to another when journeying towards the Divine. He understands that without obedience one will gravitate to their own understanding, a prideful decision that rarely leads to growth or development. Sister Joan elaborates on this initial passage stating,

In this first paragraph of the Rule, Benedict is setting out the importance of not allowing ourselves to become our own guides, our own gods. Obedience, Benedict says – the willingness to listen to the voice of God in life – is what will wrench us out of the limitations of our own landscape.⁹⁵

⁹³ Joan Chittister, O.S.B., *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010), 2.

⁹⁴ Chittister, 3.

⁹⁵ Chittister, 5.

Often individuals believe that they themselves have all the answers, which their past experience and the knowledge they have gained during their life is enough. Benedict rejects this sentiment and emphatically expresses that this fallacious idea will only prevent you from obtaining the goal of moving closer to God.

By restricting one's understanding to only what one already knows, one inadvertently also restricts their own potential for growth. Living within a Benedictine community, Sister Joan lived within the boundaries of the Benedictine Rule, however she has also gone beyond just living by these rules. She has also studied them, and written about their importance and relevance. These rules have a value that goes beyond just instructing a religious community about how to live within their community. These rules, while pertinent to religious life, also provides a value to anyone striving to live a spiritual life. A life driven by the desire to journey with the Lord, and draw closer to both God, and humanity. As indicated by Chittister, "In Benedict's mind, apparently, the spiritual life is not a collection of asceticisms; it is a way of being in the world that is open to God and open to others."⁹⁶ Benedict's guidelines for the religious community expands what it means to strive to be close to God. He affirms that in drawing close to the Divine one will also draw closer to those around you, and be moved to fight for systematic changes that will benefit all of mankind. Benedict insists that one must move beyond just living in a certain manner, and evolve further than following the rules simply because they are the rules. Our actions should lead us to a greater change. They should mold

⁹⁶ Chittister, 11.

our heart and increase our desire to move past acts of charity and into initiatives that promote greater social change.

Benedict also drew upon the gospel in the establishment of his rules. Understanding that he is just another servant of the Lord, Benedict points back to Him, and the gospel message to substantiate the legitimacy of the directions he is providing. With the gospel at its core one can be assured of its intention to lead one closer to the Lord. It is this motivation to seek God, and do his will, which one should be driven to follow Benedict's guidance. Through Benedict's direction one will be led to not only make changes in their own life, but strive to make greater changes in the world. Changes that will aid all of humanity in accordance with the gospel message. Establishing this truth as a foundation to his rules Benedict writes,

Seeking workers in a multitude of people, God calls out and says again: "Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?" (Ps. 34:13). If you hear this and your answer is "I do," God then directs these words to you: if you desire true and eternal life, "keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim" (Ps. 34:14-15). Once you have done this, my "eyes will be upon you and my ears will listen for your prayers; and even before you ask me, I will say" to you: "Here I am" (Isa. 58:9). What is more delightful than this voice of the Holy One calling to us? See how God's love shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see the Holy One "who has called us to the eternal presence" (1 Thess. 2:12).⁹⁷

Benedict's rule guides and directs the community, and it is a rule that is founded in the gospel message. Christ message is one that drives one's beliefs into action. He desired to change the hearts of his followers in the hope a greater societal changes would occur. He lived a life of mercy and fought injustice hoping to rein in a new kingdom on earth. As the author of

⁹⁷ Chittister, 10-11.

first John states, “Dear children, let us not love with word or tongue but with actions and truth” (1 John 3:18).⁹⁸ This too was the desire of Benedict. Through his direction and guidance Benedict wanted the religious communities to be changed and allow his rule to fuel and motivate them on their journey toward God’s kingdom. A kingdom that one should strive to reflect in this world. Sister Chittister elaborates on this sentiment when commentating on this section of Benedictine’s rule stating,

It is not enough, Benedict implies, simply to distance ourselves from the bad. It is not enough, for instance, to refuse to slander others; we must rebuild their reputation. It is not enough to disapprove of toxic waste; we must do something to save the globe. It is not enough to care for the poor; we must do something to stop the poverty.⁹⁹

Benedict’s rule is founded in the gospel and should lead one to not only change their actions, but motivate them to make greater changes for the community, and the world as a whole. His sagely advice provides guidance to lead one towards God, but also towards creating a better world.

At the core of Benedict’s rule was his belief that one’s desire to be in God’s presence can only be fulfilled through caring for the needs of others. Benedict writes, “If we wish to dwell in God’s tent, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds.”¹⁰⁰ His directions not only provide guidance for how to live within a religious community, but also how the community should be motivated to serve each other, and the world they are surrounded by. Founded in the gospel message Benedict provides guidance and direction to his communities,

⁹⁸ 1 John 3: 18 (NIV)

⁹⁹ Chittister, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Chittister, 14.

motivating them to gain a deeper understanding of the Lord through servitude to their community along with the world around them.

While understanding, and emphasizing, the importance of serving others Benedict also recognized that instructions on living within a community were essential as well. As explained by Sister Chittister, “The really holy, the ones who touch God, Benedict maintains, are those who live well with those around them. They are just, they are upright, they are kind. The ecology of humankind is safe with them.”¹⁰¹ For Benedict one must learn to live together with one another, if they are to progress on their journey to holiness. By learning to live harmoniously they not only create a peaceful environment for the religious community they are able to better serve others as a cohesive group.

Benedict’s rule is designed as a means to educate those living within the religious community so they could better serve God. All teaching institutions have rules that need to be followed however, often these rules are resisted. Benedict writes,

*Therefore we intend to establish a school for God’s service. In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome. The good of all concerned, however, may prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love.*¹⁰²

Establishing a biblical base, and emphasizing a philosophy in line with Christ’s teachings, Benedict provides a dependable foundation for those seeking spiritual guidance and instruction while living in a religious community. Like any sage, Benedict must first establish trust and credibility before individuals are willing to follow his instructions. Benedict understands that

¹⁰¹ Chittister, 15.

¹⁰² Chittister, 21.

with any instructions rules and regulation are necessary, and established this reliability along with his expectations of adhering to regulations in the prologue of his rule. Benedict provides a basic understanding of relenting to authority along with following the rules and regulations he formed before he enlightens them of what the rules actually are. Establishing the importance of relenting to the rule, and providing assurance that it is based on the foundation of Christ, individuals entering into the community with confidence that the obedience they are vowing to follow is based on trust, and founded in Christ.

After the prologue Benedict begins his rule by describing the different types of monastics. He breaks these individuals down into four categories, cenobites, anchorites, sarabaites, and gyrovagues. Beginning with the cenobite, he explains that they are, *“those who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot or prioress.”*¹⁰³ Benedict directs his Rule to cenobites expressing his desire for those living a monastic life to do so while under the direction and authority of another. Similar to the Jedi who lived and taught in their Academies these individuals lived and embraced a lifestyle that they strove to pass on. One who enters into religious life does so with an understanding that they will be held to a standard set by another. Sister Chittister elaborates on this stating,

Meaningless spiritual exercise may not be a Benedictine trait but arbitrariness or whim are not part of Benedict’s prescription for holiness either. Monastic spirituality depends on direction. It is a rule of life. Self-control, purpose, and discipline give aim to what might otherwise deteriorate into a kind of pseudoreligious life meant more for public show than for personal growth.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Chittister, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Chittister, 25-26.

Like Augustine, Benedict expressed to those entering into religious life that they do so by relenting to the authority of another. Like the hero on the journey who relents to the sage, or the apprentice who relents to their master, one who enters religious life relents to their abbot or prioress. One's progression on their journey depends on direction, it is not an option, but a necessity, if one wishes to move forward.

Benedict goes on to describe the second type of monastic, the anchorites. These individuals have already lived a monastic lifestyle and prepared themselves for the next step in their journey. Benedict explains that,

...the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are trained to fight against evil. They have built up their strength and go from battle line in the ranks of their members to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.¹⁰⁵

For Benedict the anchorites have already received the vital and necessary instruction from their sage who have prepared them for the next part of their journey. Continuing forward they must take the next steps on their own. While one must move beyond their sage it is critical that first one must receive the direction necessary in order to prepare for those next step. As will be proposed and discussed the Jedi whose training in an academy provided the spiritual foundations needed to safely venture out on your own. Benedict points this out through the indication that it is only through the help and guidance of many that their training is complete, and only then is one prepared to venture forth on their own. These anchorites have progressed through the first part of their journey by living as a cenobite within a community under the

¹⁰⁵ Chittister, 27.

guidance and leadership of an abbot. They received knowledge and wisdom from the sages who guided them, and now take the next step in their journey knowing they are prepared to utilize this knowledge and wisdom to battle whatever they may face.

The third category of monastics that Benedict describes are the sarabaites. Benedict does not speak kindly of these individuals indicating that the sarabaites are,

...the most detestable kind of monastic, who with no experience to guide them, no rule to try them as "gold is tried in a furnace" (Prov. 27:21), have a character as soft as lead. Still loyal to the world by their actions, they clearly lie to God by their signs of religion. Two or three together, or even alone, without a shepherd, they pen themselves up in their own sheepfolds, not God's. Their law is what they like to do, whatever strikes their fancy. Anything they believe in and choose, they call holy; anything they dislike, they consider forbidden.¹⁰⁶

These individuals struggle with obedience and resist be directed by another. Their arrogance and pride leading them to follow only the rules they deem necessary. Like the Jedi who are led astray by the teachings of the Sith or the dark side of the force these individuals allow their hubris to guide them instead of the rule. Benedict provides a warning about the dangers of this temptation and allowing one's pride to overtake you. Sarabaites will shy away from direction and avoid seeking the sagely advise they need to continue on their journey. They are individuals that do not believe they need a sage to guide them, and consequently will be unable to progress further on their journey in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Divine.

The sarabaites' arrogance and haughtiness leads them to believe they are the masters of their own journey, and they need no other advice and guidance, but their own. As Sister Chittister explains the sarabaites,

¹⁰⁶ Chittister, 29.

...presented themselves as religious but separated themselves from a disciplined life and spiritual guidance and serious purpose in order to concentrate their energies on themselves. They called themselves religious, but they were the worst of all things religious. They were unauthentic. They pretended to be what they were not....they listened to no one's wisdom but their own.¹⁰⁷

As expressed by Sister Chittister, authenticity is essential for one who searches for the Divine.

This journey will be doomed from the beginning if one is inauthentic. Part of authentically taking this journey is understanding the necessity of humility while partaking of it. One will have no hope of completing their journey if they think they can accomplish it on their own.

Benedict, like Augustine, repeats this theme over and over again throughout his rule. Both by expressing the benefits of adhering to the direction of another, or the hindrances of avoiding their guidance. The common denominator is the insistence that if one seeks to progress on this journey they must seek out and follow the direction of another.

Finally Benedict describes the gyrovague. These individuals rather than settling down in a monastic community move from one monastery to the next, never truly living within a community, nor adhere to the abbot or prioress that is responsible for it. This is rejected by Benedict who calls for stability and for individuals to remain in one monastery. Benedict explains that the gyrovague,

...spend their entire lives drifting from region to region, staying as guests for three or four days in different monasteries. Always on the move, they never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites. In every way they are worse than sarabaites. It is better to keep silent than speak of all these and their disgraceful way of life. Let us pass them by, then, and with the help of God, proceed to draw up a plan for the strong kind, the cenobites.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Chittister, 29-30.

¹⁰⁸ Chittister, 30-31.

Despite the fact that he identifies this fourth category of monastics Benedict himself does not wish to waste time addressing this group. He has such a distaste for them that he finds no need to speak of them, and so I will spend little time addressing them myself.

One point should be made however, like the sarabaites, the gyrovagues do not seek direction from a superior. Consistent travel and change in environment is not conducive to building a relationship with others within the community. Consequently, any sagely guidance or direction they received from the superior of their current monastery would have no follow up for they would move on to a different one. Without follow up and continued guidance one cannot hope to grow and obtain the necessary knowledge and wisdom to move forward on their quest towards holiness. These individuals never progress in the manner they should, jumping from community to community, taking what they needed from each, but never developing a deep commitment to any community, or the rule that governs them. As previously asserted Benedict develops his rule for only one of these four monastics, the cenobites. Their level of dedication and their authentic desire for holiness is shown through their respect for the Rule, their ability to relent to its authority, along with the sages who follow and enforce it.

3.4 - Role and Importance of Obedience to the Abbot/Prioress

The next section of Benedict's rule focuses on the role of those who will be responsible for leading the monastic community. The cenobites who are residing in the community need direction on their journey and this direction must be given by someone of the highest quality. These sages, identified as Abbots or Prioresses, must maintain certain qualities themselves, and are held to a higher standard than those whom they lead and guide. They are not only held to a

greater standard, Benedict holds them to the highest standards in the eyes of the Christian community. Benedict asserts,

To be worthy of the task of governing a monastery, the prioress or abbot must always remember what the title signifies and act accordingly. They are believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery. Therefore, a prioress or abbot must never teach or decree or command anything that would deviate from God's instructions. On the contrary, everything they teach and command should, like the leaven of divine justice, permeate the minds of the community.¹⁰⁹

Benedict designates the prioress and abbot as the symbolic representation of Christ in the monastery. As will be discussed later, the Jedi Master are individuals responsible for not only passing on knowledge and wisdom, but also illustrating how one lives a good, just and pious life, a life that is reflective of Jesus. There is no individual that holds greater status in the Christian faith than Christ, and the one who is responsible for representing him carries a heavy weight and burden. Only those who are prepared for this immense responsibility, and willing to undertake the scrutiny that accompanies it, should undertake these sagely duties.

No individual should take their sagely role lightly, not only is the prioress or abbot responsible for providing leadership and guidance, they are also held accountable for the monastics they oversee. Benedict writes, *"The prioress and abbot must, therefore, be aware that the shepherd will bear the blame wherever the owner of the household finds the sheep have yielded no profit."¹¹⁰* The sagely duties of those who oversee the monastic communities is a heavy burden to bear, and not something that should be taken on lightly. Sagely guidance is necessary for growth and progression on one's journey, but it is not a role one should take

¹⁰⁹ Chittister, 33.

¹¹⁰ Chittister, 35.

lightly for it is a great responsibility. If the individual guides one in the wrong direction, providing them false teach or poor direction, that individual's journey may not only be halted, but could potentially move one in the wrong direction. Like the pride of a young Jedi who thinks they can take on an apprentice of their own without the guidance of the Jedi council or Jedi code. These individuals end up perverting the truth, disrupting progression, and causing such a high level of harm, that oversights have been put into place to recognize it when it occurs. More importantly once recognized these individuals must be addressed and if necessary made to cease. For just like the Jedi who are responsible for those who have left the path and begun to lead others astray Benedict recognizes the need for this level of oversight and action when the abbot/prioress fails in their sagely duties and guides one down the wrong path. The level of accountability is so high that if the prioress or abbot does not provide the necessary guidance to the community, they also become responsible for the failings and progression of the others within the community.

Benedict's imposition of such a high level of scrutiny on the sage illustrates the level of importance and responsibility they have to those seeking guidance. Their role is so vital to those who undertake this journey they scrutinize themselves thoroughly to guarantee they are adequately prepared. An individual who is not fully prepared risks not only failing to properly guide, but also punishment for the misguided direction they provide. The sage who takes the role of prioress or abbot must do so with confidence and appreciation. They have a pivotal role to play passing on truth and guidance, and are accountable for when it is not done properly. It is this level of responsibility that is placed on the leader of the community that make having a

vow of obedience necessary. The fact that the prioress or abbot are held accountable for those they are leading, they need to make every assurance that their directions will be followed.

An overbearing need to assure obedience can appear to be a means in which to control others and has a great potential for the abuse of power. This is not the purpose, however, and Benedict himself ensure that this is recognized by placing a high level of accountability on those who are leading the monastics in the community. The real benefit of obedience is granted to the individual who is being obedient and relenting to the individual who they have put their faith and trust in. The authority that they grant to their superior, and the obedience that follows from it, moves them further on their journey and closer to the goal they are seeking. Sister Chittister further explains that, “The function of authority is not to control the other; it is to guide and to challenge and to enable the other. Benedictine authority is a commitment to that, a promise of that.”¹¹¹ When one relents to authority and places all of one’s trust in the other, one does so to assist them on their journey, not to benefit the one whom they have relented to. There is a freedom that one gain when one relents to another and lives out their vow of obedience. It allows one to focus their efforts on the journey they are on and moving forward. This is why the sacredness of the sage must be kept and severe sanctions must be held if the sage, or in this case the abbot/prioress violates this trust and abuses the authority they have be gifted,

Abuse of authority is one of the greatest dangers that can befall a community. If the superior’s ego becomes greater than their desire to do God’s will, they can lead individuals

¹¹¹ Chittister, 36-37.

down the wrong path. Unfortunately, pride is a sin that has risen and grown since the fall of Lucifer himself, and has persisted even in religious communities. St. John of the Cross, who lived in community about a thousand years after St. Benedict, spoke severely of these individuals. While not part of the Benedictine order, he too was a member of religious community that took a vow of obedience. His devotion to following God's will was often questioned by those in authority, and he even experience harsh physical punishment as a result of these individuals abusing their power. His experience with the dangers of blind obedience gives his opinions, and wisdom, on the subject weight, and offers further insight into why Benedict held these sages to such a high standard, and also shows that despite this locating and being obedient to a true sage is vital to one's journey. As expressed by Sister Burrow, "John has some harsh things to say about incompetent directors. They are presumptuous, authoritarian, ignorant, 'blacksmiths', 'hewers of wood' who cause irreparable harm to those they direct;"¹¹² This warning may lead some to avoid seeking out guidance from another, as they are fearful that an incompetent sage would be more detrimental than taking the journey on their own. However, even St. John knew that this was unwise, and that the leadership and direction of another is necessary. As Sister Burrow explains, "No one will insist more than John that the mountain cannot be scaled by ourselves. Nevertheless, he is equally emphatic that unless we do undertake a thorough asceticism we cannot even begin the ascent."¹¹³ St. John's reference to asceticism provides us with a mechanism to ensure that those we chose to lead us on our journey are doing so sincerely, and holding themselves to the same standards that they are

¹¹² Burrows, 15-16.

¹¹³ Burrows, 24.

holding others. When seeking out a sage one should always be wary of the individual they are relenting authority to, however, one should be comforted and reassured of their decision if the individual is living a disciplined and devout life themselves.

St. Benedict's rule provides a safety mechanism that helps to ensure that those responsible for guiding the monastics are trustworthy, and able to lead them justly and without prideful intentions. One who takes on the authoritative role within a religious community does so out of respect for the rules and the benefit that others gain for following and complying to them. Just because one is in control and in a position of authority does not mean they are no longer accountable to the rules themselves. In fact, for Benedict, it is just as important for the abbot or prioress to live the rule as it is for them to teach it through example. Benedict writes,

Furthermore, those who receive the name prioress or abbot are to lead the community by a two-fold teaching: they must point to the monastics all that is good and holy more by example than by words, proposing God's commandments to a receptive community with words, but demonstrating God's instructions to the stubborn and the dull by a living example. Again if they teach the community that something is not to be done, then neither must they do it, "lest after preaching to others, they themselves be found reprobate" (1 Cor. 9: 27)...¹¹⁴

"Do as I say not as I do," is never an adequate pedagogical method, and Benedict ensure that it is not one that the individual in charge of passing on the rule's sagely wisdom will attempt to utilize. Every sage must themselves go through their own journey and complete their own quest. It is only through the completion of their own quest that they become qualified to lead others to progress in theirs. If one is unable to be obedient and follow the boundaries of the

¹¹⁴ Chittister, 37.

rule that has guided them, they are certainly not qualified to be providing instructions to others on how to follow that same rule.

Hypocrisy is one of the greatest dangers any sage faces. How can one hope to lead individuals on a path that they themselves are unable to follow? Not only does it prevent the student from learning from the superior's example it also creates a foundation of distrust. When traveling on a journey there is a comfort in knowing one is walking with them. Ignoring the instructions in one's own life, while claiming it is important for others, can create a division between the student and the sage. This also instills doubt in the validity of the instructions themselves. An individual who takes on the responsibility to lead others should do so out of respect and commitment to the ways and rules they are teaching. If the abbot or prioress accepts their role without this level of commitment, and respect, they will not be fulfilling their role to their fullest potential.

One's level of obedience to the rule should increase, not decrease, when they become responsible for its implementation. Obedience is essential to one who wishes to benefit from living within a religious community. This obedience is crucial to the community. If the superior responsible for its instruction and implementation accepts their role for ulterior reasons, and not out of respect for the responsibility that it entails, they will be held accountable for the failure that will ensue. Sister Chittister provides this warning,

The person who accepts a position of responsibility and milks it of its comforts but leaves the persons in a group more spiritually stirred than when they began, no more alive in Christ than when they started, no more aflame with the gospel than when they first held it in their hands, is more to be criticized than the fruitless group itself.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Chittister, 44.

Through the strict adhere and obedience of the rule the prioress or abbot is safeguarded from taking advantage of the station they are responsible for upholding, a station that is held to a higher standard than the rest of the community. As with any position of power and authority those within these positions have the potential to abuse their role and utilize it for their own benefit, rather than the benefit of the community. Similarly to how the Jedi who ignore their Jedi code tend to fall to the dark side adhering to the rule, and being obedient to the religious order, will assist one in ensure that they are not tempted by the power that this authority brings. Those that have accepted the responsibility of abbot or prioress, and taken on the role of the sage for the rest of the community, need to do so out of love for the rule, and the community it directs. Sincere love and commitment to the rule, and the community, will keep the superior in line and assist him in avoiding falling prey to the temptations that power and authority often bring. Obedience is essential to all who enter religious life. The abbot or prioress is not above the rule, in fact it is through a strict obedience to it, that they become better equipped to serve the community.

Benedict also indicates that the prioress or abbot will be held accountable for those they are directing. He points out that those placed in a position of authority are held to a higher standard. Their position may grant them authority over others, but this responsibility also comes with a price. Taking on the role of the abbot or prioress exposes them to a higher level of scrutiny than those they are directing and overseeing. In Benedict's own words,

The Prioress and abbot must always remember what they are and remember what they are called, aware that more will be expected of whom more has been entrusted. They must know what a difficult and demanding burden they have undertaken: directing soul

*and serving a variety of temperaments, coaxing, reproofing, and encouraging them as appropriate.*¹¹⁶

Those entrusted, and called, to lead the order should do so understanding that it does not place them above the law, but rather subject to it to an even greater degree. The superiors of the order need to remember that they are being held to the same standards as those whom they are responsible for guiding. If one is not equipped to follow the rule themselves, how can they hope to direct others? Benedict stresses this fact because he wants to ensure that those who accept this role recognize their own weaknesses, and are accountable to them, just like they will be responsible to holding others accountable to their own.

Being self-aware and recognizing one's own weaknesses is an important trait for a leader, particularly in a role of spiritual leadership like an abbot or prioress. When understood and faced, one's weakness can help stabilize them as they lead other on their journey. By recognizing one's own weaknesses and facing them head on one develops skills they can then pass on to others, and assist them in facing their own stumbling blocks. As Sister Joan Chittister puts it,

Abbots or prioresses of Benedictine monasteries, then, parents and supervisors and officials and bishops everywhere who set out to live a Benedictine spirituality, are to keep clearly in mind their own weak souls and dark minds and fragile hearts when they touch the souls and minds and hearts of others.¹¹⁷

It is one's imperfections that makes us human, or rather it is our human imperfections that make us recognize the inconsistencies of how we were created and intended to be. This truth is what initiates us on our quest towards the Divine. When one loses sight of this truth, and their

¹¹⁶ Chittister, 45.

¹¹⁷ Chittister, 46.

hubris leads them to believe they no longer have any weakness, their journey towards the Divine will be hindered, just as their ability to lead others will be halted.

As the head of a religious community, one should always be conscious of their own shortcomings. When one recognizes their own faults, and the means in which they are overcome, they are better able to serve others. Not only are they then able to provide practical examples of how to move beyond these weaknesses, they will be able to do so in an empathetic manner. A leader who shows empathy in their guidance and direction is one that understands their role is not one of dictation, but also one of accompaniment. The role of the abbot or prioress, like that of the sage, is not simply one who dictates rules and regulation to follow. Rather they walk with others on their journey, providing them with both wisdom and support that will aide those in moving forward on their quest.

When one fails to recognize their own weaknesses they only hamper their role as a guide. This consequently limits their ability to aide another on their journey. This inability to be self-reflective and humbly admit one's own short comings is a sign of pride. Entering religious life, and journeying towards a deeper relationship with the Divine will always be hindered by pride. While there are individuals who through living a devout religious life find themselves in the presence of the Divine, they themselves would never claim to be perfect. In fact, any assertion of this claim would automatically preclude them from it, as only Divinity itself is perfect. Religious life may bring one closer, and sometimes even place one in the presence of perfection, however, the instance one loses sight that Christ himself was the sole perfect human one has lost their way toward the very perfection they seek.

Obedience is essential to Benedict and those who wish to follow his rule. If one is unwilling to be obedient then one is not ready to become part of the community. An individual who joins religious life must take this vow as it is a testament to their commitment, but also provides them a sense of freedom. When one fully relinquishes control and places all their trust in the rule, and their superior, they no longer need to be concerned with anything but progressing forward on their chosen path. Having no fear of being distracted by their pride they can place all their focus on following the direction, and the guidance provided to them from their superior.

The relinquishing of control to another is not only essential to living within Benedict's community it also offers us an opportunity to fight against one of the greatest sin mankind has fallen prey to. A sin that we will continuously be tempted by as we progress, grow and become wiser along our journey. For as one grows in knowledge and wisdom their hubris also seems to grow as well, something that obedience can help to keep in check. This ultimate act of humility is performed not to make them subservient, but rather this level of obedience is necessary in order to control one's prideful nature that hinders one's growth and progress. The sin of pride will continuously get in the way of one's progress as they journey towards a deeper relationship with God. It is this great sin, humanities first sin, which can be overcome through being obedient to another. There is a natural inclination to resist becoming subservient to another as we seem to fear being taken advantage of, and being in servitude to another. This, however, is not the reason for obedience, nor is it Benedict's intent, as expressed by Sister Chittister,

A Benedictine sense of obedience is not designed to diminish a person. It is designed to connect us to the rest of the human race. If we have the discipline to curb our own

caprice, we can develop the self-control it takes to listen to wisdom of another when our own insights are limited. The fact is that there are few right ways to do things; there are only other ways of doing a thing. To be open to the way of those who have already gone to ground before us is potentially soul saving.¹¹⁸

Along with driving one further along their personal journey, obedience also serves to draw the community closer together as well. This is reflective of Jung's assertion of one's personal growth towards wholeness and become one's authentic self. This journey toward wholeness is very much in line with one's journey towards holiness, as holiness is not just our connection to God, but also our connection to each other and living in solidarity with all of humanity. For as we are drawn closer to the Other we should also be draw closer to others as well. It is through one's relinquishing of themselves, i.e. their ego, that one becomes more connect to the community and humanity as a whole. Benedict understands that the spiritual path cannot be taken alone, and also does not move one away from humanity, but rather closer to it. Our love of the Lord, and all his creation, is embraced through the connection and love we have for humanity, his greatest creation. What is more relevant, however, is the fact that one's obedience and commitment to the order provides the individual with guidance from one who has already taken this journey. The value of the sage comes from the fact that they themselves have already undergone this quest, already partaken in their own journey, and have returned with the knowledge and wisdom to aid the next hero on their journey. Without the leadership and guidance of the sage the hero would be lost and would lack a critical element for them to complete their quest. Through their obedience and commitment to the order, its rules, and their superior, one is provided with the sagely guidance necessary to complete their journey.

¹¹⁸ Chittister, 64.

The insights they provide are gathered from their past experience, but also through trusting the structure that the rule provide. This structure was put in place for this reason and allows those that follow it to have the greatest potential to overcome the future obstacles they face.

As one journeys and strives to move further on their quest towards the Holy, one will undoubtedly face numerous impediments. These hurdles cannot be avoided and relenting to a sage and their guidance can provide the assistance needed to overcome them, and avoid similar obstacles in the future. Obedience and relenting to their authority is essential if one wishes to embrace their wisdom and benefit from their guidance. Surrendering to the sage no longer becomes a burden, but rather a gift, and something to be embraced. When one is able to embrace the sagely advice, and guidance, to heart they are moved to action. Benedict beautifully describes this, relaying to the monastic how the humility you show in following the authority of the other is a means in which you are showing your loving devotion to God. He writes,

With the ready step of obedience, they follow the voice of authority in their actions. Almost at the same moment, then, as the teacher gives the instruction the disciple quickly puts into practice out of reverence for God; and both actions together are completed as one.¹¹⁹

It is through ones devotion to God that they are led to relent to their superior. Their desire to move closer to God, and overcome the barriers that prevent them from accomplishing this goal, allows them to follow the directions of their sage who assists them on their journey. This notion is indicative of both Jung and Campbell's embrace of the importance of the archetype of God for we always must be reaching for something greater than ourselves. Seeking the perfect good

¹¹⁹ Chittister, 68.

within our life is a never ending process, for the moment we believe that we have achieved this perfect good we stop moving toward it and will not only never achieve it, but most often begin to move away from it.

Relinquishment of control and allowing another to have authority over you is a choice that is made, not one that is forced on any individual entering religious life. If one was forced into this that would be tantamount to slavery, and contrary to what is necessary for one to undergo and complete their journey. Sacrifices are required, however they are not sacrifices if they are not freely given. One who wishes to undergo this journey must do so willingly. When confronted with the opportunity to relent to a sage, and follow their wisdom and guidance, the individual will need to decide if it is a sacrifice they are willing to make. An individual who wished to enter into this order and follow the Benedictine Rule will need to decide if they are willing to be obedient to their prioress or abbot. As Benedict puts it,

They no longer live by their own judgement, giving in to their whims and appetites; rather they walk according to another's decisions and directions, choosing to live in monasteries and to have a prioress or abbot over them.¹²⁰

Embracing religious life means taking a vow of obedience and relenting certain controls over to another. Their sagely wisdom, and directions, are essential to understand the rule that Benedict provided and the value it has in one's journey. Like a hero on their quest without the knowledge and wisdom of the sage one has no hope to overcome the trails they will face.

Just as the sage is crucial to the hero on their journey, the role of the abbot or prioress is invaluable and essential to those that enter the religious life. If the rules were enough then

¹²⁰ Chittister, 69.

there would be no need for individuals to oversee religious life, and ensure that those that entered into this life are proceeding productively and following a course that will be successful. While the rule is an invaluable manual, without the prioress or abbot to assist one with its practical interpretation, during the tumultuous times, it would just be an indecipherable tome and the individual would certainly falter. Sister Chittister emphasizes this fact indicating,

The Rule is a luminaria, a lighted path, a clear direction. The presence of a prioress and abbot, of spiritual guides and spiritual giants in our lives, the living interpreters of a living spirituality and Way of Life, holds up during the hard times in life....What Benedict is saying is that there is no going through life alone. Each of us needs a wisdom figure to walk the Way with us as well as a rule to route us. The Rule is clearly not enough.¹²¹

Benedict understands that obedience and commitment to the rule is essential to monastic living, but also understood that without adequate guidance this rule would be impossible to follow. As individuals journey towards a deeper understanding of the Lord they need guidance from another, not just a set of rules one is obedient to. These individuals, the abbots and prioress, are the sages who guide those who have dedicated their life to this cause, and without them there is little hope that they will complete their quest. Like Augustine and Benedict before him, another prolific saint answered the call of God and embraced the value and necessity of obedience in one's journey towards an authentic holy life. Probably one of the best known and loved saints today, St. Francis of Assisi recognized the importance of this tradition and emphasized it in the development of his own rule.

¹²¹ Chittister, 70-71.

3.5 - Franciscan Obedience

St. Francis of Assisi, a layman, desired to follow in the path of Christ, and live as He would have live. While not a quote taken from any text that we have from him, St. Francis is often credited for saying, "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words." This quote seems to summarize St. Francis' motto for living a devout life and is further emphasizes by the editor of his collected works who indicated that, "His actions often spoke louder than his words."¹²² St. Francis' actions are spoken of far more often than his writings, his exploits have become those of legend, and for most the rule that he wrote, and structure he put in place to govern his order, is overshadowed by these tales. It is undeniable that St. Francis was a man of action who emphasized going out and modelling Christ to the world. The importance of being Christ to the world, and taking action whenever it is needed, is so vital to St. Francis' charism that he adds the additional rule of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He too understood the importance of structure and obedience when living in a religious community, and like Augustine, Francis believed that one was received into obedience when entering into community.

Some have viewed St. Francis as a rebel who combated the authority of the Church. Romanticized as the oppositional defiant step child, Francis' devout obedience to the Church is often overlooked or completely disregarded. As pointed out by Regis Armstrong,

Many contemporary biographers portray Francis as a man at odds with an institutional Church that stifled his enthusiasm and delivered a death blow to his vision. His writings,

¹²² Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *The Complete Works of Francis and Clare* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 5.

however, present a different picture as they portray him eager to respond to the legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council.¹²³

Despite the misunderstanding of St. Francis' charism by the clergy, Francis never disrespected the priesthood or the authority that they have been granted by the Church. In fact, his attitude towards them was one of reverence and admiration, "...Francis is insistent on showing respect and devotion to those who minister God's word and sacrament to him."¹²⁴ This fact is important to note as it establishes that while he may have been viewed as a rebel in his time, he only ever wished to be obedient to the Church and Christ's teachings. It is this obedience that led him to develop his rule and obedience that is its foundation.

While St. Francis' ministry began as a personal calling it grew into something greater. After his charism drew attention, others began to follow him and aid him in his calling to serve. Never wanting to move outside the boundaries of the Church he understood that in order to maintain order, and obedience, he would need to establish a system of rules that his follower would be accountable to. Like his religious predecessors he understood that importance of obedience and the necessity of relenting control to another. Throughout his writing one is reminded of the importance of giving up control, as he reiterates the necessity of allowing the Lord to be the one in control of your life. This insistence of passing all control over to God was established during the beginning of his ministry when he left his biological father and gave everything to following the will of the Lord. In an act of defiance to his own father Francis

¹²³ Armstrong, 15.

¹²⁴ Armstrong, 15.

stripped himself of all his worldly possessions, including the clothes he was wearing, as a testament to his obedience and commitment to following the will and command of God.¹²⁵

While St. Francis' defiance to his father may appear to go against the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," (Ex 20:12) it is actual Christ words whom St. Francis is living by when he made this bold illustration of devotion. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Mathew that, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me..." (Matt 10:37). More than anything Francis understood the importance of obedience and relinquishing control to another. The actions that began his ministry is a testament to this fact. He not only gave up the comfort of wealth and prosperity that his father offered him, he relinquished any power and authority his father had over him by leaving that life, and any belongings he acquired from that life. Taking these words of Christ to heart St. Francis started his mission in the manner that he intended it to continue; focused on, and obedient to, Christ. St. Francis' desire to emulate Christ was so prevalent that when constructing his rules he strived to ensure his followers also imitated the traits of Christ. As indicated by Brian Hamilton two of the major virtues Christ emphasized were humility and obedience, he writes, "As Christ subjected himself to all. Living a life of concrete humility and obedience, so must his followers."¹²⁶ Consequently, like his predecessors before him, St. Francis reiterated the importance of these virtues in the rules he created to govern the religious tradition that he founded.

¹²⁵ Stephen J. Costello, ed., *The Search for Spirituality: Seven Paths within the Catholic Tradition* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2002), 161.

¹²⁶ Brian Hamilton, "The Politics of Poverty: A Contribution to a Franciscan Political Theology," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* Vol 35 No 1 (2015): 36.

Francis' obedience was fueled by his love of Christ, and translated into a love and obedience to the Church. Under the direction of the Pope, St. Francis was instructed to create and initiate a rule to govern those who wished to follow him and live according to the tradition that he was living. Not as detailed, or in-depth, as St. Augustine or St. Benedict's rule, St. Francis created a set of guidelines to help those live in this religious tradition, a tradition based on being Christ active in the world. As described by Cotter, "...there is a great deal of freedom given in the *Rule*. Primarily it is describing a life, not setting down regulations."¹²⁷ St. Francis wanted his ministry to be alive and moving throughout the world, like Christ himself. He did not want the religious living out this mission to be overburdened or bogged down with living to the letter of the law, of his rule. Francis saw his rule as an extension of the Holy Spirit, and something that should be used to guide, and move, those living under it to action. Though St. Francis did not provide the same level of detail to the religious following in his tradition, as his predecessors before him, there is still one commonality that is found throughout, an emphasis on obedience.

The *Early Rule*, which consisted predominately of scripture passages, was originally written in 1209 or 1210 at the request of Pope Innocent III and was later adapted in 1223 when it became known as the *Later Rule*. The *Early Rule* emphasized an obedience centered primarily on Christ and the Gospels which Pope Innocent felt was problematic as it did not provide much in structure for an order. Innocent felt that a rule that was being created need to have more of an institutional structure and so Francis adapted it to include more accountability and

¹²⁷ Costello, 166.

responsibility to the order. Regardless of the changes or adaptations that Francis made both these rules for the Friars Minor rely heavily on obedience and consistently reiterate the importance of this virtue throughout their texts. Evaluating these rules shows how this virtue is consistently revered, and essential to one who wishes to take the holy path that Francis has walked. Just like it has been essential to others who have taken a similar journey the necessity of obedience to a rule and a sagely advisor continues to be essential. This continued insistence of obedience and necessity of guidance shows how this tradition grew, and also illustrates the value and necessity it has to one's journey.

In the *Early Rule*, St. Francis establishes the importance of obedience immediately addressing the order's commitment to the Church and the Holy See. In the prologue, before providing any rules or directions St. Francis provides a foundation for obedience. This obedience is first and foremost extended to the Pope and all his predecessors. It states, "Brother Francis and whoever will be head of this Order promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his successors."¹²⁸ St. Francis ensures that his order, and all that belong to it, understand that they are accountable to, and under the direction of, the Pope. This creates a baseline of obedience to the Catholic Church and her leader. Despite all the controversy and misconceived notion of St. Francis being defiant to the Church he recognizes its authority and instills in any who wish to follow in his mission the necessity of obedience to her and the Pope who is guiding it.

¹²⁸ Armstrong, 109.

Along with establishing this level of obedience to the Church, St. Francis also creates the precedence of obedience to the order and the individual who is governing the order stating, “And all the other brothers are bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.”¹²⁹ Obedience is a virtue that St. Francis strives to fully embrace. His commitment to this virtue is relayed throughout his writings and is the cornerstone of the order he established. For Francis it would seem that without obedience one cannot progress on the path towards holiness. Obedience is the key that unlocks the door to his community and opens the path that leads to the Divine.

Obedience is vital to St. Francis and his ministry. In fact, it is the initial vow he emphasizes when describing the life of one who commits to the religious life of a Franciscan. The first line in the first chapter of the *Early Rule* establishes this precedent indicating, “The rule and life of these brothers is this: to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ,…”¹³⁰ Similarly, in *The Later Rule* obedience is established in the first sentence, emphasizing its importance and pinpointing the starting point of anyone wishing to take this journey. It states,

The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors and to the Roman Church. And let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors¹³¹

The virtue of obedience guides one to humbly follow the will of another. It is only by committing to this virtue and sacrificing one’s ego to the religious life can one hope to gain its

¹²⁹ Armstrong, 109.

¹³⁰ Armstrong, 109.

¹³¹ Armstrong, 137.

full benefits. Fully and humbly committing oneself to the Church, the Pope, and the head of the Franciscan order allows one to undertake the journey towards holiness and through the commitment to this virtue one can hope to remain on this path. A path that St. Francis' ministry and mission provides.

One would be remiss if they did not mention and discuss St. Clare in conjunction with St. Francis. As one of the first dedicated followers of St. Francis she was so influenced by his mission and charism that she too founded a religious order based on his tradition. It should also be noted that she also was the first woman to write a religious rule. This alone should be celebrated as she opened the door to many future rules and religious orders to be founded by women. With St. Francis as her guide, it is no surprise that the rule that she created mirrors the same virtues and commitments as her mentor St. Francis. You see this reflection within St. Clare's rule immediately in Chapter I of her rule which states,

The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters which the Blessed Francis established, is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.

Clare, the unworthy handmaid of Christ and little plant of the most blessed Father Francis, promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and to his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church. And, just as at the beginning of her conversion, together with her sisters she promises his successors to observe the same [obedience] inviolably. And the other sisters shall always be obliged to obey the successors of the blessed Francis and [to obey] Sister Clare and the other canonically elected Abbesses who shall succeed her.¹³²

Embracing the Franciscan charism St. Clare embodies the same values and virtues of her mentor and chosen sage. St. Clare felt called to create this community of sisters in order to live a life of Christ and follow in His footsteps. Like St. Francis and the religious fathers who

¹³² Armstrong, 211.

established religious communities before him a foundation of obedience is core and central to her rule as well. The foundation of the Poor Sisters is no different than any of the religious order. It is one based on obedience and a commitment to Jesus Christ. As reflected in St. Francis' rule St. Clare also reiterates that this obedience extends to the Pope, his future successors along with the successors of St. Francis and St. Clare.

The Franciscans level of commitment to a humble and obedient lifestyle is so embedded into who they are it is even apparent in the title they have chosen for themselves. In the *Early Rule* when addressing the role of those who will lead the other brothers in the order, he emphasizes this humility in their role. He indicates that, "...no one should be called Prior, but all generally should be called Friars Minor. And the one should wash the feet of the others."¹³³ While this dictation does not appear in the *Later Rule* its tradition lives on, for it is this title that those entering into the order have always, and continue to take. This title is one of humility and reflects the core of Francis' lifestyle as a minister. They are humble, obedient servants, relinquishing control of their will to Christ, the Church and their order. Like the founders of the previous orders established and addressed Francis too emphasizes humility as a central component of the religious community. However, Francis progresses beyond just contemplative monastic living and like the Jedi, which will be explored later, who traveled the galaxy serving as a beacon of light to a dark universe, Franciscan journey out into the world to be the light of Christ as they serve others.

¹³³ Armstrong, 114.

Francis' extreme humble lifestyle set him apart from his predecessors in many ways. Religious life for a Franciscan does not consist solely of living a contemplative life as they journey towards a closer relationship to God. The Friars Minor are also to venture out into the world and be humble servants amongst the people. This led to a greater amount of freedom but certainly did not lead to a lesser commitment to obedience to a rule, superior, or hierarchy. In fact, Francis understood the benefit and importance of a hierarchical structure to the order. While providing them a different label Francis recognized, like St. Augustine and St. Benedict, the value and necessity in having a "minister" to guide one on their journey and hold one accountable when they deviate from the path. These individuals may not have been called Prioress or Abbot, but they served an identical function in their role as a monitor and guide to those that have chosen to take the path of religious life in his tradition.

In both the *Early* and *Later Rule* Francis establishes a level of commitment and obedience to the individual directly responsible for overseeing and guiding the brothers on their journey through religious living. Like St. Augustine and St. Benedict's rule this individual is responsible for leading, and accompanying, the religious on their quest towards a closer relationship to the Lord. In the *Early Rule* St. Francis writes,

All the brothers who have been established as ministers and servants of the other brothers should assign their brothers to the provinces and to the places where they are to be, and they should visit them frequently and spiritually admonish and encourage them. And all my other blessed brothers should diligently obey them in those matters which concern the well-being of their soul and [which] are not contrary to life.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Armstrong, 112.

The sentiment of obedience to the minister is further emphasized in the *Later Rule* where the instruction moves from a suggestion of should, to an obligation which one is bound to obey. It states, "All brothers are bound to have one of the brothers of this Order as the minister general and servant of the entire fraternity and they are bound strictly to obey him."¹³⁵ The ministers, as branded by St. Francis, are responsible for not only the physical placement of the Franciscans, but more importantly are responsible for their spiritual development. Furthermore, those who enter the order are not just encouraged to relent to their authority, as if it were a suggestion, but rather their obedience is tied to the rule itself. The use of the word bound denotes that the individual is confined to obey the minister and their directions. There is an obligation that one will submit to their minister when they enter into religious life as a Franciscan.

A life of submission and obedience to another can be frightening as one must put all their trust in the individual. It is precisely this level of trust and obedience that St. Francis requires of his order, for it is this level of trust and obedience that one is required to give to Christ if they want to live according to His will. This is nothing that Francis himself was not willing to do, for as Brother Cotter, OFM already asserted, "Francis abandons himself into God's care, totally dependent on him."¹³⁶ As St. Francis abandoned himself to God and became completely dependent on Him, he wants his order to submit to their ministers and rely on them. Ultimately, however, for St. Francis the goal is an absolute reliance on God. Through this obedience they can move further on their journey, edging forward towards their quest to

¹³⁵ Armstrong, 142.

¹³⁶ Costello, 161.

completely submit to the Lord. It is through this submission and relinquishment of control to the Lord that one is able to live as the Lord wills. A quest, as we will see, that is similar for the Jedi who wish to submit to and become one with the will of the Force.

As St. Augustine and St. Benedict before him understood, this level of control over another needs to be kept in check. To help prevent this power from being abused St. Francis ups the level of accountability of the minister. St. Francis writes, "...because the care of the souls of the brothers has been entrusted to them, if anyone of them should be lost because of their fault or bad example, [these ministers and servants] will have to *render an account* before the Lord Jesus *on the day of judgment*."¹³⁷ In order for one to successfully live a life of obedience one must trust what they are being obedient to. As individuals of faith, they have ultimately put their trust in the Lord, and his judgement. The message that any abuse or misdirection provided by the minister will be met with harsh judgement should provide the individual with some peace.

Francis himself expresses some harsh criticism himself to a minister who seems to have lost their way in one of his writings, *A Letter to a Minister*. In this letter you not only see how St. Francis practices what he preaches in his criticism of the minister, but also you gain insight into how the minister's behavior can and should always lead one towards the Lord. Francis writes,

And by this I wish to know if you love the Lord God and me, his servant and yours – if you have acted in this manner: that is, there should not be any brother in the world who has sinned, however much he may have possibly sinned, who, after he has looked into your eyes, would go away without having received mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not to seek mercy, you should ask him if he wants mercy. And if he should sin

¹³⁷ Armstrong, 113.

thereafter a thousand times before your very eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him back to the Lord.¹³⁸

For Francis the role of the minister is to live as Christ mercifully and forgiving, for in doing so both one's word and actions lead one to experience the Lord. Behaving this mercifully can be difficult when faced with aggression and one can surely see the connection that Francis is making here with how Christ reacted when faced with aggression and the sinfulness of the world. Here we find another aspect of the Jedi life and philosophy when Luke confronts Vader as they stand before the Emperor. Despite seeing Vader, his father, kill or destroy countless lives he continued to live mercifully when he could of kill Vader after he was disarmed. Even when faced with death himself by the Emperor Luke still refused to relinquish this mercy. This moment of mercy allowed Vader to see what the Force truly was and ultimately led to the defeat of the Emperor. In a way the minister is called to be a model of living obedience to the Lord, for in doing so they build trust and obedience in others.

While St. Francis continuously strove to keep the minister focused and motivated on their task also attempting to draw them back to modeling Christ he also recognized that did not always occur. However, St. Francis also recognized that the Lord placed within each of us conscience, and that each of us should trust in that gift. Along with the comfort of knowing that any abuse of authority will not go unpunished St. Francis also empowered the friars by instructing them to lean on their own conscience. In the *Early Rule* he writes,

But should any of the ministers command any of the brothers to do something contrary to our life or against conscience, he is not bound to obey him, since that is not obedience in which a fault or sin is committed.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Armstrong, 75.

¹³⁹ Armstrong, 113.

This concept is reiterated in the *Later Rule* as well indicating,

Therefore I strictly command them to obey their ministers in all those things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against [their] conscience and our Rule.¹⁴⁰

While further relaying the direction to submit and follow one's minister St. Francis ensures that he follows up this command with directions to help ensure that those living by the rule are not forced to comply with an order that is contradictory to the rule, the Church, or the will of God himself. Leading the religious to listen to, and discern, one's conscience is an invaluable skill when taking the journey towards the Divine. St. Francis had the wisdom in knowing that anyone who is given authority and power over another can be tempted and corrupted to utilize that authority for their own gain, and empowers his order to lean on their God given conscience to ensure that they are not taken advantage of, or led in the wrong direction. This abuse would be detrimental to the entire community, so St. Francis instructs those within the order to have a level of self-accountability. Everyone who undertakes the quest to the Divine needs to be wary of being led astray, even at the hands of the sage they have trusted. For even Christ himself was betrayed by one of his own.

St. Francis' insertion of this safety net into his rule is important, because while obedience is vital when undertaking a spiritual journey, blind obedience can be dangerous. The notion of allowing one's conscience to guide and assist one when making decision is something that is also in the tradition of the Catholic faith. As indicated and directed by in the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church,

¹⁴⁰ Armstrong, 143.

Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.¹⁴¹

We have all been given the gift of a conscience and are called to utilize it to help lead and guide us towards making the right and just moral decisions. One's conscience is not something that should be consulted lightly and first requires the individual to have sound judgement into what moral behavior is. The Catechism emphasizes this by ensuring to define conscience before empowering one to use it,

Conscience is a judgement of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right.¹⁴²

This definition of conscience is important to understand because one should not lean on this gift from God in order to have an excuse to defy their minister. St. Francis makes it clear that before anything else, obedience should be observed, and the minister responsible for your care and direction should be obeyed. Following one's conscience is vital towards maintaining a moral center, but one will also need to defend their moral stance if they choose to disobey a directive from their minister so it should not be done without a fully formed conscience. Similarly, a Jedi should not go against their master without a fully formed connection and understanding of the force. In many ways connecting to and following one's conscience is similar to the Jedi's understanding of connecting to and following the force.

Unlike the confrontation between Jedi obeying and following the directions of one's minister should not be a battle. While there may be certain instances of abuse one should

¹⁴¹ CCC, [1782].

¹⁴² CCC, [1778].

genuinely believe that they have taken their position seriously and have a sincere desire to aide one on their commitment to the order, and the path that it provides. The responsibility of a minister is not simply to assert their authority and dictate rules, but rather to build a relationship with the religious they are responsible for. Like the sage, the minister should walk with them on their journey, and escort them on their path until their wisdom is no longer needed. Only when this occurs, and the individual has been provided with all they require to continue their quest, should the individual risk continuing their quest alone.

3.6 - Obedience With - A Journey Taken Together

The minister's role as a companion for those they are responsible and accountable for is expressed in St. Francis' rule. St. Francis undoubtedly did not want any who received the call to religious life to be left to fend for themselves. Nor did he want those in charge to simply be dictators to those who have made this blessed sacrifice to serve the Lord, and those in the world which He created. Understanding the difficulties that one will face when committing to a religious life St. Francis provides those within the order a role model and guide on their journey. Additionally, this individual is also invested in them, and committed to seeing positive progress in their spiritual journey. As indicated in the *Early Rule*,

All the brothers who have been established as ministers and servants of the other brothers should assign their brothers to the provinces and to the places where they are to be, and they should visit them frequently and spiritually admonish and encourage them.¹⁴³

This same sentiment is reiterated in the *Later Rule* stating,

¹⁴³ Armstrong, 112.

The brothers who are the ministers and servants of the other brothers should visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything which might be against their conscience and our Rule.¹⁴⁴

One of the first and most relevant aspect of these chapters, represented in both the *Early and Later Rule*, is that it directs the ministers to visit those they are responsible for regularly. When one is responsible for providing direction and guidance to another they cannot do it successfully from the sideline. If one wishes the individuals they are guiding on their spiritual journey to be successful, then they need to be with them during their journey. The ministers need to be present to prepare them of the pitfalls they will face, and provide them the support and wisdom they will need to overcome and prosper through these pitfalls. If the minister is not involved on a regular basis they will be disconnected from those they are responsible for and unable to adequately administer relevant guidance and necessary advice to assist them in overcoming the obstacles they might face. As with any quest one must be prepared for the challenges they will face on the way, the role of the sage provides the preparation that one needs, however, if they are unaware of the roadblocks that will arise, they will be ill adequate in being a trusted aide, and ill-equipped to provide the guidance one needs to progress on their journey.

Through consistently monitoring and connecting with those the minister oversees, they are able to build a trusting bond, and recognize the impediments they are facing on their journey. This bond will continue to strengthen as the minister takes the journey with the individual and aid them in their struggles. Individuals who enter into religious life will have a greater willingness to trust their minister if the minister has shown a commitment to them, and

¹⁴⁴ Armstrong, 143.

their quest. Frequent visit will provide invaluable insight into the individual's needs and help build trust between the minister and the religious. The insight gained from these visits and the bond that is created will allow the minister to address the individual concerns of each person. This will allow any correction made to be done in accordance to the individual's need, and the guidance can be molded in a manner that will best lead each religious personally.

Being obedient to someone who only shows up to chastise, or overburdens you with rule, without any wisdom or insight into how to follow them, would be difficult for some, and near impossible for others. St. Francis shows great wisdom through his rule by ensuring that the ministers lead and direct in an empathetic manner. He not only ensured that training occurs, but that the pedagogical style is one motivated out of love. He stressed teaching be administered with humility, and insured that it was consistent. This established routine and attitude helps built trust, which makes being obedient to the minister easier. When a bond is formed and a trusting relationship, established the next part of Chapter X of *The Later Rule* is much easier to follow. It indicates, "And wherever there are brothers who know and realize that they cannot observe the Rule spiritually, it is their duty and right to go to the minister for help."¹⁴⁵ This section of the rule makes the religious accountable for seeking out guidance when they are struggling, and forces them to have some agency in their journey. It is not just the responsibility, and burden, of the minister to provide oversight, but also the responsibility of the religious to seek out direction when necessary. Often time's individuals are the best judge of their own short comings. Self-accountability is essential if one honestly desires

¹⁴⁵ Armstrong, 143.

transformation. This sentiment is not only found in the *Later Rule*, but this level of accountability was previously established in the *Earlier Rule*. In Chapter VI of the *Earlier Rule* it states,

If the brothers, in whatever places they are, cannot observe our life, they should have recourse as quickly as possible to their minister and report this to him. The minister, on his part, should be eager to provide for them as he would wish to be done for him were he in a similar position.¹⁴⁶

It is telling that Francis indicates that the minister should be eager to aid the individual when approached. Taking this empathetic approach St. Francis emphasizes how the minister should willingly, and eagerly respond when approached. By recognizing that one would wish to be aided in their own struggles, St. Francis encourages the minister to aide others empathically and in the fashion they themselves would need to be aided. This empathetic approach is beneficial when building relationship with one's mentor, particularly when said mentor has authority and control over you. Believing the individual who has authority over you is invested in your success, and eager to aid in that success, is vital if the relationship is going to flourish. Exposing one's own weaknesses and failings can be difficult. However, the trust and honesty that develop, from following the spirit of this rule, will establish a relationship that is more likely to be successful. Exposing one's weaknesses is an important step toward overcoming them. In fact, many times it is through one's failings that one learns the most. A trusting relationship can ease the burden of exposing a weakness, and increases the benefit of receiving possible chastisement.

¹⁴⁶ Armstrong, 114.

Like St. Francis, St. Clare also understood the importance of establishing a strong relationship between the religious and their superior who was responsible for their spiritual progress within the community. St. Clare's wisdom really shines through her recognition that one who leads by example and exemplifying a holy life is one whom the community members will strive to emulate. Truly embracing the Franciscan charism of living as Christ would live St. Clare stresses in her rule that the Abbess should model the behavior that she desired her fellow sisters to emulate. Within Chapter IV of her rule, she writes concerning the Abbess, "She should strive as well to preside over the others more by her virtues and holy behavior than by her office, so that, moved by her example, the sisters might obey her more out of love than out of fear."¹⁴⁷ A community that respects their superior is one that consistently sees them living as they call others to live. It makes a poor role model, and sage, who utilizes the do as I say, not as I do, pedagogical method. One who has gained the respect and love of their pupils does not need to demand obedience from those they are responsible for. Rather this obedience is given willingly and freely as they see the benefits that obedience to the rule and Christ produces through the actions and interaction they have with their superior.

Modelling behavior is just one pedagogical method however, and similarly like St. Francis and the other religious before him who established rules for their communities, St. Clare also recognized that direction and correction is a necessary part of the journey. Ideally with the already established respect and love one has for their superior, any direction, or correct, that is required would be received with humility. All members of the religious

¹⁴⁷ Armstrong, 215.

community should realize that progression towards the holy is not an easy path and consequently one must relent to their superior. This truth however is often hard to swallow regardless how much you respect your superior, so St. Clare, like those before her, ensured to address this reality in her rule as well. In Chapter X of her rule, she articulates this truth stating,

The Abbess should admonish and visit her sisters, and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything which would be against their soul and form or our profession. The sisters, however, who are subjects, should remember that for God's sake they have renounced their own wills. Hence, they are firmly bound to obey their Abbess in all things which they promised the Lord to observe and which are not against their soul and our profession.¹⁴⁸

As a counterpart to St. Francis, St. Clare follows in his footsteps reiterating the necessity of obedience, and the requirement that one relent to their superior when part of the community. The sisters are reminded by the rule this obedience is reflective of that which they have already given up to God. For it is God's will, not their own that has led them into this community. When one hears, and answers, the call to religious life they are relenting to God's will through their superior and striving to live by God's will not their own. It is through the relationship between the sister and their Abbess that they are striving to live out God's will and only by obey their superior can they hope to move further on this journey towards the Divine. To conclude this analysis of the official religious rules we move three decades beyond St. Francis into the realm of St. Ignatius who developed the final officially accepted rule of the Roman Catholic Church, but more importantly also developed the notion of spiritual direction which allowed the laity to embrace and benefit from the obedience of another that seem to be isolated to the world of those living in the confines of a religious order.

¹⁴⁸ Armstrong, 222.

Chapter 4 - Sagely Guidance Offered to Everyone

The relationship of the minister, or abbess, and religious is like that of the sage and hero on their quest. Similar to the abbot and prioress, the minister and abbess provides the role of the sage on the individual's spiritual journey. St. Augustine, St. Benedict, and St. Francis provided us with the three main rules that are the foundation for all other religious rules. These rules consistently emphasizes the importance of obedience and the need for a sagely figure to assist the individuals taking this religious journey. These saints and the communities they formed provided their members with a set of guidelines to aid them as they ventured forward on their spiritual journey. Building off of these traditions another great saint expands the reach of these rules to move beyond the walls of the religious communities, and provides the benefits of these tradition to be accessible to anyone wishing to utilize them. St. Ignatius, who developed the *Spiritual Exercises*, allows the sagely figure of the minister, abbot or prioress to be accessible to the laity. As Joseph Veale, SJ indicates, "They were the jottings of a layman and for many years it was as a layman that he helped others to find their way forward on the way to God."¹⁴⁹

Born about three hundred years after St. Francis, St. Ignatius lived during a time when the world was changing. He lived as the world was emerging out of the medieval era and growing into a more modern one. It was during this time of change and advancement that the spirituality that was developed by the fathers of religious life began to be exposed to the world. As indicated by Karl Baier,

¹⁴⁹ Costello, 192.

From the late medieval period onward in Western Europe, monastic spirituality-and with it the art of spiritual guidance-spilled out beyond cloister walls. Spiritual guidance ceased to be a privilege of the monastics and a few interested members of the nobility. It spread within a number of lay- and semi-lay movements and through translations of monastic literature into various vernaculars.¹⁵⁰

Utilizing the exposer of religious spirituality St. Ignatius was wise enough to grasp its valuable qualities and develop his own form of spirituality, bringing forward the essential need for everyone to have direction in one's spiritual life.

St. Ignatius' spirituality is one that allows not only those who have embraced a vocational calling as a priest or religious to undertake a spiritual journey towards God but encourages all who wish to undertake this quest to do so. Before St. Ignatius, it seems that only those who were willing to accept one of these callings were considered holy enough to undergo this journey. However, through the knowledge and traditions established by these three saintly predecessors St. Ignatius was able to spread their wisdom to a wider audience. His development of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and the role of spiritual directors, allow those other than clergy or religious to benefit from their wisdom and traditions. In fact, these exercises were originally developed by St. Ignatius to give directions to university students which illustrates his understanding of the need for spiritual development outside of religious communities. This transition from a focus solely of the development and support of the spiritual quest to those in religious life to a broader audience seems natural for anyone who researches and examines these rules. One can see the importance they place on taking one's quest toward the Divine within the community, and the benefit the community has as all its members' journey towards the Divine. However, as indicated by Debra Farrington, a

¹⁵⁰ Karl Baier, "Spiritual Authority: A Christian Perspective," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* Vol 30 (2010): 108-109

community, or rather the important relationship that is founded by living within it, can also be established outside of religious life. She writes, "...most rules would encourage individuals to form some kind of religious community, even if it is only a relationship with one other person, such as a spiritual director."¹⁵¹ The value of the community is in the relationships that are formed, and the spiritual guidance that is provided through these relationships. Understanding this truth, and the invaluable benefit this type of relationship provided, St. Ignatius took one of the most important aspects of the religious lifestyle and exposed its advantages to the rest of the world.

Embracing the truths and traditions gained from St. Augustine, St. Benedict and St. Francis' religious rules, St. Ignatius progresses this wisdom forward and provided it to a broader audience. He seemed to understand that many outside of the religious community also desired to take a similar journey to make God the center of one's life. He understood that it was not just the religious, or clergy that wished to make God's will their own. Debra Farrington expresses this sentiment well when,

Whether we live inside or outside of religious enclosures, the monastic concept of balancing our lives and ordering them around God offers hope for living a deeper more fulfilling spiritual life.¹⁵²

Like Farrington it seems that Ignatius understood the benefits of living a life centered on God. While not directly influenced by the religious orders he seems to draw upon a key element and significant figure in one's spiritual development from these traditions. St. Ignatius was able to pinpoint one invaluable aspect that these communities shared and made it available to any

¹⁵¹ Farrington, 13.

¹⁵² Farrington, 3-4.

wishing to follow the will of God. The sagely role of the abbot, prioress, or minister was not only something that could take place within these community, for St. Ignatius this role can, and should be, available to all who desire to undergo this journey. Karl Baier emphasizes this point stating,

With the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola (developed between 1522 and 1540) a new school of spiritual guidance emerged. The directors of the exercise (usually Jesuit priests) underwent special training, and their task was to lead the directee (who could be a member of the clergy, a monk or nun, or a lay Christian) through a series of meditations during a retreat lasting up to four weeks.¹⁵³

Like St. Augustine, St. Benedict, and St. Francis, St. Ignatius also had a profound influence on religious life. He too understood the importance of obedience, and like his predecessors, this vow became a foundation to those who wished to join the order formed in his tradition. This vow was necessary not only in regards to the order's commitment and dedication to the pontiff, but also in their dedication to follow their spiritual director. With the tradition and success of this vow in theses previous rules it is no wonder that it would be continued with St. Ignatius and even more important to recognize that this call to obedience goes beyond the walls of religious communities and is one that everyone called to this journey must accept.

St. Ignatius' development of spiritual direction provided those outside of religious life with the ability to take a spiritual journey with a sagely guide previously only taken by those living in a religious community, or as a priest. Written by St. Ignatius, the *Spiritual Exercises*, provide guidance for those living within the order, but also provides guidelines for individuals who are assuming the role of spiritual director for others. While St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*

¹⁵³ Baier, 109.

is designed to be undertaken as a twenty-eight to thirty day retreat, he makes it clear within the text that the direction he provides goes beyond the boundaries of a retreat. Within the text St. Ignatius explains that, "By the term 'Spiritual Exercises' is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of spiritual activities..."¹⁵⁴ What St. Ignatius is describing is the process that one undertakes as they journey towards a closer relationship with God. Whether it be prayer, meditation, contemplation, etc. St. Ignatius describes in this text a process to aide one in their quest.

This process is undertaken through the assistance of another who directs them on their journey, and just like St. Augustine, Benedict and Francis he too understood the value and necessity of obedience to these directions. The availability of this individual to everyone, including the laity, evolves the sagely role of the abbot, prioress and minister, that was previously established by the three religious fathers before him, into an accessible guide that St. Ignatius believes all should turn to in order to progress on their spiritual journey. St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* provides direction for those who wish to undertake this quest, as well as instructions for those who take on the sagely role of guiding them on their journey. When one examines these exercises, and the description of the spiritual director, one begins to see the influence that St. Augustine, St. Benedict and St. Francis had on him. St. Ignatius' spiritual directors share many of the same qualities and traits with the abbots, prioresses, and ministers, and their role is indispensable to the progress of the quest undertaken by the individual who is relenting to their guidance.

¹⁵⁴ Louis J. Puhl, S.J., ed., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), 1.

4.1 - Ignatius Obedience and Spiritual Direction

The role of the spiritual director is similar to that of the abbot, prioress, and minister, for as William Barry points out, "...spiritual direction is concerned with helping a person directly with his or her relationship with God."¹⁵⁵ Those who answer the vocational call to enter religious life do so because of their love and commitment they have to God. Their desire to grow closer to Him and serve Him led these individuals to make the noble sacrifice to enter into a religious community, and live according to His will. The religious rules were designed to provide communities with structure and direction so their quest to live in line with God's will may be accomplished. The rules which have been examined all provide a superior who is put into place to oversee the religious' progress, to help them follow the rule they committed to, and keep the focus on the will of God, and living in accordance to it. Like the spiritual director they are placed into the religious' life to bolster, and reinforce, their relationship with God.

Within religious communities the superiors have the duty and responsibility to monitor and guide those they are responsible for overseeing. Similarly, the spiritual director provides this oversight to those they have taken the responsibility to provide guidance to. As with the superiors of religious communities the spiritual director has a responsibility to those they are guiding. As indicated in the *Spiritual Exercises*,

When the one who is giving the Exercises perceives that the exercitant is not affected by any spiritual experiences, such as consolation or desolation, and that he is not troubled by different spirits, he ought to ply him with questions about the exercise. He should ask him whether he makes them at the appointed times, and how he makes them. He

¹⁵⁵ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 5.

should question him about the Additional Directions, whether he is diligent in the observation of them. He will demand an account in detail of each of these points.¹⁵⁶

St. Ignatius emphasizes that one of the roles of the spiritual director is to hold their pupils accountable. Like the superior who must hold their religious accountable to the rule they have vowed to follow, the spiritual director is responsible for holding the individual they are directing accountable to their journey.

Obedience and commitment still play a vital role in one's journey towards a deeper relationship with God. Regardless if one lives within a religious community, working through the *Spiritual Exercises* or receiving spiritual direction one must be willing to commit and relent to the authority of the individual they are receiving guidance from. Not only must one be willing to surrender to their guide, but they should hope they are willing, and able, to hold them accountable when necessary. The journey one undertakes towards a deeper relationship with God is not an easy one, or one without trial and tribulations. No one is adequately served if chastisement is avoided when it is required. The goal of discipline is to teach and when one has decided to undertake the quest to God, they must recognize that teaching and growth will be necessary.

Embracing the disciplinary nature of this journey allows one to address the shortcomings they inevitably will face. Through the assistance of one's guide these shortcomings can be overcome. Like the religious fathers prior to him, St. Ignatius also recognized the need for discipline and accountability, to be done in an empathetic manner. The *Spiritual Exercises* indicates,

¹⁵⁶ Puhl, 3.

If the director of the Exercises observes that the exercitant is in desolation and tempted, let him not deal severely and harshly with him, but gently and kindly. He should encourage and strengthen him for the future by exposing to him the wiles of the enemy of our human nature, and by getting him to prepare and dispose himself for the coming consolation.¹⁵⁷

St. Ignatius recognized that all whom take this journey will undergo trials, and obstacles they will need to be overcome. There will be moments of despair as the individual struggles with temptation, and the turmoil it brings to one wishing to move closer to God, and live according to His will. Like the other religious superiors before him, St. Ignatius stressed the need for the spiritual directors to provide direction empathetically and not in a condemning or overly judgmental manner. St. Ignatius reiterates this point in his *Spiritual Exercises* stating,

If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this does not suffice, all appropriate means should be used to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error.¹⁵⁸

The quest for a deeper relationship with God is one that is wrought with difficult situations and tough choices. There is no question that anyone who undertakes this journey will make mistakes and need to be redirected. Not one of the religious fathers, nor St. Ignatius believed that the rules, or exercises, they created would allow an individual to complete this journey without difficulties. Guidance and direction is essential if one wishes to overcome the temptations one will face and become equipped to face them again in the future. What is important to recognize in both the religious rules, and the *Spiritual Exercises*, is that the direction provided is done so in a loving and empathetic fashion. Approaching an individual empathetically demonstrates that one's progress is valued, and you care about them

¹⁵⁷ Puhl, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Puhl, 11.

personally. Consequently, the disciplinary actions and directions provided will more likely be viewed as constructive criticism, rather than judgmental condemnation. An empathetic approach aids in building trust with one's director, and reassurance that the director has a genuine concern for their spiritual progress.

Along with being empathetic, the spiritual director should also be malleable and adaptable. Every individual who undertakes the *Spiritual Exercises* is unique and thus the direction they are provided should also be molded to fit their own personal needs. Unlike the religious rules that indicate the nothing should be added or taken away, St. Ignatius' *Exercises* leave room for adjustments to be made in order to meet the needs of the individual progressing through the *Exercises*. St. Ignatius expresses this point in the *Spiritual Exercises* indicating,

(If the one giving the Exercises judges that it would be profitable for the exercitant other exercises may be added here, for example, on death and other punishment of sin, on judgement, etc. Let him not think this is forbidden, though they are not given here.)¹⁵⁹

When one journeys towards a deeper relationship with God, and to live according to His will, they will have to overcome numerous personal obstacles. Each individual who undergoes this journey will face different obstacles and thus a one size fits all mentality will not adequately address the need of all who undergo this quest. Through the development of a deep relationship, and the openness it provides, the director will become attuned to the individual needs of the one they are directing. In order to adequately assist those on their journey they may, and should, adapt the exercises to best address the individual, and their unique struggles

¹⁵⁹ Puhl, 34.

at the time. This is crucial, and essential, if one wishes to progress on their journey. If the shortcoming that is holding one back is not addressed, it will never be overcome and one's journey will become stagnant. There is great wisdom and insight into St. Ignatius adding this preface. It allows his *Exercises* to evolve to meet the needs of the one progressing through them and makes these exercises accessible to everyone.

The flexibility that St. Ignatius allows within his *Spiritual Exercises* encourages an individualistic approach of progressing towards the Divine. This approach is not only critical for the director, who needs to have the freedom to make changes or additions to the exercises, but it is also important to the individual who is partaking in the process. The lack of flexibility found within the three religious rules discussed may be critical for those living within a community but for laity who desire to journey towards a deeper relationship with God, a ridged model will not suffice. Living within a religious community levels the playing field among its members, each one lives under the same rule, and within the same boundaries. However, once one steps outside those boundaries a plethora of different variables immerge, variables that need to be addressed if one wishes to progress on their holy quest. Those living within a religious community, as well as the Jesuits are, required to take on the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are crucial to the success of the community and forge a bond between those that have taken. For the laity, however, these vows are not taken and consequently other pressing secular issues may arise that need to be addressed. Family matters or monetary concerns are just a couple examples of issues that may arise and create pitfalls for one on their spiritual journey. While St. Ignatius' *Exercises* were designed to be undertaken as a retreat, the

spirit of what he provided through these exercises has grown to benefit both those inside and outside religious communities through the process of spiritual direction.

The role of the spiritual director emerged out of St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, and those who undertook the twenty-eight to thirty day retreat were guided through the exercises by this director. However, this sagely role and the spiritual growth it promoted grew beyond the confines of a retreat. Spiritual direction began to be sought, by both laity and religious. For those living within religious communities this role was primarily performed by the religious superiors responsible for ensuring their rule, is being adhered to. Out of these early religious traditions St. Ignatius developed his *Spiritual Exercises*. Emerging from these exercises came the role of the spiritual director an individual designed to aide others on their journey towards a deeper relationship with God. It is not a surprise that the spiritual evolution that St. Ignatius pushes forward through his *Spiritual Exercises* grew out of a monastic tradition of continued sagely guidance and obedience. For as Jean Evens indicates in the *Journal of Religious Health*, "...from the sixth century onwards, the development of spirituality on the European continent was tied closely to the growth of monasteries."¹⁶⁰ Understanding the value of religious life and the direction that one receives from their superior St. Ignatius' wisdom allowed him to embrace its importance for all who wish to journey deeper into a relationship with God.

The usefulness of a spiritual director expands far beyond the boundaries of religious life and St. Ignatius' desire was for its benefits to be available to both laity and religious alike. In fact, as Joseph Veale points out, "They were the jottings of a layman and for many years it was

¹⁶⁰ Jean Evans, "Experience and Convergence in Spiritual Direction," *Journal of Religious Health* Vol 54 (2015): 265.

as a layman that he helped others to find their way forward on the way to God.”¹⁶¹ St. Ignatius’ exercises were envisioned by him as a layman and his motivation for compiling them together was in order to help others on their spiritual journey. As a layman himself these exercises, and access to a spiritual director, were intended for anyone who wished to benefit from them. In fact, before he was ordained a priest, he utilized the *Exercises* mainly with students in the university.

St. Ignatius provided the gift of his *Spiritual Exercises* to all those journeying toward a deeper relationship with God. Expanding the use of a spiritual director, and the role they provide the Christian community, is one of the greatest contribution St. Ignatius could provide to people of faith. While the tradition of a spiritual guide traces back to the desert mystics and is a reflection of the role of the Abbott or Abbess, Ignatius encourages all to seek out and utilize this sagely individual. The spiritual director, who originally functioned as a guide for these *Exercises*, has expanded beyond just an overseer of the exercises and has become an ongoing mentor for one who undertakes this lifelong journey. Like the superiors within the religious traditions the role of the spiritual director is essential for one undertaking the quest towards the Divine. Access to this sagely role is a great benefit to the growth of one’s spirituality, and can be vital to the success of the individual who has chosen to undertake the quest for a closer relationship with God. A quest, like discernment, which is ongoing and continuous.

This is particularly important as it also aids one in their discernment. Discernment is a continuous process that is, and has been, a central theme within religious communities, but it is

¹⁶¹ Costello, 192.

also one that every individual undergoes along their spiritual journey. This process of discernment, growing in relationship and experience with God, is one that has always been vital within religious communities. However, just like other unique aspect that were once only offered to religious and clergy St. Ignatius began exposing and offering similar aspects to the laity. Uncovering these benefits, he knew that they should be provided to all, including the laity, as it is not only those who enter religious life or the seminary that need direction and guidance. Rather, he understood, and embraced, the universal call that we all receive and recognized the importance of aiding everyone in their continuous process of discernment. A process that one typically underwent with their religious superior, but now, through spiritual direction, was one that all could access and benefit from.

While the role of the spiritual director may share many of the qualities of those who oversee a religious community, they are not identical. Those responsible for overseeing a religious community not only aids in the spiritual journey of the religious they also monitor and enforce the rule they have vowed obedience to. The spiritual director, on the other hand, is only responsible for assisting with the spiritual quest an individual is undertaking. As William Barry explains,

...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.¹⁶²

Spiritual direction is only one of many roles that a superior of a religious community is responsible for, but it is this role that St. Ignatius emphasizes. This emphasis St. Ignatius' truth

¹⁶² Barry, xii.

of the unquestionable value of the spiritual director to not only those living within a religious community, but to all who wish to develop a relationship with God.

Firmly founded by these religious fathers in the rules they developed to govern their orders, spiritual direction is a tradition that has been aiding Christians on their journey towards the Divine for centuries. As Karl Baier explains,

Spiritual direction in Christianity originated as a monastic concept. Historically it was from the movement of the desert monasticism that we received the idea of spiritual direction within the framework of Christian practice.¹⁶³

Establishing this fact constitutes a historical foundation and tradition that has not only continued throughout the ages, but has grown within religious communities. Its benefits have also begun to emerge out of these communities in order to benefit any who wish to understand the role God's presence plays in one's life. If the role of a spiritual director was not beneficial, or did not aid one on their journey, these orders would have discontinued its practice and the practice would never have expanded beyond the walls of the religious communities. It is precisely because individuals have received a benefit from these relationships that its use not only continues, but has become revamped allowing these services to be available to all who wish to benefit from its use.

Evolving out of the religious tradition the spiritual director provides the world access to an evaluable resource, a sage who will guide and journey alongside one who wishes to move closer to the Divine. Examining the role of the superiors of these orders provided us with a foundation for the tradition of the sage, and showed how they journeyed alongside the

¹⁶³ Baier, 108.

religious as they move further on their path towards holiness. Embracing this tradition St. Ignatius' expanded the limited reach of this sagely role into the modern arena and made these sages accessible to any who wish to tap into their wisdom. Examining the role of the spiritual director provides one with insight into the how a modern sage can positively influence one on their journey towards God. Founded out of the spiritual traditions of the religious fathers the role of spiritual director is established from spiritual institutions that have aided numerous individuals on the holy path to sainthood.

William Barry defines spiritual direction as,

...help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.¹⁶⁴

Like the sage, the role of a spiritual director is to guide one on their journey, specifically to aide one in their relationship with God. This main focus of the spiritual director as one whom guides others on their quest for a deeper relationship with God is reiterated by Gene Barrette who indicates,

Christian spiritual direction may be defined as the help or guidance that a person (directee) seeks and another (director) gives over a period of time in the process of growing in a loving relationship with God. This process unfolds under continual impulse, inspiration, and action of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual direction, therefore, involves three persons: the directee, the director, and the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁵

The quest to be holy, is a journey towards a deeper relationship with the Divine.

Working alongside an individual seeking guidance, the spiritual director aids them in this goal of

¹⁶⁴ Barry, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Gene Barrette, "Spiritual Direction in the Roman Catholic Tradition," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* Vol 30 No 4 (2002): 290.

developing a closer relationship with God. This sagely role is an invaluable asset to any who chooses to take this journey, and without their assistance, the individual would struggle in being able to complete their quest. As will be explored, there is a similar connection between the Jedi master and apprentice. Grasping an understanding of God, who and what a Divine Being is extremely complicated, just like trying to understand the will of the Force. But unlike the Force adding to this already challenging undertaking one must also embrace the truth that this Being, i.e. God, wished to have a personal relationship with each of us. Once this truth is understood one then must figure out what that relationship means, and how one can possibly work towards deepening it.

4.2 - Spiritual Direction the Path to Authenticity

Spiritual direction may seem to have emerged out of the religious tradition and into the forefront of the modern lay seeker. However, this practice is actually something that is at the core of our existence as spiritual beings. This reality is expressed by Jean Evans who indicates that,

Spiritual direction is a process rooted in spirituality with theology as its foundation. Its practice is predicated upon the belief that God seeks relationships with people, God acts in people's lives, God can be found in all things, and that human beings have an intrinsic openness to transcendence.¹⁶⁶

As previously indicated spiritual direction is something that was provided within the religious communities by one's superior. However, as Evans indicates this type of guidance is something that is rooted in all spiritual journeys and is theologically founded. This is important to note as it indicates how this practice is something that is based on a tradition that goes even farther back

¹⁶⁶ Evans, 276.

that these religious orders. It is a practice that is vital to one's spiritual journey and one that God intended each of us to take in order for us to grow closer to Him.

The path towards holiness is one that is continuously traveled over a lifetime. While this encounter with the Other, and one's draw to understand and respond to it, can occur before one's embrace of the faith through the Sacrament of Baptisms. Once one partakes in this initiation Sacrament one commits to a lifelong journey towards an encounter with the Other. It is a journey that begins at the moment of baptism, and continues throughout the course of one's life. This Sacrament is a method of change and growth that cleanses and transform the individual, drawing them closer to God. Change in any area of one's life is difficult and challenging. A spiritual change spurred on through this Sacrament is no different. Once one embraces this call and their baptismal promise one will need assistance in answering it, for change is scary and the benefits one gains from others who previously embraced this promise is exponential. This is why all who have made this promise should seek out and receive the support and assistance of a spiritual guide. As Gene Barrette puts is,

Spiritual guidance or direction is the human/divine assistance, helping translate discipleship into a life journey of transformation. Called to be a disciple, sent to be an apostle, this is the fundamental vocation of all baptized Christians. This process of change has always benefited from the guidance of others.¹⁶⁷

The benefit of a spiritual director, a sage on one's persistent quest venturing deeper towards the Divine, is monumental. The struggles one undergoes as they evaluate themselves internally can be smoothly navigated with the aid of another. Individuals who strive to make a change in their lifestyle, or behaviors, can navigate that change with greater success when they receive

¹⁶⁷ Barrette, 290.

the assistance from another. This is found to be true within psychology, and the benefits from the guidance of another in spiritual matters are no different.

4.3 - Spiritual Direction Founded in Scripture

Not only is the role of spiritual director something that evolved out of centuries of religious tradition, it also has origins in writings more meaningful than even the writings of these religious fathers. As with any valid and sound tradition the foundation of spiritual direction can be linked to and supported in scripture. Stressing this truth Barrette indicates, “Scripture gives evidence of spiritual guidance in the time of Jesus and the earliest days of the Christian community. People were not just *taught* about the Way, they were *helped* to live the Way.”¹⁶⁸ As is illustrated by the writer of first Thessalonians writes, “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live, in order to please God, as in fact you are living” (1 Thess 4:1). This passage illustrates the fact that instruction has always been provided to those that wish to follow Christ’s teachings, and live as God intended one to live. Paul provides the early Churches with this type of spiritual direction on how one should live in accordance with the teaching of Christ. While he was unable to be physically present Paul ensured this instruction was provided though the letters he wrote to these early Churches, during their struggles as they were becoming established. These instructions, as indicated by this scriptural passage, were provided so that one could, “please God,” which is the goal of all spiritual direction. For if we are living a life that pleases God, we are living a life that draws us closer to Him. Directions and instructions given to please God opens one up to a deeper relationship with God, the advice from the

¹⁶⁸ Barrette, 291.

superiors in a religious order or a spiritual director should always lead one towards actions that please God. If the actions that are recommended, or encouraged, are not pleasing to God then it should trigger a warning, and as these rules indicate one should listen to their conscience and challenge those directives.

The letter of James provides another testament to the tradition of spiritual direction. Within the book of James, James provides advice on how to live out one's faith and the importance of acting on one's belief. The writer of James states,

Do merely listen to the words, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does. (Jas 1:23-25)

James continues his instruction on the importance of living the faith. The writer reiterates the necessity of action based on one's faith,

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother, or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (Jas 2:14-17)

James' direction concerning the importance of works alongside one's faith is just one example of how he provided spiritual guidance to the early founders of the Church. The New Testament is predominately made up of letters, the contents of which are full of his advice and guidance.

Gene Barrette recognizes this truth and affirms this fact stating, "Paul's pastoral letters to Philemon, Timothy, and Titus are filled with spiritual advice, guiding the recipient into

responsible adult faith.”¹⁶⁹ This advice provided the early Christians with the aid they needed to mature as believers, and grow as followers of Christ. Paul along with the other epistle writers sets the precedent of the importance of spiritual guidance that is essential for all who journey towards a more profound understanding of faith and Christ teachings. They provide guidance and direction to both the early Churches as well as individuals as they quest for a greater understanding of the truth that Christ provided. These letters are so profound and full of spiritual relevance that they have been utilized by individuals and institutions since their conception.

The Church we have today would not be in place if not for the guidance and direction of the letters of Paul and the other epistles authors. They serve as an instruction to the faithful as they strive to live a holy and blessed life surrounded by a world that is largely in opposition to them. Their spiritual guidance provides the support and direction needed to live a Christocentric life. Without this direction and encouragement, the early Church, and the Christians that were a part of it would have been lost. The spiritual direction and guidance provided by these epistles were not only utilized by the early Christians, but also continue to be utilized by the Christians of today. Without this spiritual guidance, and support, many of the early Christians may have wandered from the truth. These epistles serve as the foundation of all that follow from them. If the early followers of Christ were not provided with these instructions, and guidance, they would have struggled to live a faith filled existence. An existence that brings them closer to Christ, deepens their relationship with God, and connects them to the Other.

¹⁶⁹ Barrette, 291.

This is the role of a spiritual director, and while this modern term was not utilized during this time frame the writers of these letters certainly served as this growing communities' spiritual guide at this time, and it is a tradition that must continue if spiritual progression is to continue.

The epistle writers' role as a spiritual director may not always be emphasized, but the guidance these letters provide constitutes a large majority of the New Testament. These epistles are studied and utilized as a source of inspiration and guidance by any who consider themselves to be followers of Christ. The scriptural support of this sagely role provides evidence of the tradition of spiritual direction even if it was never label as such in these letters. The authors of these epistles serve as the original sages to the early Church and the early generations of Christians. The role of sage naturally transpires through the ages and as Barrette plainly put it, "...it is evident that the spiritual direction and development was once the norm for all Christians. It was the task of the apostles, priests, and pastors, to provide spiritual food and guidance for their people."¹⁷⁰ The fact that we can trace the importance and relevance of this sagely role back to scripture and the revelation they provide truly validates its importance to the life and growth of the Christian faith.

SS. Augustine, Francis, Benedict, and Ignatius, were wise and insightful individuals who grasped the necessary component of spiritual direction and have ensured this tradition continued to this day. The role of the sage, and the advice they provide, is founded in sacred scripture emphasizes its essential nature to one's journey toward a stronger relationship with God. This tradition continued throughout the religious orders and amongst those who

¹⁷⁰ Barrette, 292.

answered the calling to live within the boundary of these rules. As Christianity grew and spread religious orders expanded, but adhering to tradition they continued to ensure that an individual was always assigned to provide ongoing spiritual direction and aide the individual on their journey towards the divine.

Through an understanding of the value of this tradition to every individual it has begun to be offered and utilized by a wider audience. Not only is this a blessing to anyone who is undertaking a spiritual journey it is also considered by some to be a necessity. These spiritual guides, or Christian sages, are not only beneficial to the quest, but necessary for any who wish to undertake the journey. As described by Akira Shinohara,

...in terms of the *goal* of spiritual mentoring, these writers have a strong sense of the quest for integrated, truthful, and authentic Christian faith and living. This connotes Merton's and Allen's views. Spiritual mentoring is, for them, not an option but an essential aspect of the spiritual quest.¹⁷¹

Embracing spiritual direction as an essential component to one's spiritual journey is something that has a foundation in scripture and has been expanded on since the writing of the epistles. Founded in scripture and further developed and embraced as tradition this type of relationship has become something that is now sought out, and in some ways considered necessary.

4.4 - The Continued Progression of Spiritual Direction

Like the sage that aids one on their journey, or the superior who assist one living within a religious community, the role of the spiritual director is one of guidance and leadership. They are present to aid one in strengthening their relationship with God and like the sage are

¹⁷¹ Akira Shinohara, "Spiritual Formation and Mentoring: An Approach From The Christian Tradition of Spiritual Direction," *Christian Education Journal* Vol 6 No 2 (2002): 113.

essential in assisting one on their quest. St. Francis de Sales, like St. Ignatius believed that a spiritual life was for everyone and something that each of us can and should pursue. He has this to say about the invaluable role of one's spiritual guide or, as he identifies, a faithful friend.

Addressing this need St. Francis de Sales writes in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*,

...we specially need a faithful friend, who will guide us by his counsel and advice, thereby guarding us against the deceits and snares of the Evil One; he will be as a storehouse of wisdom to us in our sorrows, trials and falls; he will be as a healing balm to stay and soothe our heart in the time of spiritual sickness; he will shield us from evil, and confirm that which is good in us, and when we fall through infirmity, he will avert the deadly nature of evil, and raise us up again.¹⁷²

A spiritual director is one who is willing to take an active role in the quest of another. As with the superiors within the religious orders an open and honest relationship is necessary for the individual to gain any benefit from their guidance. As St. Francis de Sales pointed out, through the wisdom of the director one will receive the aide they need to overcome roadblocks and, consequently, these trials will build them up, rather than tear them down. Like within the religious orders this can only be accomplished if the role of the director is respected, and the individual seeking guidance is willing to be honest and obedient to them.

The role of the spiritual director can only be successful if the one seeking direction is willing to relent to said direction. Obedience and humility is key to this relationship and reflects the virtues that Christ emphasized. Virtues that have been handed down through the religious and biblical traditions. As St. Francis de Sales tells us,

¹⁷² Saint Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, (New York: Random House, INC., 2002), 10.

This is the precepts of precepts, says the devout Avila – seek as you will, you can never so surely discover God’s Will as through the channel of humble obedience so universally taught and practices by all the Saints of older times.¹⁷³

Embracing the same standards held by the saints and the rules that they developed within the religious traditions, one can logically understand how humble obedience is something that should be given to one’s spiritual director. It is only through humility and obedient to one’s guide can one hope to progress on their journey. When parting on a quest toward the Divine we all must seek guidance from another. When one accepts the assistance of another it is counter intuitive to deny the assistance that is provided. If one is not obedient to their sage, how can one hope to progress. If one is not willing to learn from another one will not gain the necessary knowledge and wisdom to be successful. If one is unwilling to follow the directions of another then they should really question their true desires in partaking in said journey.

Establishing a commitment to one’s journey means relinquishing control to another and recognizing that one must trust their guide and be obedient to their requests. This, however, also means that one must be careful and diligent in who they accept as their spiritual guide. As with the superiors within the religious tradition, this sagely role should not be filled by just anyone. Thomas Kempis, while not part of one of the previously mentioned religious orders, was a devote Catholic who also embraced living within a community. A community that mirrored monastic living his devotion to his own spiritual journey, as well as the development of others on this journey motivated him to write the well know title, *The Imitation of Christ*. Similar to those Saints previously discussed Thomas also understood the importance of having a tested and proven sage who will be able to provide you with the necessary advice to aid one on

¹⁷³ de Sales, 9.

their spiritual quest. Thomas recognized that this role was not to be taken lightly and one needed to be diligent in choosing who they should trust with this task. Within *The Imitation of Christ* he advises the sojourner to, "...not open your heart to every man, but discuss your affairs with one who is wise and who fears God."¹⁷⁴ It only makes logical sense when one is seeking guidance and direction to seek an individual who has substantial knowledge and understanding of said subject matter. When one pursues an education, they do so with the belief that the individuals providing the education have a deeper knowledge and understanding of that subject. This is no different when it comes to spiritual matters, as Baier puts it, "...the spiritual director is assumed to have greater authority and wisdom since he serves as a guide to others."¹⁷⁵

Understanding the fact that the spiritual director has greater authority and wisdom is vital if one wishes to progress on their path toward living a holy life and living accordance to God's will. Relenting to another, being obedient to them, and humbling oneself, is necessary if one wishes to move forward on their journey. Far too often individuals believe that they can do it on their own, but this attitude is foolish, and will lead to a stifling of one's progression. A spiritual journey is not easy and the more one stays on the path the more difficult it becomes. Both scripture and the lives of saints illustrate this truth repeatedly. If one has any hope of progressing on their quest they must first expect they will need other to help guide them along their way. For as Debra Farrington puts it,

¹⁷⁴ Kempis, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Bier, 116.

Trying to explore the depths of our relationship with God alone is akin to wandering in the forest solo. Even if you know your destination, you will find it hard to find you way without paths and markers on the journey.¹⁷⁶

Without proper leadership and direction one cannot hope to progress along their quest.

It is natural to follow the path of least restriction, and avoid the challenges that must be faced, however this will only stifle one's spiritual progression. When one is not accountable to another on their journey they often can get lost, distracted by their own desires rather than the Lord's will. Since the creation of humanity this is something that we all have struggled with, each of us would prefer to be accountable to no one but themselves. As expressed by John English, S.J.,

All of us, like Adam and Eve, wish to determine for ourselves what us good and what is evil. This is another form of pride. We too wish to set up our own code of morals. We justify our selfish use of sex, our greed for possessions, and our effort to dominate or manipulate others into exclusive rights of our own.¹⁷⁷

Without another individual to be accountable and obedient to, one is bound to back track. It is too easy to rationalize away one's own behaviors, especially behaviors that are detrimental to one's spiritual progression, but beneficially or pleasurable in another fashion. If there is not an individual present to challenge these behaviors, one will continue to rationalize them, and consequently repeat them. This will only cause one's spiritual progression to cease, or worse to transgress.

One's desire to follow and live by the will of God is only the first step on their quest to actually accomplish this goal. As one progresses on their journey the necessity of a sage will increase, for without another to keep one accountable the individual will be unable to see their own shortcomings. It tends to be far easier to see the faults of another then it is to be able to

¹⁷⁶ Farrington, 175.

¹⁷⁷ English, 64.

see one's own faults. Brother John English understands this truth, but also the gentle role that the guide must play in directing another. He asserts that,

Guides often see people's delusions or failings more clearly than these people do because guides are standing outside. It becomes the guides function to lead such persons to interior knowledge, but not too forcefully or too pointedly.¹⁷⁸

As with one who seeks the aid of a therapist or psychologist the benefit that an outside perspective provides is essential if one desires to improve themselves. Similar to the benefit one gains from going to a therapist or psychologist an individual gains immense insight into their life by trusting the aid and guidance of another. Our prideful nature can hinder our ability to humble oneself to another, however it is precisely through relenting to others that we come to know more about oneself, as well as discovering more about God.

When one refuses to turn to anyone but themselves for answers, they inadvertently hinder their own progression towards a greater understanding of the Divine. It has been thoroughly shown that one who truly wishes to live in line with the Lord's will must humbly recognize that they do not know everything about God. God's very nature dictates that we can never fully grasp who or what He is, and consequently our journey to understand him never really end. The minute our pride consumes us, and we believe that we have obtained a complete understanding of the Divine, is the moment one stops progressing toward the holy. When one is unwilling to seek the guidance of another, they are inadvertently indicating that they have all the answers they need. This creates a problem, for when that occurs the individual will be unable to contemplate that any other image, or aspect, of God exists. This arrogance

¹⁷⁸ English, 85.

creates a barrier to a deeper understanding of the Divine. Consequently, this prevents one from admitting that God's will may be leading them in a different direction, one they cannot contemplate themselves. Debra Farrington expresses this truth indicating that,

...when we our own guides we seek out only those images of God that please us and avoid ones that force us to rethink our views. And when we shape God in our own image, rather than letting ourselves be molded by the understandings of God held by various members of the communities, our theology becomes self-centered, weak, and insubstantial.¹⁷⁹

During one's quest to understand and live according to God's will one needs to embrace the fact they will be challenged along the way. Only through progressing through these challenges is one able to continue on their journey. Avoiding them will only hinder one's progress. This is why one needs to open themselves up to another, and accept their guidance. It is through the direction of another that one is not only exposed to a greater understanding of God, but is also aided in living in accordance with this new understanding.

During one's spiritual journey one will inadvertently hit dry spells, and time when they feel abandoned or distant from God. Without consolation or assistance of another during these times individuals can become extremely disheartened, and can even enter into a state of hopelessness. If one is unable to move or progress through these moments the individual can be overtaken with doubt, which can lead to a stifling of progression of their journey. Additionally, in some cases, this can also lead one to become so distressed that they abandon their quest all together. It is during these times that one's spiritual director will become an invaluable tool by reassuring them that their quest is not hopeless, or meaningless. In fact,

¹⁷⁹ Farrington, 153-154.

many times this guide will be able to provide the individual with a new perspective. A perspective they were unaware of, but one that also provides hope and reassurance that they are on the right path and moving closer towards their goal. Father John English articulates this important truth stating,

Often, those who are praying become downcast because they do not feel that God is giving them consolation. They begin to suspect that by doing something wrong they have failed to earn consolation: "Perhaps Jesus does not love me" But when guides question them, they find that their faith, hope, or love has been increased. They have discovered a new meaning to life.¹⁸⁰

The sagely role of the spiritual director not only provides insight into the shortcomings of one's life, or view of the Divine, they also help to expose positive developments that often can be missed by shortsightedness. Individuals on any journey desire to see progression, and a spiritual journey is no different. Unfortunately, when one undergoes a spiritual quest it tends to be a slow process, and often the progression one makes can be missed by the distress that is brought on by the timeliness of development. Turning to, and leaning on one's sage can aid in developing one's patience and provide them the support they need to take their journey at their own pace. The guidance and direction of another provides reassurance of their progress and allows one to begin to recognize the subtle way the Lord is working in one's life, even if one is unable to recognize it on their own.

Undertaking the spiritual journey to understand God's will in one's life is a lifelong commitment, one that is wrought with trials and tribulations. Many who have walked the path towards the Divine have given up before their quest was complete. Those that have remained,

¹⁸⁰ English, 116.

even saints like St. John of the Cross struggled along the journey and needed assistance. Many, if not all, who undertake this journey, including St. John of the Cross, experienced periods of doubt and darkness that threatened to overcome them. It was as a result of progressing through these struggles, and remaining on the path, that they achieved the closeness to God they desired. St. John of the Cross, a renowned mystic and spiritual guide himself was not unique in this regard and if not for the spiritual guidance of St. Teresa of Avila, he too may have given up, or been unable to continue his quest.

It is unlikely that one will face the level of harsh treatment that these saintly figured experiences. However, a couple invaluable truths can be derived from this. First, even the saints of the past required direction as they proceeded on their journey, and second the knowledge and wisdom gained through these experiences become a benefit to all who proceed on this journey after them. As a result of their willingness to pass on the wisdom from these experiences we gain the benefits of said wisdom without necessarily having to endure the hardships and suffering they overcame.

This does not mean that the quest will not be full of trial, rather it means that when these tribulations do arise we have a storehouse of information that will allow us to get through them. It is important that those who take on the role of the sage take their role seriously, diligently researching and educating themselves on the wisdom and knowledge of these past sages. For an educated and skilled sage should be well equipped to draw upon this wisdom in order to aid others as they experience their own trials. Without the assistance of one's sage the individual will naturally avoid any and all situation and gravitate towards an

easier path, a path that offers the least resistance. While that may seem appealing, it will not allow one to progress on their journey, and will consequently leave one unprepared in the midst of spiritual turmoil. Debra Farrington expresses this exact sentiment stating,

Left to our own devices we will develop a comfortable spirituality that fails to challenge us. Perhaps it will be perfectly crafted for our own needs, but leaves out those of others. More likely it will be a weak theology that does not sustain us in times of deep trouble.¹⁸¹

The tradition of obtaining spiritual direction is based in scripture, and was developed through the religious rules. It has evolved even further into a process that is accessible to any who wish to utilize its benefits. The benefits that are gained through its application are not only numerous, and substantial, they are also vital and necessary for one to complete the spiritual quest they are undertaking. The role of the spiritual director is an intricate part of this journey and without the wisdom of this individual one will not be able to overcome the obstacles that they will eventually face. These individuals hold the role of the sage on one's spiritual quest, and are a necessary component to the journey.

As has been previously asserted believing one can accomplish this quest without the aid of the sage is not only arrogant, it is foolish. The value of the sage is very real and practical. Their role has been sustained throughout history, and is rooted in a tradition that has shown to be successful. The sage has also been shown to have a deeper subconscious relevance within one's psyche. The benefit of the sage, and its intrinsic value, is ingrained in the very core of our being. Across the globe, throughout the myths and legends of every culture the sage can be found. It is no different with the myths of today. As we progress further into the modern age it

¹⁸¹ Farrington, 157.

seems that many have begun to disregard the classic rules of Catholic religious life, however the underlying foundational truth of obedience in one's progression toward the holy and authentic self, continue to be illustrated and emphasized in our modern culture. Through an analysis of Jung it was illustrated that there is a subconscious draw towards a sage or mentor to assist us in our journey towards an authentic life. This figure is drawn upon by Joseph Campbell who indicated that we are not just drawn to a sage in our journey but rather that this individual is actually essential if one wished to complete this quest. Moving into the development of the Catholic religious life we see the importance of obedience to our own mentors and sages for without a level of obedience to another we will continue to struggle to discover and embrace our authentic self that emerges out of the quest for the holy. While earlier Rules were formulated for consecrated religious, in the West with individuals like Ignatius and Francis DeSales applied to both religious and lay people. Once again we see the importance of the role of, and obedience to, the sage in the modern myth of *Star Wars*. This is seen most clearly with regards to the training, and life, of the Jedi. It is through the illustration of Jedi, and their understanding of the Force that we find these essential elements once again drawn upon to illustrate the classic truths that have been the foundation and center to the Rules of Catholic religious life.

Chapter 5 - Star Wars: The Modern Myth

In 1977 George Lucas released *Star Wars*, it was an instant success and has grown into a worldwide phenomenon, one that continues to flourish. Since its original release eleven other movies have been released, numerous cartoons have been created and a plethora of books have been written. As Joseph Campbell claims, *Star Wars* has become a modern myth, one that continues to grow. While myths of the past were typically passed down by word of mouth for generation before being written, the myths of the modern world have taken on a new development. These myths of the modern age have now begun to be told through numerous different mediums. This reality is relayed in *The Economist* where it states, "...modern myths are one in multiple media formats. The Marvel and Star Wars fantasy universe are chronicled in interlocking films, television series, books, graphic novels and video games."¹⁸² Like Campbell has done, understanding *Star Wars* as a valid myth of our time allows one to scrutinize, and analyze, it in the same fashion that Jung has evaluated the traditional myths of the past.

Analyzing a modern work of science fiction may seem like a waste of time or irrelevant to some, but as indicated by Jung it is a manner in which we can bring to the surface truths that are often hidden within our unconscious. As stated by John McDowell, a Theology professor in Melbourne, "Like many other science fiction stories SW has something of a parabolic function in that it encourages us to reflect on contemporary moral issues through a fantasy setting and therefore enables us to think in a way we might not otherwise do."¹⁸³ Accepting that myths

¹⁸² The Economist, "Star Wars, Disney and myth-making," The Economist, December 19, 2015, accessed January 12, 2019, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2015/12/19/star-wars-disney-and-myth-making>

¹⁸³ John C. McDowell, *The Gospel According to Star Wars: Faith, Hope, and the Force* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2007), 11.

have evolved, along with their format, allows one to analyze the *Star Wars* movies in the same vein as a traditional myths. Expanding our understanding of myths, including how they are relayed in the modern world, allows one to be able to examine them through a more critical eye, one in which the unconscious truths they relay can be brought to the surface and revealed.

As previously asserted by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, who specifically mentions *Star Wars* as a contemporary modern myth, both recognized the underling truths relayed within mythology should not be ignored. Throughout history myths have been created and retold in order to pass on universal truths that are missed or overlooked when expressed in other means. The myths of the past share so many similarities that Joseph Campbell has asserted and shown a common pattern that emerges through them. This common journey, or hero's journey, as labeled by Campbell, shows a universal path that hero's travel in order to be successful on their journey. Known as the monomyth, this pattern or cycle can be utilized to diagram practically ever ancient and modern tale. Additionally, this monomyth, or myth that expands beyond one specific religion, is one everyone can relate to. It is a reflection of the journey that each of us metaphorically take throughout our life. Consequently, this monomyth, the stages it entails, and the individuals that are a part of it, all become a valuable tool in traversing one's individual, and personal, journey of life and quest for one's authentic self.

As explored in the first section of this study Carl Jung similarly recognized shared symbols, patterns, and archetypes that immerge within individuals' psyches. Through his research and analysis he developed the notion of the collective unconscious, a place within our psyche that all individuals seem to access and which reveals universal truths that we all seem to

share. The unconscious houses a plethora of concepts, ideas and archetypes that humanity share, if they consciously realize it or not. Jung's gravitation towards myth was as a result of his recognition that the truths relayed through them were reflective of the society in which they were relayed. These myths allow societies to unconsciously receive certain wisdom that is difficult to grasp, or easy to disregard. Through an examination of these myths and the truth revealed through them individuals can embrace the wisdom and its cultural relevance. Similarly, this method can be followed with modern myths such as *Star Wars*. Emphasizing this process and its continued validity Lincoln Geraghty writes, "...one method of analyzing myth in these sorts of films is the Jungian psychology approach. This approach 'treats films as a primary myth and thus a key reflection of cultural identity'"¹⁸⁴ Recognizing *Star Wars* as a modern myth, and utilizing Jung's approach in studying its themes and archetypal figures, provides a venue in which unconscious truth can come to light.

Over the past forty plus years our society has embraced a new myth, one that has become a global phenomenon and clearly mirrors the monomyth that Campbell describes. This modern mythical tale has grown immensely and has become a mythology that spans several generations. From the first theatrical release in 1977 the series has released a total of eleven movies, more books than one can count and a plethora of cartoon and TV series. With no indication that this trend will stop this myth continues to expand and grow, an indication of its increasing validity as a myth. A myth whose revealed truths are imbedded, or hidden, within

¹⁸⁴ Lincoln Geraghty, "Creating and Comparing Myth in Twentieth – Century Science Fiction: *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* Vol 33 No 3 (2005): 193-194.

our unconscious. *Star Wars* is a modern adaptation of Campbell's monomyth. In fact it follows his hero's journey so precisely that one could assume Lucas did it intentionally.

This idea of *Star Wars* as the myth of our time is not a unique perception. Wilkinson illustrates this stating, "*Star Wars* has come to 'represent one of the great myths of our time.'"¹⁸⁵ As one of the greatest myths of our time its popularity knows no bounds, it is embraced throughout the world, and across practically every cultures. This universal attraction, and acceptance, grants us the ability to examine the archetypal figures, found within it stories through a critical eye. A critical examination of certain archetypes will hopefully reveal the unconscious truths Campbell and Jung assert are present within myth. This analysis, and the revelations it provides, can then motivate one to respond appropriately as a result of the truths that come to the surface.

With the monomyth, as expressed by Campbell, there is an individual or rather an archetype that play a vital role in the hero's life. This individual is the sage, a mentor who plays an essential role to the hero as they progress through their journey. As has been previously described the hero's journey is one that each hero progresses through as they attempt to achieve their desired goal. The meeting of sage takes place in the beginning of the hero's journey, before the hero's leaves their ordinary world behind and travel into the unknown and crossing the threshold into the special world. Their role in the hero's development, and journey, is both essential and unavoidable. For without the sage's involvement and guidance the hero will be unable to proceed through the special world and emerge victorious. Without this

¹⁸⁵ Wilkinson, 15.

interaction the hero will be ill-equipped, and unprepared, to face the challenges they will find beyond the threshold of the ordinary world, and consequently fail in their endeavor.

Additionally, it should also be noted that the sages themselves were once heroes on their own journey. Like the saints of our past, they too completed their own quest and passed on what is necessary to those who wish to undertake a journey of their own.

The sage is an essential part of one's journey, and pivotal to the completion of one's quest. This essential component to every individual's journey is also based on a Jungian archetype, and their value should reflect a deeper meaning, as do all of Jung's archetypal figures. As articulated by David Wilkinson a British theologian,

Campbell argues that all the stories draw on a common store of images and symbols. In this he was influenced by Carl Jung and the concept of archetypes. That is, certain psychological urges and instincts manifest themselves in fantasies and reveal their presence in symbolic motifs and characters.¹⁸⁶

One of the key archetypal figures that rises up, and is emphasized, within *Star Wars* is the archetype that is integral to allowing one to complete their quest. That figure is the archetype of the sage. The sage is vital to every hero, as the knowledge, wisdom and/or relic that they pass on to the hero is essential if they wish to complete their journey. *Star Wars* is no exception to this rule. In fact, the archetypal figure of the sage provides one of the biggest draws to the *Star Wars* mythos.

Within this modern mythos we find the emergence of sage like figures, known as Jedi. These sages of the *Star Wars* universe provide spiritual guidance, and direction, to those on

¹⁸⁶ David Wilkinson, *The Power of the Force: The Spirituality of the Star Wars films* (England: Lion Publishing, 2000), 73.

their journey. The immergence of these figures in this modern myth help to further illustrate the importance of sages in our own world and society. It is the irreplaceable role of the sage that individuals within today's society no longer seem to recognize. The vital role of this archetypal figure is a truth that the *Star Wars* mythos continuously emphasizes. A truth that asserts the dangers of avoiding proper guidance or refusing to relent to appropriate authority. Unfortunately, many now a days seem to reject this truth as they take their own personal spiritual journey without any guidance or boundaries. With the advent of the internet, and the struggle to trust in any organization, many believe that they can take this journey on their own. Relying on "Google" as their sage if, and when, they think they may need assistance. However, as expressed by Campbell's monomyth this path will inevitably lead to failure. It is exactly this reason that the role of the sage is continuously found within the myths of the past, as well as those of the present. Their role is vital to one's journey if one wishes to be successful, and it is their continue appearance and emphasis with the *Star Wars* mythos that validates their essential nature in one's personal or spiritual journey today. As asserted by Wilkinson,

A myth captures themes of timeless value, but does so in a way that relates to the time it is told. He could express concern about society, morals and religion in the contemporary US, but by doing it in story, and keying into these timeless values, the concern would resonate in cultures all over the world.¹⁸⁷

When evaluating the role of the sage within these movies and the wisdom these sages provide, one is faced with the truth that their assistance is necessary. Understanding this fact allows one to embrace the sage's role in one's own journey and may lead one to seek out a sage in one's own life. Jung and Campbell both recognized the connection between the external

¹⁸⁷ Wilkinson, 74-75.

journey one undertakes and an internal journey that one is on. This connection draws out an even deeper reality surrounding the sagely figures we find within these myths. These archetypal figures thus serve an even greater purpose beyond assisting the hero in achieving their physical quest. These archetypes also have the ability to provide deeper insight into one self and can allow one to evaluate and promote one's internal growth as well.

The Jedi of the *Star Wars* universe are the warrior sages of the galaxy. Through an analysis of these archetypal figures, we again gain insight into the necessary role sages' play to any who are on their own journey. More importantly one also comes to the realization that the Jedi are actually reflective of the real-world sages we find in the religious orders of the Catholic Church. Like the Jedi these real-life sages need to be recognized and embraced during one's own spiritual journey towards the authentic self if one wishes to be successful. One can thus reflect on the role of the Padawan within *Star Wars* and their relationship with Jedi master as it mirrors our own relationship with the sages that direct us on our spiritual journey. This reflection can aid in understanding the importance of a sage in one's life as one attempts to navigate through their own quest and attempt to overcome both their external, and internal conflict.

5.1 - The Story/The World and The Greater Implications

The original *Star Wars* trilogy tells the story of Luke Skywalker, a young farmer on a desert planet who embarks on a quest of self and spiritual discovery. A journey that ends in him embracing his role as a Jedi and leads him to play a part in saving the galaxy from the evil Empire. The first film, *A New Hope* follows Luke's journey to the discovery of the Force. It

follows Joseph Campbell's monomythic structure of the hero's journey perfectly. From his initial rejection of the quest to his return to Obi Wan Kenobi and accepting him as a sage. Following Obi Wan's guidance Luke learns about the force, create allies, and eventually confront the Empire. Utilizing all that he gained from Obi Wan, along with the help of his allies Luke destroys the Death Star. This not only completes his original quest returning him to the "ordinary" world, but also opens himself up to a whole new bigger "ordinary" world, leading Luke forward to another, larger quest, one with bigger consequences. This is the reality of the hero and his journey, and a truth expressed by Campbell, and understood by Jung.

After his introduction to the Force and entrance into the Rebel Alliance, Luke's greater quest emerges out of the follow two films. He discovers the truth about his father, Darth Vader, completes his training as a Jedi under the great sage Yoda, confronts Vader, defeats the Emperor and consequently causes the fall of the Empire. The original trilogy, like the original film illustrates the hero's journey. This can be seen both in a micro level, as seen in the original film, as well as on a macro level through the original trilogy. This theme is repeated in the prequels following Anakin as the hero along with the later trilogy with Rey as the central hero. Interestingly enough, even the other two standalone films, *Solo* and *Rogue One* are also a clear representation of the hero's journey. Along with the clear connection these films make with the hero's journey it is also apparent that there are some clear spiritual truths being relayed throughout them.

While *Star Wars* is a sci-fi/fantasy tale it is impossible to watch the movie without recognizing the strong religious undertones. The religious and spiritual themes throughout the

Star Wars mythos are not there simply by accident but are rather intentional. This is something that has been recognized by many fans of the films, as well as scholars who have studied it for its philosophical and spiritual value. Cass Sunstein a former Harvard professor recognizes this truth indicating that,

The Theological resonances in the series are unmistakable, and Christianity looms over the series; it seems to be woven into its very fabric. The whole story is about freedom of choice, good news, and redemption.¹⁸⁸

This sentiment is also recognized by Alyssa Rosenberg, a writer for *The Washington Post*, who insinuates that religion is central to the original trilogy. Religion is so intertwined within these films that she asserts that those who are unable to see this theme must have been concentrating on something other than the movie. Rosenberg writes,

...anyone who ignores just how central religion is to the first three movie installments of the franchise can't claim to be paying attention. From "A New Hope" through "Return of the Jedi," the 'Star Wars' movies are fundamentally a story about how a dead and discredited religion reasserted itself and proved the truth of at least some of its tenets to unbelievers.¹⁸⁹

Rosenberg asserts a truth about the original trilogy that is also predominantly true about almost every other *Star Wars* title, including the cartoon series and numerous books that have been written within this mythos. The underlining theme of spirituality that the Jedi bring to this mythos is not only integral to the stories, but are one of the greatest draws individuals have to these tales. The Jedi, their spirituality, wisdom and unique abilities granted to them as a result of their devotion is something that practically every fan is drawn to. Most young children when

¹⁸⁸ Cass R. Sunstein, *The World According to Star Wars* (NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2016), 67.

¹⁸⁹ Alyssa Rosenberg, "Restoring religion to the 'Star Wars' movies: The original 'Star Wars' trilogy is fundamentally a journey of faith. As the franchise expands, it shouldn't forget that the Force is about more than magic." *The Washington Post* November 20, 2015.

exposed to these tales immediately dream of becoming a Jedi, and I do not know anyone who has not at one point attempted to move something with their mind as the Jedi are trained to do. The fascination one has with the Jedi, is not uncommon as it provides an outlet for the underlining fascination individuals have with discovering meaning and a connection to the world around us. The Jedi provide concrete answers and definitive proof of, the Other that many are searching for. This desire to feel connected to the world around us, and everyone within it, is an internal desire that most seem to long for. The *Star Wars* franchise, with its prevalent theological undertones provide an opaque glimpse of a reality that many are searching for, a reality where religion and science can coexist. A reality where one's spirituality is tangible and can be seen, and experienced, by those around them.

The theological themes within *Star Wars* are unavoidable and appear to be one of the subconscious pulls that has caused such a large cult following of the franchise. This sentiment is recognized by other individuals like David Wilkinson who addresses the question,

Why does *Star Wars* have such an appeal? There are many answers to this and in order to see them we will have to review its history and the motives behind it. The theological elements inherent in it are key to its appeal. It raises questions about spirituality and ultimately is dependent on belief in God.¹⁹⁰

Wilkinson insinuates an internal draw that individuals have towards the theological underpinnings that are present throughout these films and stories. Lucas can appeal to the deep desire within each of us to embrace a God that we are unable to definitively prove exists. He taps into an element that resides in most people, an unconscious, or subconscious, desire to make a connection with, "the Other."

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, 16.

The spiritual core of the *Star Wars* universe is not only unavoidable, but also something that appears to be intentional by its creator George Lucas. This is clearly indicated by McDowell who writes,

Lucas intended merely to encourage thinking about “spiritual” matters. He claims the he “put the Force in the movie to try and awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people – more a belief in God than a belief in any particular religious system”¹⁹¹

Lucas intentionally placed spiritual ideas and themes within his films because he saw a need for our society, particularly the youth, to become reconnected with the Divine. A need that many would claim is no longer relevant or desired. Yet despite this seemingly overt rejection of God, there also seems to be an unconscious pull toward it. For while many outwardly claim to not recognize the Divine, or desire a connection with it, there has been an overwhelming support of a film that is embedded in exposing and recognizing its existence.

The great attraction to *Star Wars* is one that goes beyond just enjoying a fun, popcorn, fantasy story. There is a deeper, almost internal attraction or drive towards this mythos. An attraction that comes from our unconscious desire to fill the space that religion, and the journeying towards the Divine once occupied. As expressed in *The Economist*,

What explains the power of all this modern-day mythology? There is more to it than archetypal storytelling, clever technology and powerful marketing. In part, it may fill a void left by the decline of religion in the secular world.¹⁹²

Currently there has been an increase in the number of individuals who declare themselves to be “nones,” a classification that indicates an individual does not adhere to any religious beliefs or traditions, nor affiliate themselves with any religion. Many of these “nones,” however also

¹⁹¹ McDowell, 17.

¹⁹² The Economist, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2015/12/19/star-wars-disney-and-myth-making>

identify themselves as spiritual. It would seem that despite a conscious rejection of religion many of these individuals still have a strong unconscious desire for a spiritual connection. A connection that traditionally religion has led one towards. This void of structured religion, and lack of embrace of their traditions, has led many to gravitate unconsciously to seek answers in other sources. Sources that use the same manner, and medium, to relay truths since the beginning of time, through storytelling and mythmaking. It is this hidden need, or desire, for the “other” that has made *Star Wars* so successful.

The religious themes and messages throughout the *Star Wars* mythos are so well developed and accepted that the truths revealed through its myths are studied and have even become the foundation of a new religion. Speaking to this Anthony Digmann, a Catholic evangelist, has declared that,

Star Wars has provided a dialogue not only among fans, but also amidst religious scholars and has renewed mythological and religious themes in popular culture. The results have included people reading their religions and philosophies into the films, religious critiques, and even fans around the world declaring Jedi to be their religion. While some of this activity is farce, *Star Wars* has such universal appeal because it reflects religious truth.¹⁹³

Star Wars is steeped in the ancient traditions of myth and like all great mythologies, truth is embedded within its stories, characters, and themes. These truths presented in myths, old and new, are reflective of a greater story, one in which is continuously being told throughout time. A message that is so unbelievable that mankind has hidden it amongst stories, tales and myths.

¹⁹³ Anthony Digmann, *Using the Force: Star Wars and Catholicism* (Dyersville, Iowa: Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam, LLC, 2019), 1.

This message is the story of God's love for us and our salvation through him. As emphasized by Jones,

Every timeless myth and fairy tale is a 'splintered fragment' of God's story. Every unexpected hero is a distant echo of the virgin-born boy from Galilee; every sacrificial twist is a whisper of the Cross; and every triumphant turn to victory is a misty reflection of the Resurrection.¹⁹⁴

Star Wars is no different than any other mythos or fairy tale. Embedded within its story are remnants of God's story and revealed truths He desires us to know and embrace.

It is precisely these truths, as represented in *Star Wars*, which causes so many to gravitate towards it. As society grows and science overshadows religion individuals unconsciously desire a connection to the mysteries that science cannot define or explain. Living in a world surrounded by injustice, yet embracing a philosophy of relativism, has left many struggling to find, or accept, the absolute truths that lay within the collective unconscious that connects all of humanity. The mythos of *Star Wars* strives to address this need within our psyche, and creates a universe that, while seeming advanced and complex scientifically, provides a relatively simple explanation of the mysteries of the world, particularly the role of good and evil within it. This desire has been recognized by individuals from all walks of life. Including within the political arena. This is pointed out by Sunstein indicating that,

...the country was desperately groping for real change. *Star Wars* came around and revalidated a core mythology: that there is good and evil, and that evil has to be defeated.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Timothy Paul Jones, *Finding God in a Galaxy Far, Far Away* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Multnomah Books, 2005), 137.

¹⁹⁵ Sunstein, 61.

There appears to be a core desire within each of us to know the difference between good and evil, and strive to combat the evil we know exists. Joshua Hays, M.Div., further emphasizes this point stating,

...one of the best qualities of *Star Wars* is that it takes quite seriously the reality of good and evil. The entire series unequivocally affirms the existence of both right and wrong and distinguishes between the two in a way that pop culture increasingly avoids.¹⁹⁶

As our society progresses, striving toward equity and justice, differentiating between right and wrong, or good and evil, becomes a greater challenge. Not wanted to insult or offend others many often lean towards a philosophy of ultra-relativism that makes this process even more difficult, if not outright impossible. Consequently, we find an internal and unconscious drawn to a mythos that addresses these desires.

Through an analysis of the mythos of *Star Wars* one can draw these truths out and utilize them to illustrate the relevance of current religious truths and traditions. One of these core truths revealed within the *Star Wars* mythos is that good does exist and that there is something out there that shines or radiates this goodness, this light, into the world. Conversely, another core truth is the reality of evil and suffering in the world, and that there is a cause for this evil. As expressed by Timothy Jones, a pastor and writer, "...the *Star Wars* saga is awe-inspiring because it stands in the timeless tradition of tales that are saturated with fragments of the true light."¹⁹⁷ The awe that draws so many to *Star Wars* is the internal draw towards a deeper understanding of the world we live in. A desire to see the light and avoid the darkness, a

¹⁹⁶ Joshua Hays, *A True Hope: Jedi Perils and the Way of Jesus* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2015), 66.

¹⁹⁷ Jones, 22.

need to recognize the good in the world, so one can gravitate towards it and away from the evils that often are hidden in plain sight.

At its core, the *Star Wars* mythos is an extension of the monomyth developed by Campbell and illustrates the archetypes one finds with Carl Jung's psychological understanding of the collective unconscious. Consequently, one is thus able to analyze the *Star Wars* mythos in order to draw out these universal truths that have been hidden within our unconscious. In fact, according to David Wilkinson, Lucas' motivation to create *Star Wars* derived precisely from his desire for these unconscious, and forgotten, truths to be presented, and embraced, by the world. Wilkinson indicates that Lucas,

...had long had a fascination with the great stories of human existence. Technically called 'myths,' these were stories which, within a particular culture, explained the world in which that culture lived, imagined a better world, and probed questions of origin, purpose and value.¹⁹⁸

When one combines the understanding that myths reflect and illustrate universal truths, with the fact that Lucas himself intended to utilize his own mythos to draw out these truths, one can validly utilize the story, characters and themes to draw upon and expose them for the universal truths they reveal.

5.2 - Lucas and Myth

Lucas' study of myths, along with his understanding of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, allowed him to create a new mythos for the modern era. Campbell had such a meaningful influence on Lucas and his work that he even referred to Campbell as his Yoda, one

¹⁹⁸ Wilkinson, 72.

of the wisest and most prolific Jedi Masters in Lucas' Star Wars Universe. As indicated by Will Linn,

Most famously, George Lucas came to see Campbell as "his Yoda" after *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* inspired revisions of Star Wars that enhanced the archetypal qualities of its characters, the symbolic depth of its imagery, and the mythic structure of its narrative. As John Williams said, "Until Campbell told us what Star Wars meant [...] we regarded it as a Saturday morning space movie" (starwars.com). The mythic structure he learned from Campbell, famously called *The Hero's Journey*, has gone from Lucas' secret weapon to an industry standard that can be seen in a majority of studios and franchises.¹⁹⁹

Lucas' ability to create a modern myth was not simply coincidental, but rather he was intentional with its structure and the characters that he developed with the mythos. As expressed by Anthony Digmann,

As Lucas coalesced his study of popular myth from various cultures and religions across the globe, he found a core of character archetypes as well as a common plotline in the hero's journey.²⁰⁰

As a result of his research, Lucas' attention to the structure of the hero's journey, and his use of archetypal figures Lucas was able to create a new modern myth for a post scientific age which seemed to no longer value these myths, or the truth that is found within them. This new modern myth has been able to expose truths that were previous presented within the myths of old. Through an analysis of this new modern mythos, with a particular focus on the archetype of the sage, one can become enlightened by the truth of the necessity and relevance of the sage in the hero's journey, one that reflects the personal journey that each and every one partakes in throughout their lifetime.

¹⁹⁹ Seastrom, Lucas <https://www.starwars.com/news/mythic-discovery-within-the-inner-reaches-of-outer-space-joseph-campbell-meets-george-lucas-part-i>

²⁰⁰ Digmann, 21.

When myths are understood and embraced in this manner their value to society grows along with their usefulness as purveyors of truth. When this occurs, individuals are able to utilize these myths, and the truths they reveal, to self-reflect on their own life. Self-reflecting is vital to anyone who wishes to improve themselves, and while self-reflection can be difficult, it is also essential for one to progress forward in a positive manner. The reality is that individuals can easily disregard the criticism of others, or their well-intentioned advice. However, ignoring a truth that has been revealed through self-reflection is far more difficult and less likely to occur. Positive change is what the individual is truly striving for. This realization has been recognized by John McDowell who expressed that, “myths can be so true that they shed light on people’s lives and situations more effectively than a single recital of facts can.”²⁰¹

McDowell not only affirms the value of myths he also makes another interesting and insightful point about myths and the manner in which society views them. For him, the notion that myths have no value, other than entertainment, is a misnomer that has grown out of our modern scientific focused society. Speaking on myths he emphasizes this sentiment stating that, “...reducing them to the level of pure entertainment is a mistake that prescientific communities would never have made...”²⁰² We seem to have reached an age when science is valued more than anything other discipline. While scientific advancement should be encouraged and embraced that does not mean that one should disregard the value and importance of the arts and the truths that are revealed through their expression. When this happens we lose out on invaluable insights into the mystery of life, our purpose in the world,

²⁰¹ McDowell, 13.

²⁰² McDowell, 13.

and our relationship with others within the world. Individuals often struggle discovering these truths on their own and they seem to be relayed best through the medium of storytelling and mythmaking.

When one realizes that *Star Wars* is directly linked to Campbell's hero's journey, and that all the components of this journey are drawn from our collective unconscious, we can then validly explore the symbols found within its mythos and how they relate to our metaphysical beliefs. This sentiment is emphasized by McDowell who indicates,

The hero's journey is one into sainthood rather than into warrior heroism, and here Lucas distinctly echoes Campbell, according to who the hero is still striving, but for oneness with the cosmos, not control over it... He is, moreover, acting on behalf of others, not just for himself.²⁰³

McDowell makes the prolific point that Campbell's hero's journey is in fact a quest to embracing the divine will, a will that when followed leads one to become a saint for others. Combining this truth with the reality that the *Star Wars* mythos has admittedly drawn much of its themes from Christianity one can legitimize studying this mythos to gain a deeper insight into the universal truths found within the collective unconscious that are being expressed through its tales. These truths, expressed through the symbols and archetypes found within the mythos, can thus be drawn from analyzing said symbols and archetypes. Through a deeper look at the Jedi within *Star Wars* one is therefore able to provide practical insight into one's own spiritual journey in the real world. Consequently, truths that have seemingly been ignored or lost as a result of the ultra-relativistic postmodern age we find ourselves in can be regained, and hopefully embraced so the saintly journey that we are all called to can be accomplished.

²⁰³ McDowell, 4.

By recognizing the value of myth, and that truths are revealed through them, one is able to further break down these myths and expose the truths revealed through them and the mythos they are expressed in. When this is accomplished, individuals are able to utilize these truths to teach, learn and grow, as they progress on their own journey. A journey that should not be taken alone, but rather one that should only be undertaken with the assistance from another who has taken it before. Like the Jedi who fulfill this role of the sage to those on the hero's journey in a galaxy far far away, individuals who wish to complete this journey in our own galaxy must find a sage to guide them.

5.3 - The Force

Before immersing ourselves into the role of the sage, as represented by the Jedi of the *Star Wars* universe, we should first examine the notion of the Force, its connection to the Jedi, and how both can be seen as a reflection of the Catholic faith and religious orders. One of the foundational beliefs about the Force that is also in line with one that resides at the core of the Catholic faith is hope. Without hope individuals lack the ability and desire to move through difficult times or work towards an internal change to better oneself, or an external change to create a more just society. This hope is not something that is found within, but rather something outside ourselves. Wilkinson illustrates this point and connects this Christian belief with that found in *Star Wars*. He writes,

Hope with *Star Wars* comes from the belief that there is something outside the normal process of human will and reason, which is working for the good: the Force. Philosophers would call this "belief in transcendence." ...This belief in transcendence has been the foundation of Christianity's belief in hope. Hope is based on the belief that the

world is getting better and better. Hope is grounded on a God who is beyond this universe and who comes to give us hope.²⁰⁴

The Force provides the Jedi hope like God instills hope in his followers. The living Force revealed within the *Star Wars* franchise is comparable to the living hope that Catholics find in Jesus. Hope is a motivation, it spurs one to take action, and make changes for the betterment of oneself and others.

A hope that motivates one to change or take action is a hope that has been formed and nourished through faith. Faith is the foundation, the roots in which the stem of hope springs out of. Faith is something that cannot be separated from religion. It is the bedrock that believers stand upon, and what the Catholic Church is built upon. As a Catholic, one who believes in the truth revealed by Christ and through his traditions, faith is essential but often tested. The Catholic beliefs are ones that many struggle to grasp. The incomprehensible mysteries are continuously being explored and experienced yet can never be fully understood nor grasped. Similarly, the Jedi also must have faith in the Force, a power studied by the Jedi for thousands of years. As expressed by Sunstein, "But the Force is not merely about human psychology, behavioral biases, or even magic. It is murkier and more mysterious than that. Above all, it involves a 'leap of faith.'"²⁰⁵ Faith is central to both the hope one gains from their Catholic beliefs, but also to the Jedi and their belief in the Force. This trust provides the Jedi their ability to utilize and manipulate the Force like one's trust in Christ's teachings provides the believer the fortitude and courage to fight for justice and the future they know will be revealed.

²⁰⁴ Wilkinson, 92-93.

²⁰⁵ Sunstein, 174.

This faith, this trust, is generated and cultivated through an understanding and embrace of the truth that God is good. Through an acceptance of this fact, and a desire to move towards a life that embodies this good, one is motivated to achieve the love that is product of the hopeful actions that are inspired by faith. This love is epitomized by God Himself, for God is goodness incarnate. There is nothing within God that is not good, and all good experienced comes from God. We cannot separate good from God, not God from that which is good. Simply put, God is good all the time, and all the time God is good. Correspondingly, the Force is the all-encompassing goodness that the Jedi tap into for their strength and power. As indicated by McDowell, “The Force *is* the Good itself and that is why they do not speak of the good side of the Force.”²⁰⁶

Like the Judeo-Christian God, the Force is goodness itself. This truth is fundamental to both the Christian faith, the Church, and that of the Jedi. A commonality that establishes the Jedi as a benevolent sage similar to the clergy and religious of the Catholic faith. That being said, it should be noted that both the Catholic Church and the Jedi also recognize evil as a part of the world. In both cases however evil is considered to be the antithesis of the divine entity they have devoted themselves to. Within the Catholic faith it is taught and believed that evil has not, is not and never will be a part of God’s will. Any evil that is experience or produced is a direct result of being absent of the good. Similarly, within the *Star Wars* mythos evil comes from one’s desires that are go against the will of the Force. As stated by McDowell, “SW interestingly, then, identifies evil with disordered desire, in other words, with the seeking of

²⁰⁶ McDowell, 28.

that which cannot and should not be what we desire."²⁰⁷ This characteristic of the Force parallels Catholic's perception of God. While the Jedi recognize there is a Dark side the understanding of this is that those that tap into this and utilize it are not acting according to the will of the Force. Conversely an individual who commits evil acts in our world are going against the will of God. Both the Catholic faith and the Jedi recognize, and admit, the reality of evil however they also both realize this evil is a result of individuals making choices which are disordered to the will of that which they recognize as good and transcendent.

The very nature of the Force is also eternal, it has always been present, is present in all things and will be present after we are gone. This characteristic of the Force is expressed in a fiction book which was written as a guide for Jedi in the *Star Wars* universe. Presented as a type of handbook for Jedi, it provides details about the belief and structure of the Jedi and their order. Within this tome its states,

There is no death, there is the Force. All things die, but the Force lives on. As beings who exist as shades of the Force, the end of our existence in this form is not to be overly mourned. We are part of an energy larger than ourselves, and we play roles in a cosmic fabric that outstrip our incarnate understanding.²⁰⁸

This not only relays the fact that the Force is eternal, but also the fact that those that follow the ways of the Force live eternally as well.

The archetype of the sage, as described by Jung, is a part of the collective unconscious that connects each of us to the universal truths found within the sub-consciousness of our psyche. This archetype is represented in *Star Wars* in different fashions, but the one that is

²⁰⁷ McDowell, 28.

²⁰⁸ J.W. Rinzler ed., *The Jedi Path* (Bellevue, Washington: Lucasfilm Ltd., 2010), 7.

consistent and most recognizable is through the image of the Jedi. While *Star Wars* was not created as a direct allegory to Christianity in the same vain as C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, it certainly holds many Christian themes and underlining truths throughout its mythos. As expressed by Wilkinson, "*Star Wars* is not a Christian allegory, but it uses a number of Christian motifs to explore concepts of mystery and guidance."²⁰⁹ In fact, it is important to note that Lucas' actual intent was to incorporate elements of various religious traditions, so while one certainly will recognize Christian motifs immersing, other religious motifs can also be recognized as well.

5.4 - The Jedi

Reflecting on the Jedi traditions and the order developed by these traditions one can draw many parallels with them and numerous Christian practices and beliefs. Additionally, one is also able to see a connection between the Jedi order and the religious orders that have grown out of the Catholic tradition. This allows one to examine the importance of certain core ideas, concepts, and characters in order to better understand universal truths. Truths that are drawn from the collective unconscious and best expressed through myth. For myths seem to have a better way of expressing mystery than other literary genera.

As expressed by Campbell locating a sage and obtaining their wisdom and guidance is essential for one to complete their hero's journey. These sages are reflected throughout numerous ancient mythological tales, but also appear in modern myths as well. A clear connection can be seen, and has been made, between the Jedi and these sages. As indicated

²⁰⁹ Wilkinson, 80-81.

by Digmann, “Yoda is the epitome of the unsuspecting, old sage from traditional myths, and his focus is on, among other things, growth in character.”²¹⁰ Along with Yoda, Luke also received direction from another sage within the Star Wars universe, Obi Wan Kenobi. Like Yoda, Obi-Wan is also a Jedi and utilizes his role as mentor to provide Luke with the direction he will need in order to achieve success on his journey. Father Jim McDermott, a Jesuit priest, recognizes this connection, the invaluable role these sages have on Luke quest, and consequently the importance of sages within one’s own journey.

For Father McDermott the wisdom provided by one’s sage not only provides one with the necessary insight to be successful on their quest, but on a deep level, it allows one to understand and embrace what it means to be human. He writes, “Luke’s mentors, Ben Kenobi and Yoda, are classic wisdom figures...they teach him about being a human being...”²¹¹ The Jedi of the Star Wars universe, like the religious sages and mentors within the Catholic tradition, show individuals not only the path towards holiness, but also emphasize being on this path draws one closer to what it means to be truly human. To put it another way, as has been asserted by Chittister in her expression of the quest for the holy, or with Jung understanding of one’s journey towards wholeness, one is being and moving towards their authentic self.

By recognizing and embracing the Jedi as sages one can then begin to analyze the ways of the Jedi and the truths that are relayed through their teachings and traditions. Analyzing the way of the Jedi, their traditions, virtues and teachings one would be hard pressed to not see the

²¹⁰ Digmann, 87.

²¹¹ Jim McDermott S.J., “A force to be reckoned with: Mercy, Sin and ‘Star Wars,’” *America* November 30, 2015, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/force-be-reckoned.com>

connection between the Jedi and the sages of our own universe. One particular example of this is the connection that is made between the Jedi and the ancient Greek philosophy of Stoicism which focused on virtuous living, controlling one's emotions and being at peace with one's place in the world. This connection is expressed by William O. Stephens who indicates,

To recap, the virtues of the Jedi shares with the Stoic sage are patience, timelessness, deep commitment, seriousness (as opposed to frivolity), calmness (as opposed to anger or euphoria), peacefulness (as opposed to aggression), caution (as opposed to recklessness, benevolence (as opposed to hatred), joy (as opposed to sullenness), passivity (as opposed to agitation), and wisdom. Given all these virtues, Yoda certainly resembles what the ancient Stoics described as the sage – the ideal person who has perfected his reason and achieved complete wisdom.²¹²

Along with the similarity in teachings, the *Star Wars* films also illustrate other parallels between the Stoic sages and the Jedi, particular in the lifestyle they chose to live. This can be seen through Obi-Wan Kenobi when he is first exposed to the audience. In fact, David Wilkinson draws upon this connection when describing Obi-Wan and the image we are provided when his is introduced in the film. He indicates that, "Certainly his desert lifestyle and his monk-like robes have echoes of religious teachers such as John the Baptist. He embodies wisdom in old age with a deep spirituality, becoming Luke's teacher in the ways of the Force."²¹³

Interestingly enough, the truth of Obi Wan's nature is inadvertently revealed during the first description of him to Luke by his Uncle Owen. While Uncle Owen's intentions are to caution Luke about him, what is unconsciously revealed through his description is actually a recognition of his value as a wise sage. John McDowell explains,

²¹² William O. Stephens, "Stoicism in the Stars: Yoda, the Emperor, and the Force," in *Star Wars and Philosophy: More Powerful Than You Can Possibly Imagine*, eds. Kevin S. Decker and Jason T. Eberl (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2005), 22.

²¹³ Wilkinson, 100.

In one of the first mentions of Ben Kenobi (later revealed as Obi-Wan Kenobi) in ANH, Uncle Owen denounces him as a “crazy old wizard.” The situational irony is that “wizard” derives from *wys* (“wise”) in Middle English, and Obi-Wan is the archetypal figure of the intelligently wise and magical guru who becomes Luke’s protective figure.²¹⁴

It would seem that even those within the Star Wars universe have, at the very least, an unconscious understanding that these Jedi are in fact the wise sages of their universe. More importantly, however, is the fact that this is a truth that is relayed to the viewer in multiple ways throughout the film and one would be hard pressed to not pick up on this theme after watching these films.

Being able to see these connections, and the correlation between the Jedi and the sages within our world, one can see how these myths can take on a deeper meaning. They are capable of revealing truths in a manner that an individual may otherwise be unable to recognize, within their own life. As expressed by McDowell,

The message of truth is expressed *through* myth and not alongside it or inside it, and so the purpose of myth is “not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man’s understanding of himself in the world in which he lives.”²¹⁵

Myths have an ability to express unconscious truths that when revealed through story and mythological tales, have the capacity to rise out of the unconscious, or sub conscious mind, in order to reveals these truths to the conscious self.

When one examines and evaluates the Jedi’s role and place within the Star Wars universe, they cannot help but come to the conclusion that they are the representation of the holy sages of our universe. These iconic spiritual leaders have studied the ancient ways of the

²¹⁴ McDowell, 117.

²¹⁵ McDowell, 12.

Jedi, their history, tradition, and teachings. This ancient order has attempted to spread peace and justice through the galaxy and strive to emulate how one should live if they too have these same desires. These beliefs, traits, and practices reflect those same spiritual and religious practices that the stoic sages of our past practiced. Expressing this sentiment and emphasizing this truth Stephens writes,

For the Stoics, the good man thus functions as a prescriptive ideal known as the perfect wise man or “sage.” The sage’s soul is steady, orderly, completely virtuous, and it does not suffer from any “passion.” However, the stoic sage is not devoid of all emotions. The Stoics believed that there were three “good emotional states” that were not pathological movements of the soul, namely benevolence (wishing someone good things for his own sake), joy (in virtuous deeds), and caution (reasonable wariness).

Clearly Yoda has many Stoic traits. Yoda is free from emotions that subvert reason. Yoda is not reckless or impatient, as Luke is at first. Nor is Yoda frivolous. Like a Stoic, Yoda never becomes perturbed or excited. Most significantly, Yoda does not succumb to anger.²¹⁶

The Jedi and their mission to spread peace and justice is comparable to the mission of the Church, and those who have committed themselves to its teachings and practice. Individuals who have embraced these truths, and are motivated to live by them, need to also recognize the value and need to follow the guidance of the sage. For the sages of the past are necessary to guide those of the present into the future. Having undergone this journey themselves they are more prepared to aid others on their journey, ideally with even more wisdom to pass down to those they are mentoring than they themselves received from the sage who mentored them. This is how wisdom is passed on and gained throughout the ages, growing from one generation to the next while also ensuring tradition is upheld, and the path to the truth is maintained.

²¹⁶ Stephens, 21.

5.5 - The Jedi Order

Like the sages of the religious communities that have been discussed, the Jedi also came together to form a community of their own within the Star Wars universe. These like-minded individuals understood the value to coming together as a community to support and provide guidance to one another along their journey. Additionally these individuals discovered that by unifying as a group they were more equipped to fulfill mission and advance their cause. This can be seen within the Catholic Church through the numerous orders that have risen out of the dedication to living a religious life and is illustrated by the formation of the Jedi Order within the Star Wars universe. This connection has been recognized by individuals like Anthony Digmann who stresses these connections stating,

Speaking of the Jedi Order, their structure and even name resemble elements of Catholicism, which is filled with all sorts of religious orders, all with their own charisms of emphasis. Consider for example the Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Salesians, St. Teresa of Calcutta's Missionaries of Charity, and the order to which my father belongs – Glenmary Home Missioners. Each of these orders in the Church has its own focus, yet operates within the Church's overall mission of the salvation of souls. The Jedi order is much like these religious orders, and it even has a hierarchy like the Catholic Church.²¹⁷

One of the striking similarities between the Jedi order and religious orders of the Catholic faith is the nature of the vows that those entering into religious life profess. However, before examining these vows and how they relate to the Jedi we should first take a brief moment to examine the Jedi, their role within the Star Wars universe, as well as their philosophy, and teachings.

²¹⁷ Digmann, 74

Within the Star Wars universe the Jedi are warriors who fight for peace and justice throughout the galaxy. While not the focus of this paper it has been mentioned that Lucas did draw upon other religious traditions. So, while the Catholic and Christian message is one of nonviolence there are other traditions, like the Buddhist monks, who sought peace through self-defense trained in martial arts. Like these noble monks the Jedi are the guardians of the galaxy who utilize their power to strive for peace and justice amongst the diverse population of their galaxy. Open to all, the Jedi Order embraces the diversity of galaxy and recruits any individual; male, female, and from any race, who has shown an attunement to the force, and a desire to cultivate it. These individuals dedicate the rest of their lives to the Jedi Order, training and cultivating their knowledge and understanding of the Force on a daily basis. As stated in *The Jedi Path* a manual on the ways and teachings of the Jedi Order,

It is a philosophy upon which stands the Jedi Order. It is a pledge of protection to the citizens and inhabitants of the Republic. It is an encapsulation of our relationship with the Force. As a Jedi, you must be faithful to the spirit of the Code. Everyday you must ask yourself: Do I understand it?²¹⁸

Striving towards a full understanding of the Force, it not a short and quick journey, but rather a lifelong commitment to the truth that flows from it. This commitment extends beyond striving for a deeper spiritual understanding of the Force on a personal level, but also develops this understanding into a greater truth of how all life is connected. Once this truth is embraced and accepted it cultivates a practical wisdom that motivates one to action. Actions that promote peace, and fight for justice.

²¹⁸ Rinzler, 6.

Understanding that this goal, of peace and justice, is an ongoing battle waged throughout time, and their known universe, those who join the Jedi order make a lifelong commitment to this cause. This can be seen in the daily reflection which is alluded to within the previous passage from *The Jedi Path*, “Do I understand it?”²¹⁹ As a Jedi, one should perpetually strive to develop an honest relationship with the Force, regularly reflect on what that relationship means, and what actions are driven by the knowledge of this relationship, in conjunction with the truth that all life is precious and connected to one another.

Similar to those who embrace and understand the deeper commitment to living a religious life within a religious community, the Jedi also understand that true faith leads to actions. One’s belief and trust in the truth moves one to grow beyond just accepting the existence of the Force, or Divine being, and motivates one to take action, because of this recognition. Realizing, and embracing, this truth generated a desire, and unshaken inspiration, to act on the behalf of others. As described by Timothy Paul Jones,

For the Jedi, however, to believe in the Force is not merely to admit the existence of the Force. It is not even to reach out to the larger world to perform a trifling trick or two. In the *Star Wars* sage, Jedi Knights must believe so deeply in the larger world that they learn to live constantly in its power. Their beliefs must move beyond *mere acknowledgment* and give birth to *faithful commitment*.²²⁰

By embracing the faith, and being committed to it, an individual who vows to live as a member of a religious community, will be moved one to serve both their religious community and all those who live outside of it. Similarly, a true Jedi will be moved by their training and not only serve the Order, but everyone they come in contact with during their life long journey as a Jedi.

²¹⁹ Rinzler, 6.

²²⁰ Jones, 47.

Even amidst this brief description of the Jedi Order one can see the numerous parallels that can be made between the foundation of the Jedi Order, and those of the religious orders within the Catholic tradition. Both welcome anyone who has shown an internal call, to learn more about, embrace the truth of, and change their life for, the unknown power and source of meaning within the universe. Like the Jedi Order, the religious orders also strive for peace and justice and are formed by their motivation to serve the world and all its inhabitants. This connection between the Jedi and religious is so apparent that the individuals that have developed the ways of the Jedi as a religion have admittedly based their creed on a prayer often attributed to St. Francis. While Lucas desired his movie to encourage individuals to ask the big questions that come out of philosophy and religion, there is no indication that he intended his creation of the Jedi or the Force to become a religion. Its growth in fandom and popularity not only produced a pop culture sensation it also led to many to diving deeper into the metaphysical questions the Jedi and the Force presents. Consequently, in 2001 a movement began to declare Jediism as a religion, and currently there are over 10 countries that recognize it as one. Their creed states,

I am a Jedi, an instrument of peace;
Where there is hatred I shall bring love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy;
I am a Jedi.
I shall never seek so much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The Force is with me always, for I am a Jedi.

*Creed adopted from the **Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi**, author unknown, 1915.²²¹*

Analyzing this creed alongside the prayer of St. Francis one cannot help but recognize the similarities, in fact it is almost identical. Reading these side by side there is no question that their creed was developed and modeled after this prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. One cannot avoid the direct connection between the philosophies of the Jedi and that of religious orders that have developed over the ages. Their similarities are so apparent that even those whose motivation was to create a new organization, and new belief system, gravitated to the Catholic sages. One should always lean on the wisdom of these sages and avoid, “reinventing the wheel” if it is not necessary. The similarities between the Jedi and the Catholic faith grow beyond just philosophical ideas however, and also can be seen in the similarities in their institutional structure as well.

One can find clear similarities in the structure of the Jedi Order and religious orders within the Catholic Church. Both of these institutions observe, and respects a hierarchical structure. Once one enters into either of these orders it is a commitment and dedication that is intended to last a lifetime. This commitment is not taken lightly and while all are welcome to enter, few actually make such a pledge. Just like within the religious communities the Jedi make a commitment to loyal serve, not just the philosophy of their order, but give their allegiance to the order’s hierarchy as well. This vow is taken to ensure one’s ongoing commitment to the order, the order’s superiors, and the institutions hierarchy. This aids in ensuring that the integrity of the faith is maintained, and passed on, as it continues to grow. This same sentiment

²²¹ Jedi Website, <https://jedimonk.com/2018/08/31/the-creed/>

is found within the structure of the Jedi Order. As indicated in *The Jedi Path*, the Jedi Order, like the religious orders, are obedient and subservient to a hierarchy. It states, "...the Jedi Order follows a hierarchy to aid in the flow of command. Though we are all equals in the Force, the more senior members offer an expertise that deserves respect by those who have not yet achieved such a station."²²² Obedience is essential to both the Jedi Order and the Church's religious orders. Both serve to ensure that a proper chain of command is followed, not just for the sake of control, but to guarantee the passing on of ancient wisdom, customs, and traditions that are in line with the faith they represent and reflect.

Through this respect and commitment, one is guaranteed to remain on a path that has been shown to lead them closer to their destination. By accepting these already proven, and recognized, truths and instructions, one can be assured that they will not waste time developing new practices when ones have already been proven to be successful. The role of the religious rules, like that of the Jedi, are to ensure one remains on a path of spiritual growth and progression. Additionally, if they are dedicated, focused, and committed enough, they may also improve upon these methods in order to assist the next individual who takes these vows and commits to this journey.

This respect and commitment to one's superiors is vital to embracing the religious life, just like it is essential if one wishes to commit themselves to the Jedi Order. Along with the commitment, and loyalty, to the structural and institutional Church hierarchy comes a commitment to the hierarchy of the unique hierarchy of each religious community as well as a

²²² Rinzler, 11.

vow to be obedient to the community's superior. This individual, who is responsible for monitoring and aiding the spiritual progress of the religious brother, or sister, is a reflection of the role of the Jedi master within the *Star Wars* mythos. Like the superior within a religious community is tasked with guiding the religious within their community, the Jedi Master is responsible for the spiritual development and training of their Padawan, a title given to one who has entered the Jedi Order, and is an apprentice to another Jedi. The commitment to one's superior, like the Padawan's commitment to their Master is a commitment to obedience, a dedication to learning, and a trusting acceptance of the eternal truths that are passed on to you through your Master. As asserted within *The Jedi Path*,

Listen to your Master's teachings even when they seem contrary to what you learned at the Temple. You are an apprentice for a reason – if you do not seize every learning opportunity, you will never reach Knighthood....You are a Padawan – you must be prepared to do whatever is asked of you.²²³

As with a Padawan an individual who enters religious life will be assigned to a superior who will be responsible for guiding and directing them as they embrace the religious way of life. If one is going to be successful in this endeavor, they will need to embrace this humble role and relent to the authority of another. Releasing one's hubris, and surrendering control to another, allows the individual the ability to utilize their collaborations with their superior as teachable moments. Consequently, every interaction, both positive and negative, should result in a learning experience. Therefore, these interactions should always be embraced and followed regardless of one's personal thoughts or opinions of the instructions.

²²³ Rinzler, 51.

5.6 - Obedience and the Jedi

The level of obedience and loyalty required by both the Jedi Order and religious orders does not stop at this hierarchical level either. Just like an individual who enters into a religious order give a vow of obedience to both the religious superior and their order so too does a Jedi give obedience to both their individual Master and the Jedi Order itself. This obedience to the Jedi Order is reflected in their commitment to the Jedi Council, a group of Jedi Masters who determine the direction of the Order and role of its members. As stated in *The Jedi Path*, "Of Course you will be subject to the demands of the Council. The Council, or one of the proxies in out satellite academies, will determine the mission you execute."²²⁴ Just like the level of obedience within a religious community goes all the way to the top of the Church's hierarchy so too do this level of obedience reach the top of the hierarchy of the Jedi.

This level of obedience is taught, and illustrated, in the training and education one receives when they enter religious life, or seminary, similarly this training is provided to a Jedi when they enter the Academy. It is through a deep respect and appreciation of the sages' wisdom and traditions that the ways of the Jedi are passed on. This is reflective of the manner in which the traditions and truth of Christ are passed on within the traditions of the religious orders. Dick Staub, an award-winning writer who has focused much of his writing on the connection between culture and faith, also recognizes this connection, and the level of commitment these two organizations share. He explains that,

Aspiring Jedi are sent to the Academy to master the ancient laws, which hold the secrets of the Force, proving the Jedi with purpose, power, and tranquility. Christian disciples

²²⁴ Rinzler, 112.

find purpose, power and tranquility by learning the ancient words recorded in our Holy Book, the repository of the spiritual ways governing the universe that lead us to know and love the Lord of the Force.²²⁵

It is only through an open armed embrace of the sages' wisdom and an obedience to the truth and traditions that their guidance provides can one hope to avoid the dangers and pitfalls that one will face on their journey.

As has already been shown obedience is a central vow to every religious order. Likewise, as has been illustrated, this level of obedience is required of the Jedi who enter the Jedi Order. The fact that this central vow is core to both these institutions is no coincidence. Without dedication and obedience to those that have come before, and the traditions they have established, endangers one to become distracted and deviate from their journey. This deviation can consume one and ultimately deter them from their path and the achievement of the quest to oneness with the other. This is illustrated by the journey that is undertaken by Anakin as he progresses on his path towards enlightenment as a Jedi. Along the way he rejects the teachings of the Order as well as his own Master and Jedi Council who were leading him towards his goal. As a result, Anakin turns away from the Jedi code and towards his own path, one that he wishes to control. This path, however, only leads one away from their initial goal of peace and love, and towards the aim of power, a desire connected to the dark side and one that does not lead towards the Holy.

Staub is one who believes that this notion of obedience, is losing favor in our absolute relativistic culture. The world has become so relativistic that it feels taboo for one to tell

²²⁵ Dick Staub, *Christian Wisdom of the Jedi Masters* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 79-80.

another no, or indicate to them that the path they are currently on will not lead them to their desired goal of enlightenment. Adherence to traditions and the reception of guidance from another, even the most benign, can be easily manipulated by society to appear controlling. This refusal to relinquish control or rely on the guidance of the authority of another, has been promoted by the fear that this authority is bigoted and anyone who relents to their authority is promoting a bigoted ideology. Unfortunately, this seems to occur as a result of the authoritative organization, or individual, providing boundaries or challenging the sojourner to live a life that is difficult and often contrary to what would provide worldly success.

This inability to relinquish control to another, to embrace and trust another's guidance, is one of the greatest detriments to one's spiritual journey. Star Wars illustrates this truth through the telling of the fall of Anakin. Anakin's refusal to relent to the authority of his master, the council and the Jedi order in general is one of the reason he sub comes to the Dark Side and become one of the world's most iconic villains, Darth Vader.

Vader's inability to relent to the authority of the Jedi Council, respect its traditions and follow the teachings of the Jedi Order lead him down a path of pride and away from the righteous path that he original set himself upon. As a result of Vader's hubris, his beliefs, and consequently his actions, are the antithesis of the direction and guidance he would receive from the Jedi. The dangers of one's pride is that it leads them to believe they need no guidance, or direction, from anyone. Consequently they are no longer held accountability for any misconceived understanding of the Divine or misdirection they may take on their journey. This is one of the lessons that Lucas attempts to illustrate through Vader's journey. Unfortunately,

however, this message has somehow been missed and individuals now believe they can take this spiritual journey on their own and figure out everything without the assistance of another. Recognizing this connection Staub elaborates on this dangerous mentality. A mentality that Anakin embraced when he transforms into Darth Vader and relays it to the attitude of individuals today. He writes,

The willingness to submit to the will of another has fallen out of favor, however. We react negatively to the very implication of following instructions, behaving in accordance with a law, or submitting to someone else's control – even God's!²²⁶

This level of arrogance results in one's inability to progress forward on their journey, as their path is paved with pride rather than humility. Overconfidence and self-importance do not lead one towards the Divine. In fact, it is this type of conceit that will lead one away from this goal, not towards it.

Anakin's pride and ego, which has been amplified by being referred to as the "chosen one" and constantly being told that he is superior to the other Jedi in so many ways. This leads him to believe that he no longer needs the guidance and direction of his Master, Obi-Wan. Not only does he not need Obi-Wan's instructions, but he even resents Obi-Wan for believing that he more guidance. As indicated by McDowell, Anakin's inability to accept that he does not have all the answers leads to "...his resentment of Obi-Wan's guidance. As he admits to the wise Padme, 'In some ways, a lot of ways, I'm really ahead of him. I'm ready for the trials.'"²²⁷

Disobedience fueled by arrogant pride leads Anakin down the dark path, a decision that is often taken as a result of misdirection rather than a choice one consciously makes. It is this very truth

²²⁶ Staub, 87.

²²⁷ McDowell, 74.

that further establishes the need for humility, and the importance of making a commitment to follow the guidance of another.

Only by following the direction and guidance of the sage can one hope to avoid being deterred from the righteous path. Everyone who partakes of this journey will have moments of doubt, or arrogance, which will lead them to be tempted to stray from the path. By being obedient to the teachings of one's sage, and the institution they represent, will ensure that one does not wander from a righteous path, but continues forward upon it. Joshua Hays illustrates this point through Luke's journey as a Jedi. Understanding the temptations and difficulties that one faces on this journey Hays further emphasizes the importance of obedience. For even one who has progressed far on their journey only needs to be disobedient once for their destiny to change and their path lost. Illustrating the severity of this fact Hays expresses this concerning Luke's journey,

Deviation from the right path will lead to inevitable corruption, transforming him from an aspiring Jedi Knight into a creature as loathsome as Vader, who murdered both Luke's biological father and his spiritual mentor. A single misstep could transform Luke from hero of the Rebellion into traitorous assassin for the Empire.²²⁸

What Hays is illustrating in this point is the volatile nature of one who undergoes a personal or spiritual journey. He emphasizes the importance of remain faithful and committed to one's path for if one falls prey to temptation, anger, or any other temptation that would lead them astray, they endanger their entire journey. In Episode IV, *Empire Strikes Back* Vader encourages, and tempts, Luke to leave the path of the Jedi and join him so they can overtake the Emperor and rule the Galaxy together. Luke, remaining faithful to his journey, and committed to the Jedi

²²⁸ Hays, 88.

code, refuses to give in to Vader's desires and consequently as a result he is able to draw Vader back to the light side, destroy the Emperor with his help, and becomes the hero of the Rebellion and the galaxy.

The quest for unity with the Divine is one that is ongoing and takes a level of dedication that requires support, guidance, and encouragement. This can only hope to be reached through relinquishing control and showing a devoted obedience to others who have taken, and progressed on this journey previously. Within the Jedi order this obedience is shown to one's master, the Jedi Council and the Order itself. This level of commitment is reflective of the obedience one must show when undertaking their own spiritual journey. Obedience to one's spiritual director, or superior within a religious order. One thing is certain, obedience is a central component and a necessary first step that must be embraced if one hopes to proceed on their spiritual journey. Proudful arrogance and obedience to oneself alone, regardless how smart or wise one may be, will only deviate you from the desired path, and prevent one from progressing on their spiritual journey. This is why obedience is one of the central vows found within religious life, and consequently why one finds this reflected within the Jedi code.

Obedience is the first step in this long and arduous journey. Master Yoda reiterates this notion to Luke when Luke approaches Yoda about receiving training in the ways of the Jedi. As expressed by Dr. Judith Barad, a professor of philosophy at Indiana State University, before Yoda agrees to train Luke, Yoda insists that Luke, like any other individual seeking to journey along this path, must have,

...“the deepest commitment, the most serious mind.” If you're committed and serious, there is one more prerequisite that must be met before training can commence. You

must have the patience to finish what you begin. The process of becoming a Jedi Knight is definitely not quick and easy.²²⁹

Without a commitment to be obedient, neither the Jedi Order, nor any religious order within the Catholic Church, will provide guidance or training. One must recognize that the path they seek is not easy, and in order to have any hope of following said path one must be completely committed to following the guidance of those who have traversed it before you. Just like the path of the Jedi the journey towards sainthood is not easy or quick. One must embrace the challenge, commit to the path and obediently follow the sagely guidance of one's personal instructor but also the proven traditions and guidance of the sages whom have journey along this path previously.

5.7 - Vows and the Jedi Order

One's vow of obedience actually moves beyond a dedication to one's order and superior within said order. Obedience goes beyond the boundaries of the community for along with professing obedience to the order one wishes to join, one also must be committed to the will of God. This type of obedience goes beyond just following rules and regulations or being committed to the regular practices of prayer and meditation. For when one is truly dedicated to, and embraces, the will of God they recognize their commitment goes beyond one's personal journey. Part of the obligation one has when they enter religious life, the priesthood, or even as a dedicated and faithful Catholic, is to the world. Along with one's devotion toward personal spiritual growth, and development that is nurtured within the confines of their community, one

²²⁹ Judith Barad, "Try Not – Do or Do Not" ethics in a Galaxy, Far, Far, Away," in *Star Wars and Philosophy: More Powerful Than You Can Possibly Imagine*, eds. Kevin S. Decker and Jason T. Eberl (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2005), 57.

must also be devoted to the service of the greater community beyond their order. Being obedient to the will of God will eventually lead one out into the world, to serve those in need, and fight for justice amongst all of humanity. Not only is this same truth found within the Jedi order in some ways it is an even greater commitment, for it moves beyond just addressing the needs of their home planet and expands into the needs of the entire universe. Expressing this sentiment McDowell writes,

Obedience to the will of the Force is not blind acquiescence to a powerful but morally ambiguous god, and certainly is not giving absolute significance to one's own desires. On the contrary, it is the journey into becoming responsible for the well-being of the galaxy or, more personally, one's galactic neighbor.²³⁰

For the Jedi, along with those dedicated and committed to following the will of God, obedience becomes greater than just following a set of rules or adhering to traditions. It grows and expands beyond a commitment to one's community and into a commitment to the universal community, that everyone is a part of. Like the obligation to serve others is central to the Catholic faith, the requirement to serve the galaxy is core to the Jedi. This truth is so vital and important for the Jedi to embrace it is a main focus of their meditation. This is illustrated by McDowell who emphasizes that,

...it is the object of Jedi contemplation so that they are focused on that which is *other than themselves* and not on themselves as such, and which indicates the *interconnection of themselves with all others*.²³¹

Obedience is a valuable and necessary requirement for one who undertakes a spiritual quest towards the Divine. It is important to realize that one's embrace of this vow goes beyond just following directions, but also includes a commitment to being obedient to the will of God, a will

²³⁰ McDowell, 25.

²³¹ McDowell, 26.

that will always draw you out into the world to serve others and strive for peace and justice for all of humanity. Or in the case of the Jedi, striving for peace and justice for all life forms throughout the galaxy.

Along with the vow of obedience, two other vows are made by those entering religious life. These are the vow of chastity and vow of poverty. While the vow of obedience is the most relevant to this matter it is important to note that these other two vows are also represented in and reflected in the Jedi code. Recognizing this truth Anthony Digmann emphasizes this connection and indicates that, “Not only do the Jedi practice obedience through their hierarchy, like Catholics, they also practice the other evangelical councils of chastity and poverty shared by Catholic clergy and religious.”²³² Both the Jedi, and those who enter religious life, are held to a high level of commitment and dedication to their calling. In order to ensure the standard of this commitment is maintained these two orders require one to pledge to be committed to the path they must take to complete their quest. Only one who is serious and devoted to this cause can hope to progress on this path. These vows, when adhered to, enable one to focus on the goal and not become distracted by world desires that will only deviate on from the path.

These two vows, chastity and poverty, while not as vital to one’s journey as obedience certainly provide one with a means to aide in keeping one focused on the path they are on. These vows help the individual provide the deep level of obedience they must be committed to if they wish to sojourn upon this path toward the truth. Taking, and adhering to, these vows allow one to avoid worldly distraction that can often times cause a shift in priorities that can

²³² Digmann, 75.

become a detriment to one's journey. A keen focus and strong will are essential to one undertaking this journey, so, as expressed by Digmann,

By detaching from the world, we are able to attach better to God. The Jedi commitment to non-attachment include both material things and romantic relationships. In this way they are able to focus on the Force, similar to how Catholics are to detach from temptations of the world and focus on God.²³³

Both the Jedi path and the quest toward the holy are wrought with obstacles, temptations and test. The sages of the past who developed these religious rules, and provided guidance to those of the journey to the Divine recognized this fact and as a result embraced these vows as they understood that this level of commitment to the journey will only aide them on their quest. Any distraction or attachments, like those caused by the desire for money or a relationship, will only deviate one from their path, and further hinder their process. Only a complete and utter commitment to the quest, and the path one must take in order to accomplish it, can lead one to their goal. These two vows not only provide a testament to the level of commitment one is willing to make, but also allows one to avoid further earthly desires that would only serve as a distraction to one's ultimate goal.

As shown throughout history one's desire for wealth can become so overwhelming and all-consuming that it no longer becomes a means in which to survive, but the sole motivation and barometer in which one measures their success and meaning in this world. Additionally, one's overwhelming sexual or romantic desires can also cause one to lose sight of their intended goal of achieving unity with God and living according to His will. As a result, one's focus can shift to achieving unity with another and living according to their will. While we must

²³³ Digmann, 78.

recognize that there is a genuine need for money to survive, this drive for wealth should never overcome or outweigh one's desire to draw closer and unite with the Divine. Similarly, one's desire for a relationship with another, should never be prioritized over one's desire for a relationship with The Other. These dangers are expressed within the *Star Wars* mythos as well, in fact one of the main focuses of Episodes I, II, and III were expressing these dangers.

Episodes I, II, and III, better known as the prequels, tell the story of the transformation of Anakin Skywalker, Jedi Knight to Darth Vader, Sith Lord. In the first film, we are introduced to Anakin as a child. He is discovered by the Jedi and found to be naturally stronger and attuned to the Force than any other individual who has come before him. He is accepted into the Jedi Academy and begins his training as a Jedi. Initially his goals are altruistic, desiring to become a Jedi, protect the galaxy and spread peace and justice. However, as he progresses on his journey to become a Jedi he sub comes to numerous temptations and begins to ignore parts of the Jedi Code, picking choosing what he thinks is important and what he finds obsolete. This arrogant decision becomes his downfall and allows him to make a devastating and destructive decision that ultimately leads to him becoming one of the most iconic villains in cinematic history.

Anakin's lack of obedience to the Jedi Code, and Council, is what ultimately diverges him from his journey, causing him to pursue his own goals rather than that of the Jedi. Like the vows of poverty and chastity taken by the religious, the Jedi also reject attachments to power/wealth, and romantic involvement. His belief that he has a greater connection to the Force than any other, leads him to fall to dark side. His journey down the dark side leads Anakin to embrace the fallacious and prideful belief that he does not need to adhere to the Jedi path,

and that his path must be the right path. Falling to this temptation leads him to no longer be obedient to the Jedi, and thus allows him to disregard the lifelong commitment to the Jedi he made. A commitment that forfeits his need and desire for wealth, power and even love.

The Jedi, like those who enter into a religious community are required to give all their devotion to the calling and mission of their order. One way to ensure this occurs is for one to relinquish control to the order and those who oversee and monitor them. Along with this level of obedience one must also be willing to relinquish any personal desires one may have, as their journey will only be hindered by these distractions, or rather attachments. These attachments while not in themselves wrong, or evil, endanger one by tempting them to believe that they are the ultimate goal and ultimate meaning in life. More importantly when one becomes attached to something they inadvertently become consumed with keeping it and avoid its loss. This leads to a greater issue, fear. As explained by McDowell, "Attachments to people and things induce fear over loss, and this in turn moves us to attempt to secure their possession – this is what Jedi training constantly reveals to be the path to the dark side."²³⁴ It is for these reasons that individuals are required to take these vows. Both St. Francis and St. Ignatius, who we previously discussed, also embraced this level of devotion and dedication to poverty. Their lives exemplify the vow of poverty they embrace and both have lived lives to show how this radical idea can be conceptualized into a reality. As has been shown through the lives of the saints who embraced them, and illustrated through the code of the Jedi, these vows enable individuals to remain focused on their spiritual growth. For they allow one to avoid distractions or shift one's focus to

²³⁴ McDowell, 68.

be solely on the physical world. A focus that judges one by their power, wealth, or relationship status.

These dangers, and consequently the value that is brought by making these sacrifices, are illustrated in Anakin's journey. For when he makes these desires his focus and is unable to avoid becoming attached, he is lead astray and greatly deviates from his path. Anakin's journey began when he was discovered by a Jedi Knight who recognized the strong connection he had to the Force. In fact, his connection to the Force was greater than any other Jedi that had come before him. This strong connection while allowing him to progress faster than others also causes him must internal turmoil and conflict. It is not his connection to the Force that causes his fall, but rather his pride and ego that develops as a result of consistently being told how special his is as a result of this unique connection. As a result of his hubris, he begins to believe that he is above the Jedi way and that their way is flawed.

Believing that he was above the guidance and direction was Anakin's first step towards the dark side. Like Adam and Eve, Anakin's first sin was pride. Arrogance is what causes the first of humanity to fall and it is what continues to lead us down the wrong path. This vice is something that philosophers and theologians have warned humanity about since they have been philosophizing. This truth is asserted by McDowell who explains that, "According to Aristotle, the cardinal flaw the tragic hero suffers from is *hubris*, and usually this is translated as 'pride' or 'arrogance.' This form of *hubris* certainly contributes to Anakin's fall..."²³⁵ By thinking his established and recognized superior connection to the Force gave him the right, and in

²³⁵ McDowell, 72.

some ways a responsibility, to be disobedient. This self-righteous disobedience not only deviated him from the path of the Jedi, it also began his journey towards the dark side. A path that he continues to take as this disobedience enables him to ignore the other two proverbial vows of poverty and chastity as well.

Anakin's arrogance leads him to believe he can be the designer of his own path, and thus can determine if there is a value and benefit to poverty and chastity. Relinquishing the value and necessity of obedience, he is able to easily disregard the other two. This ultimately is his downfall and leads to him to not only cross over into the dark side but to embrace this new path and become the Sith Lord known as Darth Vader. While it is Anakin's lack of obedience that ultimately allows him to deviate from the righteous path of the Jedi it is his arrogance that allows his lust for power to consume him and his attachment to Padme, and fear of losing her, that pushes him over the edge.

As a Jedi you are sworn to protect the galaxy and spread peace. Like those within religious communities, or even the laity who have dedicated their life to this spiritual pursuit, this must be motivated by the benefit that others gain from this cause, not the glory or power one can gain by providing it. Similarly, like those within religious communities, the Jedi themselves obtain no payment for their services. Their service to the galaxy is ongoing, not coming to any sort of completion until they have passed on. Embracing the vow of poverty aids one from falling to the temptation that can come from one's arrogance believing that they have all the answers. While this temptation can lead one to believe that their knowledge and wisdom

is so valuable to others that it should be monetized, the greater danger is believing that your understanding should be embraced and accepted by all.

Embracing and accepting a vow of poverty goes beyond giving up wealth, it expresses another underlining truth that you are giving up the pursuit of power, specifically worldly power. This is why the Jedi are not to have any political connections. They are guardians of peace and justice for all, not just one planet, or political affiliation. In fact, in the Star Wars Universe when a child is discovered to have a connection to the force and are given permission to be trained as a Jedi they are transplanted to the Jedi Academy which becomes the child's new family. While religious orders do not seek out children in order to grow their family, they do recognize any who enter into monastic life as one who is entering into their family. Similar to the terminology used by those who enter the Jedi Order, those who enter into religious life utilize verbiage such as, brother, sister, mother, and so forth, to address others within their community. This familial embrace is integral to assimilating into this new lifestyle. It allows one to realize the level of love and commitment the community has for one another and their spiritual journey. This symbolic gesture illustrates that all are family, and all should love one another as family. This mentality allows one to focus on the promotion of peace and justice for all, not just one's race, biological family's ideology, or even one particular nation or religious denomination.

Within the prequels this important separation begins to dissolve and consequently causes the downfall of the Jedi. By allowing the political arena to enter into the chambers of the Jedi council the vow of poverty begins to dissolve. For when the Jedi begin aligning themselves

with a political affiliation, they quickly move from being guardians of peace to become generals in a galactic war. While unintentional this move changes the philosophy of the Jedi and causes individuals like Anakin to begin to question not only the Jedi, but also their methods.

As the recognized chosen one, Anakin has struggled with being fully obedient during his training as a Jedi. With this shift in the Jedi philosophy Anakin once again begins to struggle with following their directives. Believing that he is the strongest and most powerful of all the Jedi he begins to become tempted by power and deviates from the humble vow of poverty that ensure this desire is avoided. With the Jedi Council embracing their new role as generals in an army Anakin begins to feel justified in how he believes the galaxy should be overseen and ruled. If the Jedi are going to move into the political and militaristic arena, then he believes that his place as the chosen one entitles him to be the one to enact this change. If the Jedi are going to take a greater role in how the galaxy is ruled that in only makes sense that the most powerful of them should be a part of establishing and maintaining this regime. His already oppositional defiant behavior that allowed him to walk the line of obedience quickly leads him to cross the line of poverty of power when the Jedi Council change their philosophy concerning politics and war. Seeing the Jedi Council adjust past traditions leads Anakin to begin to question other traditions of the Jedi as well, particularly the tradition of chastity as being understood as the right expression of love.

Love is one of the most powerful forces on Earth, it builds many people up, empowering them to overcome obstacles and even leads individuals to make sacrifices they never thought possible. This powerful emotion, however, can also have devastating effect if not fully

understood, or if one is not completely aware of the sacrifice it entails. When one makes a commitment to love, be it God or another individual, it is a serious commitment, a lifetime of service and dedication to another. When this is not fully understood, or embraced, love can be distorted by other emotion. One can become confused by the plethora of emotions that flow out of an incomplete understand of love. Even one who has a full understanding of love cannot resist having an emotion response when something occurs to one they love. This is natural and individuals should recognize that these types of responses will occur.

Love creates an attachment between two individuals. As a result, when one person experiences pain or suffer the other individual not only experiences it through the empathetic bond they share, but also emotionally response to it as well. This level of attachment, which can be caused by romantic, and paternal, love is why the vow of chastity is important to religious communities, and thus reflected in the Jedi order. Relinquishing attachments is essential to the way of the Jedi, and core to their faith. As indicated by Corey Barrett, a writer for the World Religion News, "The Jedi think non-attachment is key to faith. In fact, the reason why Anakin Skywalker becomes evil is rooted in his attachment to his wife and mother."²³⁶ This attachment to another is why the Jedi require a commitment to chastity for all who enter the order. The Jedi understand the extreme level of commitment it takes for one to achieve their goal of unity with the force. This level of dedication is essential, and any distractions, or attachments, that may give one pause, or cause one to deviate from the path, needs to be removed. Obedience is vital to partake in the journey towards the Divine. Avoiding attachments, and separating

²³⁶ Corey Barrett, "May the Force Be With You: An Inside Look At The Religious Influence For The Jedi," Worldreligionnews.com May 4, 2018.

yourself from them, is important. Any level of attachment one has is detrimental to one's progress on their journey. When one is attached to something, or someone, they will struggle to give up that thing, or person even if that is what is necessary to progress further on the path towards the holy. As a result, by not relinquishing and releasing one's attachments before entering on this journey may eventually cause tremendous distress in the future. This amount of dedication is required of both those individuals entering the Jedi order as well as those who are seeking to pursue religious life.

When one enters into a religious community, like the Franciscans, one is making a deceleration that they are dedicated to God, His will, and the fulfillment of His will through the mission of the community above all else. This level of commitment is impossible to keep if one is married, in a serious relationship, or even a parent. Relationships are like the relationship one has with their community. They both require dedication and commitment to ensure their survival. Consequently, to avoid disruption to any of these callings it should be avoided.

The goal of any of these callings is to follow God's will. In following his will, one reflects God and His love. This love is shown through those who embrace the calling to enter religious life and become obedient to their order's rule. In any callings one should avoid attachments as they only serve as a distraction, or hindrance, to the level of attention one should give to God, and His will. The commitment one has to their family is similar to the commitment one has to their religious community. For the love found within the family should be a reflection of the love God has for His family i.e. humanity and the Church. The vow of chastity taken by religious

enables one to avoid the type of attachments that are often found, and in some ways required, when one is called to married life.

The risk that attachments bring are they can cause one to lose focus when that which you are attached to is endanger, or at risk of being lost. This causes fear and can lead to an unwarranted reactions, or worse, one which goes against God's will. Just like the religious orders who understood this risk so does those within the Jedi Order. Master Yoda, explains the dangers of fear in his famous monologue from *The Phantom Menace*, "Fear is the path to the dark side...fear leads to anger...anger leads to hate...hate leads to suffering." Fear is an unavoidable consequence of attachments. Individuals naturally become fearful of losing something they want to hold on to. The more attachments one has, and the more attached one is, the greater the change and level of fear one will have. Avoiding attachments is essential to controlling one's fear of lose and consequently the response that fear can cause. For it is the reaction to fear that one is seeking to avoid. This is expressed by Joshua Hayes, "Fear and anger create crisis situations that force a response and can quickly become a slippery slope to failure."²³⁷

It is because of the danger fear brings, that attachments are to be avoided, and as a result of the level of attachment romantic love brings the vow of chastity is valuable and aids one in avoiding the dangers of these types of attachment. The importance of this vow is illustrated in the *Star Wars* mythos by the forbidden relationship Anakin has with Padme. Anakin defiantly ignores this vow and secretly weds and impregnates Padme. It is at the

²³⁷ Hays, 77.

moment that Padme confronts Anakin about turning from the Jedi way, asserting his own power and authority of the Jedi that Anakin takes the action that seals his transformation into Darth Vader. After Anakin is confronted by Padme, she makes it clear that his betrayal of the Jedi has lead him down a dark path, one in which she cannot, and will not follow. Fearful of losing her and his children this quickly turns to anger and he strikes out at Padme, and then attacked his master. As a result of this reaction, he unintentionally kills Padme, and ensures the separation from his unborn children. The battle with Ob-Wan, his master, results in him being horribly disfigured, and then reconstructed into the icon figure of evil, Darth Vader.

Some may argue that this type of response is unrealistic, or over reactionary, yet these types of passionate response occur every day. When something happens to someone you love, and you fear losing them, individuals often make rash and violent decisions. When one's emotions rise their rational thinking decrease and can lead to individuals making irrational decisions. This can be seen in the number of crimes that are committed as a result of uncontrolled emotions that can be triggered by love. Revenge, greed, along with other acts of desperation are often results of, or prompted by, an emotional response to a situation with whom they love. From the angry lover who catches their significant other cheating, to the individual who robs, or commits fraud because they feed into their lover's greed, crimes of this nature have been committed in such regularity that there is a classification of felonies that they fall under, i.e. crimes of passion.

Anakin's fall to the dark side, and ultimately his transformation into the evil Sith Lord Darth Vader, illustrates the importance of remaining obedient, humble and chaste. Through the

illustration of his journey, the numerous temptations he is unable to avoid as a result of his disobedience to, or disregard of, the vows to the Jedi Order, one is able to understand the value of obedience, and the danger one's hubris is in leading one to believe they have a better way. Adhering to the guidance of a sage is vital to one's spiritual journey and consequently discovering and embracing a sage is essential if one wishes to progress on this journey. Avoiding a sage, or the recognition of the need to relent to authority not only endangers one from falling prey to known pitfalls and obstacles it will also prevent you from receiving the support and direction one needs in order to progress on this journey and reach its desired outcome.

One of the latest installments of the *Star Wars* mythos, *Episode XIII The Last Jedi*, has been scrutinized by both fans and critics. While many of their concerns and critiques about the film are justifiable, there is also a central theme that is addressed in this film that provides another invaluable truth that is often missed because of the focus placed on these criticisms. This film addresses a similar theme of the importance of humility and remembering that one is never above the need and call to obedience, or the need for a sage. This episode explores the downfall of Luke, the hero of the original trilogy, and how his hubris, leads him to deviate from the way of the Jedi, and consequently creates a new villain, Kylo Ren, who gains power and reigns terror throughout the galaxy.

In Episode 8 *The Last Jedi*, the storyteller once again expresses the truth of obedience, and adhering to established tradition, through a dilemma Luke faces when he establishes, and runs a new Jedi Academy after the defeat of the emperor. This time, however, we learn the

value and truth of remaining committed, and obedient, to the way of the Jedi, and the traditions established by the Jedi code. This is relayed by presenting the dangerous outcome that persists when one's hubris leads them to deviate from the path and the time honored, and proven, traditions that lead to success. As a result of Luke's hubris and pride, that ironically grew out of his obedience and commitment to the Jedi way which was illustrated through the journey he took in episodes IV, V and VI, he make one single drastic mistake that inadvertently leads to the rise of the New Order, and become the new threat to galactic peace.

As a result of Luke's hubris he believes that his most powerful student is traveling down a dark path and he is unable to deviate from. This student is none other than Ben Solo, Luke's nephew and the son of Han and Leia. Luke believes that Ben's journey towards the dark side has already begun and doubts that Ben will ever be deterred from this path. As a result of the immense latent power with Ben, Luke makes a decision out of fear, a decision that goes against the way of the Jedi. Believing he can end the threat before it begins Luke make a choice one night to end his nephew's journey towards the dark side by ending his life. Approaching Ben while he is sleeping in bed Luke ignites his lightsaber and is about to kill Ben while he sleeps. It is in this moment that Luke finally recognizes his mistake and is unable to follow through with his plan. Unfortunately, at this moment Ben wakes up and witnesses the seeming betrayal of his master. Luke who only moments before changed his mind is now confronted by a fear and anger filled Ben who believes he must defend his life against his master. It is at this moment that Ben, embracing his fear and anger, transforms into Kylo Ren. After defending himself from the apparent attempted murder of his Uncle Kylo proceeds to destroy and dismantle Luke's academy by killing the rest of the Jedi whom he was training. This leads to Kylo's rise in power,

the establishment of the New Order, and his desire to continue where Vader left off, and gain complete domination of the galaxy.

Again, the importance of obedience and devotion is relayed through this plot point, only this time the truth is revealed by illustrating the negative outcome that can persist when one ignores the wisdom of the sages that have been passed on. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, this notion is revealed through the positive outcome that results from Luke remaining obedient to the way of the Jedi. In *The Last Jedi*, however, this truth is revealed by taking the opposite approach and illustrating the dangers and pitfalls one will face when they deviate from the path, and traditions that have been established. One's prideful belief that they have a better way, or greater understanding of the truth than those who have successfully journeyed before them will only lead one astray. This iteration of the truth is extremely relevant and important as it relays to the individual the dangers of ignoring one's sage, or the sages of the past that have previously established a proven means to the truth, and an acceptable way to move towards its embrace. When one ignores the directions and cautions given by one's sage, they can begin to believe that they themselves are the ultimate judge of all.

Additionally, this plot point illustrates another valuable truth for one undertaking this journey and wishing to remain on the righteous path. One must be diligent, and vigilant, when undertaking this journey. It is a path that one should never become complacent of, or allow their pride from their previous successes to disillusion themselves into believing they will not need assistance overcoming and future obstacles. The reality is, this journey is one that is never truly completed, and the path one travels with perpetually have challenges to overcome.

Furthermore, for Joseph Campbell once the hero completes his journey he once again begins a new journey repeating the process multiple times throughout one's life. Only through remaining committed and obedient can one hope to remain on the path. For once one believes they no longer need guidance, or instruction, they have relented to their own hubris and deviated from the path. One needs to humbly recognize that no matter how far one gets on their journey they will face deeper, and more difficult, trials. Trials that can only be overcome through the ability to humbly seek out direction from another and adhere to the previously established rules, devotions, and traditions, that have continuously aided those who have journeyed on this path throughout the ages. We see this theme emerge in the film, *The Last Jedi*, with Luke Skywalker whose hubris leads him to believe he had all the answers.

Losing sight of his Jedi training, their traditions, and the foundations for the truth that the Jedi have established and utilized to set themselves apart from the Sith, Luke unintentionally disregards a core teaching and philosophy of the Jedi and inadvertently leads his nephew, Ben Solo away from the Jedi path and directly on the path of the dark side. This failure leads Luke to believe that he is not only no longer worthy to train Jedi, but that the Jedi way is no longer valid or a worthy pursuit. His shame, and inability to humbly self-evaluate himself and his training, lead him to run away from society and retreat to a place where he can live out the rest of his days alone, and unburdened by the weight of the galaxy.

The Last Jedi begins with Rey, the hero of the new trilogy, tracking down Luke and requesting his guidance as she wishes to embrace the ways of the force and the traditions of the Jedi. Fearful of repeating his mistake with Ben Solo, Luke is reluctant to train Rey and

attempts to dissuade her and her desire to train in the ways of the Jedi. Rey refuses to be dissuaded and Luke eventually, and reluctantly, begins to provide her with instruction. During their time training Luke's frustration with Rey's struggles and apparent draw towards the dark side leads him to feel vindicated by his decisions to become a hermit and desire to erase the Jedi, in all its forms and iterations, from the galaxy forever. In fact, it is not until his former master, Yoda, visits him as a spirit that he understands the detriment of his attitude and understands an important lesson that his hubris would not allow him to embrace.

Motivated by fear of the dark side, its detriment to the galaxy, and his belief that it can only be eliminated if the Jedi way, history and tradition is also eliminated, Luke makes an emotional response to Rey's temptation to the dark side. In a fit of rage and frustration, which is fueled by his uncontrolled emotions, Luke takes action to destroy all traces of the Jedi way. He travels to the ancient tree that houses and, preserves the ancient Jedi tomes with the intention to burn it down and destroy these ancient tomes that are full of Jedi teachings and traditions. On the surface it would appear that the writers of this new instalment to the *Star Wars* mythos are feeding right into the modern mentality that tradition, and obedience to another, is no longer necessary to discover the truth, or to complete the spiritual journey one has set themselves on. This, however, is exactly what is being rejected in *The Last Jedi*, for it is the deviation from tradition, and the abandonment of the sage that has really led to the fall of Ben Solo and the creation of Kylo Ren.

Chapter 6 - Dangers of Rejecting Tradition

Patrick Gilger and Eric Sundrup two Jesuit writers for *America Magazine*, address these themes from *The Last Jedi* in an article they authored in May of 2018. Within this article they address the current conflict that is faced by society today. How does one deal with tradition, how does one embrace a tradition that seems to be obsolete. While most individuals understand and embrace their spiritual nature, how this nature is nurtured and cultivated has come into question. Tradition, particularly Catholic tradition has come into question and many have, out of a seemingly justified position, left the Church and its apparent hypocrisy after the exposure of the priest scandal. This conflict surrounding tradition, its importance, and the value of being obedient to the path that tradition grew out of, is exactly what is addressed within this film. As was shown with Vatican II it is important to remember that we periodically need to return to the source of our beliefs and traditions and while staying true to them also make appropriate adaptation to fit the modern world.

The Last Jedi addresses this conflict through the two main characters and their approach to the spiritual quest they have taken on. On the one hand you have Kylo Ren who originally embracing the traditions of the Jedi, and their training, grows to completely reject them and strives to eradicate them. While Rey on the other hand appears to gravitate and fight for these traditions and the training that has risen out of these traditions. This is expressed by Gilger and Sundrup who indicate that, "Kylo Ren and Rey typify two approaches to tradition. Rey feels deep need for the kind of formation that only rootedness in tradition can provide. But Kylo is angry at having been betrayed by these same traditions-angry enough at times to want to burn

it all down.”²³⁸ This struggle to value and embrace tradition is one that is on the rise. The notion that an organization, in particular a religious organization, its teachings and traditions, are valid has come under valid scrutiny as a result of individuals within the organization making unethical and criminal decisions. This scrutiny is valid, and vital to ensuring the safety of those individuals affiliated with the institution. It also allows justice to be served by holding those criminally liable who deserve to be held accountable. However, as is illustrated in *The Last Jedi*, one does not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. One must recognize the importance and value of these proved age-old traditions and teachings, while also identifying those individuals who utilize their power and authority to abuse to take advantage of another. One must recognize that it is the individual, not the organization, teachings, or traditions, that has been corrupted. For if we are unable to recognize this and allow our pride and arrogance to disregard the wisdom of the past, we unintentionally give up all the benefits that the sages of the past have given us.

The struggles these individuals have overcome on their journey and the wisdom they have gained from it is invaluable and essential to anyone who wishes to partake of this journey themselves. One causes a great disservice to themselves by ignoring these teachings and traditions. For it is these teachings and traditions of the past that allow us, as individuals taking the journey, to avoid the known pitfalls, while also encouraging individuals to embrace the tested and proved techniques that have led others to success. One of the manners in which evaluating and emulating the methods of the sages of the past is often overlooked is their

²³⁸ Patrick Gilger and Eric Sundrup, “‘Star Wars’ Has a Problem With Its Past,” *America* Vol 218 No 12 (2018): 37.

failures. These failures are just as important to the one taking this journey as they illustrate what one should avoid on their journey. Additionally, it is important to recognize that one may, and often will, falter on their journey and that these failures can actually lead to unrecognized truths that were not originally understood. Yoda illustrating this truth to Luke in *The Last Jedi* Yoda states, “But weakness, folly, failure. Yes failure, most of all. The greatest teacher failure is.”

Luke’s failure comes from his pride, a pride that he was not even aware he had. As the hero of the rebellion and the agent that brought peace to the galaxy, he enthusiastically starts a new Jedi order and begins to train the next generation of Jedi. It only takes one mistake, one failure, momentous as it might be, for him to give up and throw in the towel. Rather than reevaluate his mistake and make the appropriate changes to ensure it can be avoided in the future Luke runs and hides. Fearful that the teaching of the Jedi can and will always lead to the dark side Luke turns himself off to the Force, becomes a hermit and refuse to continue to spread the teaching or traditions of the Jedi. As relayed by Gilger, “And Luke, the mentor Kylo had and Rey needs-the very one who should have rooted them both in the traditions of the Jedi order-refuses to take up his responsibility to form the next generation, fearful that that he is not equal to the task.”²³⁹ The irony of this is the fact that no one is ever fully “equal to the task”. To think that one is fully prepared and capable, to lead others on this journey only attests to the level of hubris one has about their abilities. It is this pride that cause one to fumble, for

²³⁹ Gilger, 37.

even sages need guidance and direction, particularly those that have taken on the responsibility to spread the truth and way onto others.

6.1 - No Jedi is an Island

The notion that no one is ever completely prepared, and therefore able to be the perfect sage, or guide does not mean one should avoid pursuing a sage to aid them in their journey. In fact, when one begins to understand the level of responsibility an individual has in performing these duties, one can see the benefit and importance of these individuals living in a community together. Community is another aspect of the Jedi that is also reflected in religious life. Both must show a deep and dedicated level of commitment to their calling and to those that share that calling with them. It is through living in community that these individuals are able to model and illustrate these qualities to each other, along with those who observe these individuals. This is illustrated by Timothy Jones who states,

To become a Jedi is to be committed to a community. Compassion and love are, after all, essential to a Jedi's life, and these qualities can thrive only in the context of a committed community.²⁴⁰

Like the Jedi, the religious order which were discussed, understand and emphasize the importance of living within a community. While living in community together these individuals can provide support and guidance to aid those who have taken on the responsibility of leading others on their spiritual journey. We must never forget that we as human being do not live in a vacuum. We are communal by nature and thus community is part of who we are and should be celebrated, not shunned. Individuals undertaking a spiritual journey should recognize this truth

²⁴⁰ Jones, 67.

and embrace the fact that they are not alone on their journey, but they have the support of those around them. Along with this direct support one also should be comforted and relieved by the fact that others have taken this journey previously and have provided the current sojourners with the wisdom they will need to be successful. This idea of being in fellowship reflects the manner in which Jesus lived while completing His quest and taking His journey. As Timothy Jones indicates,

If I imitate the example of Jesus, I must give up the arrogant delusion that my salvation, my spiritual life, and my sins are personal matters. I must admit that I cannot follow Jesus alone any more than I can get married alone. To follow Jesus, I need the fellowship of others who have chosen to share this quest.²⁴¹

As Catholics or any followers of Jesus, we should continuously reflect on his life and strive to imitate Him as we take the spiritual journey towards the other.

For Christians Jesus is the ultimate sage, the sage of sages, and the model of all sages to follow. Christ also understood the importance of fellowship, and the dangers of attempting to pursue this quest on one's own. His wisdom shines through the Gospels as he not only instructs us how to live in relationship with one another, while also provides us guidance in how to grow in our relationship with the Other. One of the most importance directions He provided his followers as they matured and progressed in their faith way was that it should not be done alone. Jesus understood the dangers of temptation and the ease in which we as individuals can fall to these temptations. Consequently, He directed his followers to never venture out on their own. As is illustrated within the Gospels when Jesus sends them out to continue their quest and spread the truth they have come to embrace. He does not send them out alone, but rather he

²⁴¹ Jones, 71.

instructs them to always go with another. As the writer of Mark states, "Calling the Twelve to him, he send them out two by two..." (Mark 6:7). This sentiment is also illustrated in Luke 10:1 where it indicates that, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." Knowing that His followers would face turmoil as they ventured out on their mission, He provides them with instructions to ensure they are prepared and supported on their journey. As asserted previously when examining Campbell's hero's journey, the role of the sage is essential to completing one's journey. By traveling and following the directions of another, these individuals are not only able to support one another through the chastisement they will receive, but they also are able to assist their counterpart from deviating from their chosen path as well.

It is no surprise that Jesus would issue this directive to his followers as it is a sentiment that also appears in the Old Testament as well. The advice and guidance is not unique to the New Testament, but is also found within the scriptures that Jesus would have studied. We find the same type of advice being provided in the Old Testament as well, particularly through a passage found in Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes states, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up!"(Ecc 4:9-10) As we progress on our journey, we should reveal in the fact that others are willing to take this journey with us. We should recognize that support and accountability of another is vital to our success. During the times of need we can be assured that these individuals will pick us up when we fall and guide us back to the path that we may have drifted from.

It is important to recognize that no one is ever perfect and that despite one's intentions we will all make mistakes. Consequently, one will benefit from others assisting us as we attempt to navigate beyond these mistakes. This is true whether you are just beginning your journey towards the other, have been on this quest for some time, or even if you are leading and guiding others on their path towards this goal.

Even within religious orders, or amongst those that provide spiritual direction, the individual providing the guidance also receives guidance from another. While the role of the sage is to provide wisdom and direction to others on their journey, the true test of the sage who guides you, is if they also have an individual to direct them as well. This practice aides in keeping one's hubris in check and reminds one of the importance of humility. Like the Jedi who seek unity with the force, individuals on a spiritual quest desire unity with the Divine, and to live according to His will. In both case this unity is only achieved by recognizing, and moving toward becoming, the best version of who one can be, one's true authentic self. Obedience is key to this pursuit and a commitment to this pursuit is necessary if one wishes to discover and bring to realization their authentic self. Like the Jedi, those living within a religious community are obedient to another and make this commitment to the pursuit and discovery of the holy. They both embrace this commitment, the Jedi through their commitment to their Order, and the religious through their commitment to the Church. Making this level of commitment and living obediently to said commitment leads to wonderful and miraculous occurrences, just look at the lives of the saints who have been examined. When this occurs, one moves closer to the holy and further towards becoming their authentic self. This is the goal of every individual who partakes on a spiritual journey, and the Jedi are no exception.

Anyone, including the Jedi, who undergoes a spiritual journey is doing so because of their desire to find their authentic self. This journey towards one's true, and authentic, self is linked with one's quest for the divine. Only by discovering one's authentic self can one hope to live authentically and hope to complete their lifelong quest of unity with the Divine. It is this journey that Campbell illustrates through the continuous cycle of the hero's journey. For once one completes their journey, they immediately set out on a new one. Each journey bringing them closer and closer to the divine, His will, and one's authentic self. A self that is buried deep within and requires some direction and guidance to discover and live out. As Gilger plainly states, "Our authentic selves do lie deep within us. But it is a lie to say that our authentic selves require no formation, no accompaniment from wise mentors, to be realized."²⁴² If one is ever to progress toward their goal of authenticity they must recognize and embrace the importance of the sage for as Gilger emphasized there is no way to reach this goal if one does not turn to the wisdom and experience of the past sages. These sages of the past have done a great deal of heavy lifting for us. We should not overlook their sacrifices and accomplishments simply because one's prideful nature allows one to believe that they can complete this quest on their own. The reality of the matter, which has been asserted by Joseph Campbell and argued by Carl Jung, is that anyone undertaking a journey will require a sage if they wish to progress towards its completion.

Embracing this truth is the first step in progressing on one's journey and discerning who this individual may be. This discernment process will allow one to recognize their individual

²⁴² Gilger, 38.

calling and give them a glimpse into what their true authentic self looks like. Once this is recognized then the individual can embrace religious life, a life of ordination, or a calling to married or single life. In any, and all, of these callings a sage is essential. Within the religious life there is the superior who fulfills this role. An individual who receives the calling to priesthood also will be provided a mentor to aid them in adjusting to the life of a priest, and thanks to St. Ignatius this important role is now open to the laity through spiritual directors. Similarly, the Jedi also has this type of structure within their institution. Each Padawan is assigned a Master, who is responsible for training them and providing them instruction, in the hope that they lead them to become the best and most authentic Jedi they can be.

6.2 - From Myth to Truth, Bringing the Sage into Reality

The truth is, that once one begins this journey they will need to discover, and embrace, a sage if they wish to complete it. When one recognizes this truth, they should then recognize that they will also need to relent to their authority, and trust their guidance. Naturally included in this process is a passing on of tradition, and more importantly an expectation that this tradition will continue to be practiced. For these traditions are in place because they have been shown to be beneficial to those who have undergone this journey previously. Utilizing the language of authenticity Gilger expresses this truth stating, “True authenticity recognizes our connection to past traditions and the need to be formed within them, flawed though they may be.”²⁴³ One must recognize that this quest for the holy has been taken by individuals before us and therefore one should naturally follow their leadership if one wishes to follow in their

²⁴³ Gilger, 39.

footsteps. One should also recognize that while no system, or organization, is perfect it does not mean that we should reject them, or its traditions. In fact, when this institutions exists for themselves without a goal of wisdom that is greater than themselves they often fail. These traditions have been shown to generate success, and lead people towards their goal. While one can certainly point out instances where individuals abused their authority within the tradition this does not mean the tradition is flawed but rather the flaw was within the individual. An individual who apparently missed the meaning behind the traditions and did not embrace, and live by, the truth that is revealed through them.

The understanding that sages are not only valuable, but also vital, to one's journey is not something that one need recognize in theory, but it is something that one should recognize as an undeniable truth. Allowing one's arrogance to convince them they can take this journey on their own is a fallacy that religious leaders and communities have consistently warned sojourners about. It is a truth that one finds hidden within our subconscious, and is found to be a universal truth within humanity's collective unconscious. The dangers of avoiding this truth are real and are illustrated through modern myths such as *Star Wars*. It is for this reason that turning to myths such as *Star Wars* can have a practical application, and can be utilized to illustrate truths that are often otherwise difficult to illustrate.

Demonstrating this truth Timothy Jones compares the moments of his own personal downfall with that of Anakin's. One's arrogance in thinking they have no need for direction is reflected in Anakin's journey and in fact, as Jones illustrates, it is this embraces that leads to Anakin's demise. His arrogant refusal to accept the leadership and direction from his master in

particular, and the Jedi order, in general leads to him straying from the path. If he would have adhered to the traditions of the Jedi, which reflects the wisdom of the Bible, the Church, and the religious orders that have grown out of her, he could have avoided temptation, and false teaching that lead him always from the light, and into the darkness. Jones explains,

Whenever I embrace the lie that I do not need the guidance of my fellow believers, I – much like Anakin after his fall into darkness – am reduced to a mere fragment of what I was meant to be.²⁴⁴

One's quest towards the other is a quest toward a full understanding of who one is. We are all called to be the best version of our self and we must recognize that this version cannot be reached through prideful and arrogant means. It is only through humility, and the ability to take criticism and direction from another, that one can hope to progress towards the fullness of who they can become. By reflecting on Anakin's downfalls and shortcomings one can understand this truth in a manner in which will allow them to avoid these mistakes in one's own life.

Conclusion

In the past myths were consistently utilized to illustrate truths that are often difficult to relay or vocalize in another format. As emphasized by Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung, myths, and the hero's journey that are relayed through them, have important universal truths that are

²⁴⁴ Jones, 74.

difficult to illustrate and embrace in other mediums. One should not disregard the truth that is relayed simply because it is found within a mythological tale. As society progresses and changes with each age, so do the myths that are produced from them. These myths should not be ignored, nor overlooked, for these new myths offer us an updated version of the universal truths that have been presented through myths since the beginning of time. John McDowell understands this notion and the practical value myths have to us by emphasizing that,

...while myths are produced by the cultures in which they are born and they express their cultures' self understandings, they are also culturally productive, in that, if taken seriously, they can in turn shape our experience and impression of the world around us.²⁴⁵

When one comes to recognize that myths are a medium to reveal universal, and vital, truths to society, and are created to aid one on their own personal journey towards the other, and towards the best version of oneself, one must also recognize the value they have to society, and the individuals who live within society.

When one is able to recognize the value of myth one is then also able to fully utilize these myths as tools to illustrate the greater truths that are found within them. Additionally, these myths can be useful in aiding one who wishes to live by these greater truths as these truths are often illustrated in a manner that everyone can understand. *Star Wars* is a perfect example of one of these myths. In many ways this mythos is an untapped resource, and individuals could greatly benefit from embracing the truths that are revealed through them. As expressed by psychologists Susan Fiedman and Ryan Hall,

²⁴⁵ McDowell, 39.

Star Wars is a hero's journey with archetypal themes including finding one's place in the universe and dealing with loss. Despite other films' usefulness in psychiatric teaching, *Star Wars* has been relatively untapped...²⁴⁶

Star Wars as myth has some powerful and relevant truths that can still be utilized to aide others on their journey. The truths revealed through this mythos are better seen and digested through this format, and one should reflect on these truths to gain a better understanding of their own journey. Not only does one gain a greater understanding of their journey through these myths they also come to recognize the dangers one will face while traversing it. One of the most profound truths that is revealed through *Star Wars* is the need to be obedient to another. As illustrated throughout all of the *Star Wars* properties there is a need to embrace a mentor and their instructions if one wishes to be successful in completing their journey. Additionally, one must also be willing to relent to the authority of another, being obedient to them and the code they have sworn to abide by.

As has been illustrated through Campbell's hero's journey the importance of the sage cannot be overlooked. If one wished to compete their quest they must first meet, embrace, and follow the direction of the sage they encounter on the way. If one's desire to know and become one with the "Other" is truly altruistic they will be unable to complete this journey without their sagely advice, and one's ability to comply with said advice. For while one may not need the guidance of another if their desirers are earthly rather than spiritual, one most assuredly needs a sage if one's desires take them beyond just the physical. Timothy Jones asserts this truth emphasizing that,

²⁴⁶ Susan Hatters Fiedman and Ryan CW Hall, "Using Star Wars' supporting characters to teach about psychopathology" *Australian Psychiatry* Vol 23 No 4 (2015): 432.

You *don't* need guidance if your primary longing in life is to gain possessions or power. But if you desire something greater – something such as love, perhaps, or compassion or grace – the guidance of others is something that you simply cannot live without.²⁴⁷

As one proceeds on their quest toward the holy, they need to recognize that it cannot be accomplished without the aid of another. If one attempts to accomplish this alone, they will ultimately fail, like Anakin Skywalker did. One should not avoid the advice and direction of sages, but rather as illustrated through Campbell, the sage should be sought out before even beginning this journey.

The truth and relevance of the sage is something that has been established by Joseph Campbell, through the *Hero's Journey*, and shown to be a universal truth through Carl Jung's archetypes. Along with the relevance of the sage within one's journey, one also needs to recognize, and relent to their authority. As has been illustrated through the tradition of the religious orders and the rules that govern them, obedience is key to success. An analysis of the religious rules of Augustine, Benedict, and Francis has revealed that a cornerstone to religious life, and the foundation of a successful spiritual journey, is obedience. Only through one's dedication to this holy quest and through their compliance to the religious leader of their community is one able to progress on their journey. The spirit of these rules, their focus on obedience and direction from another, was embraced by St. Ignatius who exposed it to the larger lay community. Through his development of the spiritual exercised and the formation of spiritual directors St. Ignatius allows a broader audience to embrace the virtue of humility.

²⁴⁷ Jones, 66.

As mentioned previously pride is humanity's first sin. Our inability to relent control to another and believe that they are essential in aiding us on this quest for the Holy is what has continued to debilitate us from being successful. The structure provided by these rules creates a space of encouragement and trust that promotes growth of one spirit and leads them closer to the goal of authenticity. These rules, which are reserved for those who enter into religious life, have been shown to be successful. The freedom one gains by relenting control and embracing obedience allow one to focus on journeying deeper toward one's authentic self. This holy quest is hindered by a lack of guidance, along with one's inability to self-reflect and self-analysis. If one is unable, or unwilling, to let go of their own ego and hubris they will also be unable to progress on their quest towards its desired outcome.

As one's quest continues, they will face many challenges and trials that they can only hope to overcome if they follow the direction of their sage and surrender to their guidance and instruction. While it is recognized that we are all called to a relationship with the other it is also understood that not all are called to live this call out in the same way. Regardless of the call however we all need guidance when answering it. We will not all called to enter the priesthood, religious life, or married life, and some may feel the call to live out their life single, but however we are called, it is a calling that is never taken alone. Even the progression of religious life shows this development. We have seen through the growth of religious life the development of spiritual directors, and the how these directors are not solely for those in religious life, but for the laity as well.

The modern mythos of *Star Wars* illustrates this truth as well and can be another manner in which this truth can be illustrated. Emphasizing this truth through this medium can aide in its illustration and in some respects can relay this truth in an easily digestible fashion, one that practically all can embrace. We should not be afraid to utilize myths such as *Star Wars* to help illustrate these points, especially during a time when it is so pervasive in our culture. For as Anthony Digmann indicates,

Star Wars is the dominant myth of popular culture with many connections to the truths about Catholicism. We may use these similarities to speak with other hungry for the truth of the Gospel in a fun, enlightening, and non-threatening way.²⁴⁸

We live in an age where knowledge is only a few keystrokes away. When information is needed, we turn to Google, and trust in it to provide us with the answers. While this may be a viable solution when simply seeking facts, it certainly does not replace the wisdom we receive from another human being. As a result of a seemingly justifiable mistrust of the Catholic Church, along with other religious organization, we have developed the misguided belief that direction from another is no longer necessary. We are all spiritual beings so making the statement that, “I am spiritual” is a given. However, when one follows it with, “but not religious” they are asserting their pride in thinking that they have no use for the plethora of individuals who have already traveled this spiritual journey before them. The rules and regulation that have been constructed by the sages of the past have been put into place because the guidance they provide has been proved to be successful. Disregarding the wisdom

²⁴⁸ Digmann, 194.

of the past, and the direction of one's current sage, will only lead to failure. Failure that most likely has already occurred, and been overcome, by a sage of the past. It is the guidance of the sages in our lives that allow one to be more prepared for the challenges one will face on their quest. It is their continued direction, and the proof provided by the success that followed these directions that provide one with the hope that they too can be successful. For just like a Jedi without a master will undoubtedly turn to the dark side, the sojourner on a quest to the Divine will assuredly falter without a sage to guide them on the path.

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