

MILLTOWN INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

**TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY:
EXPLORING STRESS AND TRAUMA AMONG MISSIONARIES
IN MINISTRY**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
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Dedication

To my sister Anna Roche

Who died 5th December 2007

Rest in Peace.

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Ethical Statement

My main objective in doing this research was to explore a transformative spirituality for missionaries; a spirituality that would address the realities of their lived experiences of stress and trauma. The following are the key principles that I considered essential.

- The research group are missionaries.
- They were invited to participate in the research.
- They were invited to tell their stories through an in-depth questionnaire.
- Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were assured.
- Each participant was informed that the information gathered would be used for the sole purpose of this piece of research.
- The researcher takes responsibility to report the material accurately.
- The research is carried out under the supervision of Dr. Thomas G. Grenham.
- I abide by the policy of the Milltown Institute as outlined in the Student Handbook 2007-2008.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2007 a group of missionaries were asked what was their understanding and experience of stress and trauma. The following were some of the responses: fear, rape, feeling threatened, road blocks, armed robberies, culture shock, corruption, torture, natural disasters, anger, confusion, deadness, adrenaline buzz, racism, conflict, poverty, war and burn-out. This is the reality of the life of missionaries in the twenty-first century. Many missionaries are living and working in environments characterised by violence, disease, inhumane living conditions, social oppression and political corruption.

In focusing on this limited piece of research, which specifically addresses stress and trauma in the ministry of missionaries, I explore the contemporary context of missionaries and the environments in which they work. I portray, not only why it is important that missionaries have awareness and training in the management of stress and trauma but also how, in dealing proactively with these issues, they may be used as a gateway to renewal and a development of a transformative spirituality. A framework is proposed to facilitate an ongoing process for renewal and the development of a life-giving transformative spirituality.

In Chapter One, this dissertation looks at the historical and social context of missionaries by exploring the background to the missionary movement. Chapter Two reviews literature for the understanding of the concepts and theories of stress and trauma. To further the research, Chapter Three investigates the spirituality of the fifteenth century mystic, Julian of Norwich, as a model and guide for a transformative spirituality. A Biblical foundation for a framework of healing for stress and trauma in missionaries is offered. Chapter Four describes a small scale qualitative study. Chapter Five draws conclusions.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHANGING FACE OF MISSION

1.1 Introduction

I commence this chapter by exploring the missionary movement, especially in the last forty years, to paint a picture as a backdrop to the development of the theology of mission and to the missionary living in the contemporary world.

Michael McCabe writes: "It has often been said that what we are witnessing in the Church today is a paradigm shift in the understanding of mission."¹ He suggests that the vision of many modern missionary movements founded in the 19th and 20th Century, such as the Society of Missionaries to Africa, the Franciscan Missionaries, St. Patrick Society, Kiltegan and the Medical Missionaries of Mary was that they were commissioned to go to places where the Church had not yet been established. They were motivated to go to so-called "pagan" lands in a spirit of generosity and self-sacrificing love. McCabe claims that the approach of the missionary was marked by unshakable certainties and unilateral claims. He quotes David Bosch as saying that the modern missionary movement was a "child of the Enlightenment."²

McCabe writes that there are three characteristics expressed in this missionary movement that reflected the spirit of the Enlightenment: "the assumed superiority of Western culture; optimism about the combined progress of Christianity and Western civilisation; and a certain alliance with colonialism."³ Missionaries saw themselves working for God, rather than participating in the action of God's Spirit in the world. However, looking at the overall picture in the historical and cultural context, the missionary movement was a remarkable phenomenon which brought the Christian faith to peoples of many other cultures and religious beliefs. According to McCabe the tasks were clear and precise.

¹ Michael McCabe, "*Mission Ad Gentes – Looking at the Future: The Search for a New Vision.*" Available from <http://www.millhillmissionaries.com>. Accessed 13th January 2007, 1.

² David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 274.

³ Michael McCabe, "*Mission Ad Gentes – looking at the future: The Search for a New Vision*" Available from <http://www.millhillmissionaries.com>. Accessed 13th January 2007, 1.

They were the preaching of the Gospel; the conversion of individuals to Christ and their baptism into the Church; finally, the building up of the structures of the Church (as these had developed in their home countries) and the administration of the sacraments.⁴

1.2 The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

The 1960s ushered in dramatic changes in the Christian Church. The second Vatican Council called for a new vision in the Church; from the vision of converting pagans to Christianity; to the vision of having to struggle to promote justice, peace and the integrity of creation to the wider world and the commitment to interreligious dialogue. The agents of the modern missionary movement were mainly priests and religious. As a consequence of Vatican II, lay men and women were becoming more actively involved. There has been a slow process of change for the last forty years. McCabe observes that there "has been a highly significant shift in the global axis of Christianity."⁵ The Christian population of Europe and North America combined is outstripped by the number of Christians in the Southern Hemisphere. Missionaries are now coming from the Churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The membership from the Northern Hemisphere is dwindling. One of the reasons for the dwindling in numbers may be due to the influence of the second Vatican Council. However, there is a need for further research in this area. Some of the other causes may be due to sociological and cultural factors; the new movement of overseas development workers, the development of communications, modern technology, and travel.

To facilitate the new vision of Vatican II, new images need to develop both in the Northern and Southern Hemisphere. It is still the popular image of the people in the Northern Hemisphere that the missionary work consists of converting as many people as possible to Christianity or of helping the abject poor.⁶ However, according to Philomena Njeri Mwaura, Africans' image of missionaries is "all the foreign brothers and sisters

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶ See Triona Doherty, "Mission Possible: The changing face of 'the foreign' missions," in *Reality* (October 2007), 10.

living in our villages, working in hospitals, translating our Bibles and teaching women hygiene and sewing. They bring themselves and their money to run our churches.”⁷

Neither the Western image of missionaries going out, nor the African image of Europeans coming in, captures the reality of mission in the twenty-first century.

In this post-modern age it is hard to define the uniqueness of the vocation of missionaries. Recently, while visiting in a school, a missionary was giving an awareness talk on Mission to a group of children. He asked them did they know any missionaries? The answer was yes, they knew people working for Goal, Concern and Trocaire. Goal, Concern and Trocaire are Non-government Organisations (NGOs) who have people working overseas for development work. One or two children had aunts or uncles as missionaries. Development Workers and Missionaries are the same in the minds of the school children.

However, school children are not only the group who may have difficulty in defining the mission of the Church. At a meeting of an international congregation, missionaries were asked to divide up into groups according to their countries of origin. They were to reflect and portray their image of the congregation. One group of Irish missionaries gave the symbol of passing the baton over to a group of African missionaries. The response was “What are you passing over?” It was a powerful question and not easy to answer. In an attempt to respond to this question it is necessary to begin by defining the meaning of mission in the contemporary world.

⁷ Philomena Njeri Mwaura, “The Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel: Bearing the Witness of the Spirit Among Africa’s Gospel Bearers” in *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* Volume 24, No.2 (Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 189-213 at 190.

1.3 Definition of Mission

Mwaura claims:

Mission is the "cutting edge" of the Christian movement, embodying a way of life that refuses to accept the status quo and keeps on trying to change it, being pushed and pulled by the Spirit of God towards the dawning of God's Reign.⁸

On similar lines Sean Dwan writes a "missionary is someone whose personality, lifestyle, and work embody God's love for humanity and the world."⁹

Jesus Christ proclaimed his mission statement as:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. (Lk.4:18-19).

Jesus Christ was the Word made flesh and lived among us. The Word of God is ontological rather than verbal. Leo Kleden writes:

The heart signifies the core of the human person and *the mouth* refers to our ability to proclaim the word. The existential word of God is written in the very core of my existence and urges me to proclaim it just as "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps.19:1).¹⁰

A missionary is called to proclaim the Word of God with integrity and conviction. The contemporary missionary is challenged to live in solidarity with the people, to be compassionate to oneself and others through the implementation of an authentic religious interculturalism.

⁸ Ibid., 190.

⁹ Quoted in "Mission Possible: The changing face of 'the foreign' missions." in *Reality* (October 2007), 10.

¹⁰ Leo Kleden, "The Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel in Asia: The Narrative of Jesus in the Living stories of Asia," in *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* Volume 24, No.2 (Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 261-287 at 266 and 267.

1.4 Interculturation

Thomas Grenham states “Interculturation is a relational process in which every person has an opportunity to become more fully human: to become all that they are called to become.”¹¹ When a person is traumatized or exposed to trauma he/she feels overwhelmed and disconnected from themselves and others through numbness or feelings of anger, despair, and fear. Relationships are strained. Missionaries responding to the call of Christ “Go into the entire world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation’ (Mk.16:15) need to acknowledge their own pain and woundness. According to John Welch “a healer who admits being wounded can allow wounded people to find their own healing powers.”¹² Stress and trauma affects and disrupts a person’s way of being, the living out of one’s call of bringing the good news. Ann Belford Ulanov states “Even our personal faults connect, as if by a hinge, to the impersonal violence we do to each other.”¹³ One understands by this statement that if a person is feeling fearful, sad, confused or angry as a result of stress or trauma, this has a ripple effect on the people one is working for or living with.

1.5 Conclusion

To summarize this chapter I have shown, in general terms, some of the background to the context of being a missionary in to-day’s world. I have portrayed a picture of the missionary movement over the last forty years; the development in the new vision for mission in response to the call of the second Vatican Council. However, according to Mary Jennings mission work is both stressful and traumatic of its very nature.¹⁴ The aim of this study is to develop a life-giving transformative spirituality so that traumatic and stressful events of contemporary missionaries are acknowledged and integrated in a safe space. A spirituality that may renew the life of missionaries and others as Jesus proclaimed: “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full” (John.10:10).

¹¹ Thomas G. Grenham, “Interculturation: Transformative Action for Flexible Identity” in *Milltown Studies*, No.5 (Summer 2006), 41.

¹² John Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982), 12.

¹³ Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart, Opening to Aliveness, Deadness in the Self* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), x.

¹⁴ See Mary Jennings, *Review of IMU-REAP Programme* (Dublin: Irish Missionary Union, September 2007), 3.

One needs to look at the definitions of stress and trauma to have an understanding of the effects and reactions and their potential for renewal and transformation.

The next chapter reviews the relevant literature about stress and trauma.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: STRESS AND TRAUMA

2.1 Introduction

Stress is part of daily living. Without a certain amount of healthy stress one would not be able to function; we would not get out of bed in the mornings! However, there is an acknowledgement that in to-days world we live in the midst of increasing violence from war, drugs and acts of terrorisms or at least this is the implication from the blanket media coverage. In focusing on this piece of research, which specifically addresses stress and trauma in the ministry of missionaries, I research the writings, theories and concepts of stress and trauma. I portray, not only, why it is important that missionaries have awareness and training in the management of stress and trauma but also show that in dealing proactively with these issues they may be used as a gateway to the renewal and development of a life-giving transformative spirituality.

2.2 Definitions of Stress

The word stress is derived from the Latin word “*stringere*” meaning to draw tight. Stress is defined as any experience that puts a psychological or physical factor beyond its range of stability producing strain within the individual. Marjory F. Foyle writes “In order to help us handle stress we need to understand what it is, how it develops, why we react as we do, and how we can learn to cope.”¹⁵ In this practical and compassionate book Foyle explores the components of stress.

2.2.1 Components of Stress

First there is the event itself which is external to the individual and outside of personal control. When an event is outside one’s control one may become anxious. The second component is how one appraises the event. This appraisal of the event depends on one’s personal filter. Foyle claims that “the personal filter has many components such as family background and genetic influence, culture, personality, age, physical health,

¹⁵ Marjory F. Foyle, *Honorably Wounded: Stress among Christian Workers*, 2nd edition (USA: Monarch Books, 2001), 26.

personal experiences and personal values.”¹⁶ The third component is the coping methods employed to deal with the situation.¹⁷

2.2.2 Coping Methods

The first coping method according to Foyle is problem solving. One responds to the event. An example may be given of severe flooding where people organise themselves to ensure safety for themselves and families. The second coping method is palliation. She writes that palliation is

The things we do to make the current stress bearable. Withdrawal into helplessness is a great danger to us all, and we need actively to search for ways of palliation to enable us preserve our psychological integrity. Good methods include talking it over, taking advice, taking active steps to handle what is possible, leaning hard on God...finding something that you enjoy doing and if possible taking short breaks from the situation.¹⁸

On the other hand, one may develop what is called ‘the ostrich principle’ that is pretending the situation will go away if one does not look at it. To cope one may develop unhealthy patterns of behaviour such as taking drugs, or too much alcohol, or she claims “taking it out on everyone else by quarrelling and being difficult.”¹⁹ One of the signs that coping methods are beginning to fail is when one develops stress-related symptoms such as anxiety, depression or psychosomatic disorders. Some of the psychosomatic disorders are headaches, backaches, and gastro-intestinal disorders.

However, in her writings, Jennings notes that, among missionaries, even if the symptoms are recognised, one has the risk of being labelled as being difficult and not being able to cope.²⁰ She writes:

Time and again, people spoke of a ‘can do’ culture which either shrugged off the effects or sublimated them through a particular understanding of spirituality; these current conversations uncannily mirrored the findings of Robert Grant in his essay on *Trauma in Missionary Life*.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

²⁰ Mary Jennings, *Review of IMU-REAP Programme* (Dublin: Irish Missionary Union, September 2007), 7.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

2.3 Missionaries and Stress

In 1995 Robert Grant wrote that many missionaries are living and working in environments characterised by violence, disease, inhumane living conditions, social oppression, and political corruption.²² According to Grant "Trauma, by definition, involves experiences that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope and hence to make sense of certain life events."²³ As a result of these experiences missionaries suffer from a variety of psychological, physical and spiritual injuries. He says "in this light, post-traumatic responses can be seen as attempts to master feelings of helplessness, terror, and guilt."²⁴

However, Grant claims that missionaries are trained in their formation to be tough, striving to be good, sacrificing oneself and catering for the needs of the other. He writes:

Witnessing violence is enough to cause severe psychological damage and long-term health problems...Exposure to violence can destroy feelings of safety, justice, personal efficacy and faith in humanity; as well as beliefs in a just and loving God. Concerns about mission, vocation and personal sanity are other common side effects of continual exposure to trauma and injustice.²⁵

Nonetheless, Grant claims that being "unable to share feelings of rage, terror, and helplessness with understanding associates is sometimes more devastating than the actual trauma. Stifled despair is deadly."²⁶ Therefore, one could argue that missionaries who are unable to share their feelings of rage, terror and helplessness are lacking in coping skills such as problem-solving and palliation. There appears to be a lack of good practice of talking through events and finding ways to integrate and make sense of experiences.

²² Robert Grant, "Trauma in Missionary Life," in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XX111, No.1 (January 1995), 71.

²³ Ibid., 71

²⁴ Ibid., 71.

²⁵ Ibid., 72.

²⁶ Ibid., 73.

2.3.1 Different Types of Stress

Dr. Debbie Lovell-Hawker, a psychologist who works with returning overseas development workers in England, develops further the definition of stress. She divides stress into the following categories:

Basic Stress: (personal factors e.g. relative at home is ill; relationship problems).

Environmental Stress: (stress caused by a particular environment e.g. extreme heat; crowded accommodation; noise).

Traumatic Stress: (e.g. seeing a pile of dead bodies; encountering a landmine; being in a traffic accident).²⁷

In the context of missionaries one needs to explore more deeply the concept of **Basic Stress**. In regard to relationships, problems may be caused by tension among missionaries in the interpretation of the ways of bringing the “good news.” Some missionaries coming from pre-Vatican II formation training may see the bringing of the “good news” as converting as many people as possible to Christianity and bringing health and education services to the people. Other missionaries from a post Vatican II formation training are challenged to live in solidarity with the people; to be compassionate through the application of an authentic religious interculturalism. Both approaches are authentic but in different ways. The gap in the different formation trainings may also be a trigger to cause tension and strain in relationships among missionaries and co-workers.

2.3.2 Environmental Stress and Culture Shock

Missionaries have not only to adjust to a new climate, but also to the beliefs, customs, practices and social behaviour of a new culture. A person may find it a strain to make the necessary psychological adaptations. There is a sense of grief and sadness for friends, family, profession and possessions one has left in the home country. There may be confusion in role, role expectation, values, feelings and self-identity. One may be surprised the questions that will surface within oneself about one's culture. One may

²⁷ Debbie Lovell-Hawker, *Working through trauma: Supporting staff responding to disasters* (England: People in AID, 2005), 16.

experience anxiety even disgust and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences. One may become aware of one's own prejudices and racism, or the prejudices and racist attitudes observed among colleagues. According to Ann Hope and Sally Timmel:

Racism is revealed in attitudes, behaviour and systems in which one race maintains supremacy over another race. Human beings create and maintain the systems which, in turn, reinforce racism.²⁸

For missionaries it is the prolonged exposures to all of these types of stress which may lead to **cumulative stress**. If there is no intervention cumulative stress will influence whether an individual is able to cope or will move to a state of **burn-out**. This is a condition of chronic physical, emotional and mental exhaustion. A person may develop a negative self-concept and negative attitude towards work, life and people.

2.3.3 Traumatic Stress

According to Robert Grant "trauma involves overwhelming life-event(s) that render most people powerless and/or living in fear for their life."²⁹ It is an incident of stress that strikes "like a bolt of lightning" such as an experience of earthquake, road accident, or rape. The Greek derivative meaning of trauma is "to wound." When a situation is perceived to be life-threatening the mind and body mobilises a vast amount of energy in preparation to fight, flight or freeze. Grant claims that "trauma can shut down growth indefinitely on several, if not all, levels of one's being depending on age, maturity and type of trauma"³⁰ Shell-shock was a term used for soldiers who suffered from psychological and physical effects. They had invisible wounds from the war. Their bodies and minds were constantly on alert for bombs and raids. Physically they had returned from war, but psychologically and emotionally they were still responding to a war environment.

²⁸ Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers* (London: ITDG Publishing, 2000), 126.

²⁹ Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (California: undated), 10-11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

2.4 Symptoms of Traumatic Stress

Peter A. Levine, a leading author in stress research, explains simply and in detail the symptoms after an overwhelming event. Levine suggests three symptoms:

1. Hyperarousal: When the body feels threatened it instinctively releases a chemical called adrenaline to help us to defend ourselves. One may feel one's heart pounding, one's body perspiring, and difficulty in breathing, cold sweat and muscular tension. Levine observes that "it can also manifest as a mental process in the form of increased repetitious thoughts."³¹ One may feel one's body shaking, but when the threat is removed these systems should normalise and one can feel the relaxation of the muscles and the feeling of relief and safety.

2. Constriction: In a life-threatening situation the nervous system responds by constricting the blood vessels in the skin, extremities and internal organs; according to Levine "so that more blood is available to the muscles, which are tensed and prepared to take defensive action."³² The body posture is changed and is alerted. One may have a sense of being numb.

3. Dissociation and denial: Immediately after an incident a person may feel outside the event; they may deny that the event is happening. The denial and dissociation helps a person, according to Levine, to

"soften" the pain of severe injury by secreting nature's internal opium, the endorphins...We may deny that an event occurred, or we may act as though it was unimportant...Frequently chronic pain represents a part of the body that has been dissociated.³³

Levine is writing about symptoms after an overwhelming event. Missionaries are experiencing overwhelming events or the fear of them in the daily living out of their lives such as in Kenya and Pakistan. The body and mind never has an opportunity to relax and return to normal. One's body may adjust to the constant release of adrenaline. Adrenaline is a chemical and like all chemicals is addictive. There is a risk of a pattern

³¹ Peter A. Levine, *Healing Trauma: A Pioneering Program for Restoring the Wisdom of Your Body* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2005), 16-17.

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

³³ *Ibid.*, 18.

of behaviour developing not only for the individual but for the group of feeling comfortable only in emergencies; needing to be hyper-active all the time. Missionaries sometimes feel unable to cope with the routine of home-life after return from overseas.

2.5 Patterns of Behaviour

Each person reacts differently to trauma and reactions vary from one individual to another. The severity of the reactions may take time to appear. It depends on the person's character and vulnerability at the time. These symptoms are a perfectly normal consequence of trauma. An example is after a violent robbery, one may feel fearful, angry, and not able to sleep. The body may tense at every sound. They are normal reactions to abnormal events. They may last for up to a month after the event, and usually subside during this period. However, if one does not acknowledge these feelings, thoughts and sensations, the impact of the overwhelming event or events may impede further growth and development of a person. Bierens de Haan suggests that cumulative stress and trauma may change:

your attitude, imperceptibly towards the victims, your colleagues, and your daily tasks. Cynicism or bitterness may lead you to make sick jokes about tragic situations. Overworked or disillusioned, you have no energy to accomplish the tasks of which you are capable, and you no longer find pleasure in what you normally enjoy doing.³⁴

In this process missionaries may react and behave in various ways. They may either have the feeling of numbness or deny the significance of the event. They may have feelings of anger and look for someone to blame. Feelings of anger can displace guilt and anxiety. Or the feeling may be as Levine states:

Not quite right, without ever becoming fully aware of what is taking place; that is, the gradual undermining of our self-esteem, self confidence, feelings of well-being, and connection to life.³⁵

They may be experiencing nightmares, flashbacks, or intense emotional reactions to any event reminiscent of the trauma events, and may deny the severity of them. They may be

³⁴ Bierens de Haan, *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Guidelines: Humanitarian Action in Conflict Zones: Coping with Stress* (Geneva: ICRC publications, 1997), 13.

³⁵ Peter A. Levine, *Healing Trauma: A Pioneering Program for Restoring the Wisdom of Your Body* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2005), 9.

suffering from exaggerated startle reactions, and having sleep disorders. Depression and chronic diseases such as hypertension and auto-immune disease can occur. Some behaviour disorders may be manifested in dangerous driving, hyperactivity, staying too long in the workplace, including evenings and weekends, drinking too much, or inappropriate sexual activity.

Grant states:

Failing to receive support and understanding creates forms of neurosis known primarily by victims of serious trauma. Not being acknowledged for having difficult truths or for finding the courage to breach social denial-systems can be devastating. Failing to receive these validations leads to self-doubt, depression, mistrust of authority, social isolation and often illness. On the other hand, being a hero or genius usually means being able to go just beyond the tolerance of the average citizen.³⁶

Each person responds differently to trauma depending on the individual's frames of reference and meaning in life. The following may be some of the feelings that one may experience:

- Being overwhelmed, and not able to take responsibility;
- Shame and guilt at not being able to cope.
- Hostility towards leadership.

Some people may act out these feelings by being high controllers in a group.

Other people may react to traumatic events by being functional in his/her work. He/she may be praised for the great work they are doing. In responding to the praise they are only referring to the exterior for all of their actions. The inner life may be untouched. Similar to the other type of personality, controlling may also be one of their features. Gradually these patterns of behaviour may affect, not only the vitality of a person, but also the group. If a person fails to receive support and understanding these patterns of behaviour may lead to substance addictions such as drugs, alcohol, food, coffee, sex and nicotine. These may be used to help to block a variety of disturbing thoughts and feelings.

³⁶ Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (California: undated), 80.

2.5.1. Addictions

Grant says that as well as substance addictions there are process addictions such as “overwork, sex, compulsive praying, gambling, shopping and TV watching”³⁷ that can be used to deflect effects of trauma. These addictions are used as reactions against feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy. People use substances and activities to temporarily silence thoughts and fears that interfere with one’s ability to work, concentrate and sleep. According to Grant “addiction is a combination of a physiological predisposition and trauma, i.e. physiological abuse and reaction formation to trauma.”³⁸ It is a complex reaction between mind, body and spirit. However, Grant states that only human relationships, God and increased self-awareness can bring healing.

2.6. Vicarious Trauma and/or Secondary Trauma

One would often hear missionaries say “I don’t have trauma, it is the people I am working with have the traumatic events.” However, Grant claims that care-givers such as nurses, police, missionaries, relief workers are seriously affected by the injuries, stories, and struggles of those with whom they work. “Those who constantly bear witness to the wounds of others absorb trauma vicariously.”³⁹ Missionaries working with traumatised communities in countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, Chile, Peru, Burma, and Pakistan are in life-threatening situations and may experience the emotional, physical and psychological reactions similar to the people among whom they work. Judith Herman claims that:

Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition and memory...The traumatized people feel and act as though their nervous systems have been disconnected.⁴⁰

Trauma always means a loss. There are different types of losses; a loss of health, the loss

³⁷ Ibid., 80.

³⁸ Ibid., 63-81 at 81.

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁰ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 35.

of capacity to trust and to relate; the loss of the belief that "All is Well!"⁴¹ The self-confidence is lost; the belief in oneself to do a job well; the loss of meaning in life and trust we had in God. Grant states "the old self is wounded."⁴² However in every wound there is a call. The call is vague and complex. He says the call is "an invitation to transcendence and to the development of a progressively more integrated personality."⁴³

Many missionaries lose their fellow co-workers through violence illness and accidents. They lose the companionship of friends as they change ministries. Sometimes, they may be moved from one country to another country with a very different culture and environment. Unless one acknowledges the sadness, accepts personal vulnerabilities; recognizes that there is a need of forgiveness for oneself and others, one can carry bitterness and unresolved grief. Some missionaries returning to Ireland may not only feel sadness at the loss of their friends and ministry but may feel shame, guilt, blame and a betrayal of leaving behind unfinished ministry and a feeling of "letting down" their friends and colleagues. If one does not know how to facilitate change and transition a person may feel confused, disorientated and a reluctance to face the future. One needs to understand the process of transition.

2.7 Transition

William Bridges states that there are three phases to transition that one has to deal with. The first phase is the endings, the saying of goodbyes, and the letting go of friends and security. The second phase is a time of loss and emptiness. This is a time of winter, when every thing looks bleak and dark. A person may feel sad and disorientated. In this phase one may be tempted to return to the previous experience or make quick decisions. However, like winter eventually, if one has patience, glimpses of life will return like the first appearances of snowdrops and crocuses. Gradually the energies return and according to Bridges life "resumes an intelligible pattern and direction."⁴⁴

⁴¹Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (California: undated), 11.

⁴²Ibid., 63.

⁴³Ibid., 64.

⁴⁴William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (USA: Da Capo Press 2004), 7-14 at 16.

Sadly, the experience of transitions for missionaries can be a trigger for stress and trauma. Bridges notes that people talk about change but he explains that *change* is situational. According to him:

Transition, on the other hand is psychological. It is not those events, but rather the inner re-orientation and self-definition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes in your life.⁴⁵

Transition is a natural process of disorientation and reorientation. It is a process that needs space to acknowledge the turning points in a person's life to integrate experiences. According to Bridges, transitions are "key times in the natural process of development and self-renewal."⁴⁶ There is need for an ongoing process for endings, being in transition, before new beginnings can occur. Space needs to be created, according to Grant, so that "the most troubling challenges posed by one's wound can be addressed."⁴⁷ Otherwise, missionaries are living with symptoms rather than undergoing a life-giving transformation.

According to Paula Molloy "for those returning missionaries who have experienced persistent and prolonged trauma (and that is the majority) they need help to process and deal with the trauma."⁴⁸ Missionaries returning to Ireland need a process to enable them to disengage from their mission overseas as well as help them to integrate into Irish culture and society. However, if they do not deal with the trauma and its effects, integrating themselves will be more difficult.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed and discussed the writings, theories and concepts of stress and trauma in the context of the contemporary missionary. Through the writings of Foyle I have portrayed the components of stress, that is, the event, the personal reaction, and the coping methods. Through reviewing and discussing the writings of other authors, such as

⁴⁵ Ibid., xii.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (California: undated), 78.

⁴⁸ Paula Molloy, *Retuned Missionaries Desk: Report and Recommendations* (Dublin: Irish Missionary Union: October, 2005), 4.

Levine, and Grant, I have explored the different categories of stress which includes basic, environmental, cultural and traumatic stress. I have investigated the symptoms and effects of traumatic stress.

The physical wounds of trauma may be visible. However, there may also be invisible wounds which are more difficult to heal such as helplessness, sadness and anger. Grant notes that in every wound there is a call to healing. According to Grant "the healing process is based on the belief that one is capable of wholeness."⁴⁹ He claims that the spirituality that emerges out of trauma is both an internal and external process. It is a spirituality of compassion, liberation and peace. He states that those "taking up the path of healing become modern-day mystics who inspire the rest of humanity to keep reaching for wholeness and the spirit."⁵⁰

In the next chapter I explore literature to develop ways to foster a life-giving transformative spirituality in the life of a missionary.

⁴⁹ Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (California: undated), 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

CHAPTER 3

FOSTERING A TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

3.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I explore ways of how a meaningful transformative spirituality may be fostered in the life of a contemporary missionary. Firstly, I look at the meaning and understanding of transformative spirituality. Secondly, I investigate the spirituality of the fifteenth century mystic, Julian of Norwich, as a model and guide for a transformative spirituality. Karl Rahner writes that “the Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic’, one who has ‘experienced’ something, or will cease to be anything at all.”⁵¹ Thirdly, in order to develop a life-long learning continuum for reflective practices I offer Jack Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning.⁵² Finally, I propose a Biblical foundation for a framework of healing for stress and trauma in missionaries. I commence this chapter by writing an understanding of what is a transformative live-giving spirituality.

3.2 Transformative Spirituality

The word “spirituality” is used in various contexts and meanings in the contemporary world. Some people consider spirituality and religion to be one and the same while others are emphatic about the difference between the two. Religion according to *Learning in Adulthood* “is an organised community of faith that has written doctrine and codes of regulatory behaviour.”⁵³ Denis Robinson writes:

All Spirituality has its roots in the lived experience of God. For this reason Christian spirituality is primarily concerned with the awareness of and response to the invitation to enter into a personal and communal relationship with the Triune God who is experienced as actively and intimately present with us and all creation.⁵⁴

⁵¹ See Handouts distributed for “Issues in Mysticism” (MACS 24) class by B. Flanagan on 27th January 2008.

⁵² Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

⁵³ Sharan B. Merriam, Rosemary S. Caffarella, Lisa M. Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd edition (London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 200.

⁵⁴ Denis Robinson, “The Nature and Meaning of Applied Spirituality” in *Lamplighter: Exploring Spirituality in New Contexts* (Dublin: Veritas, 2004), 13.

In relationship to transcultural spirituality Grenham writes that:

intercultural spirituality encompasses a holistic approach to understanding deep human desires across every cultural and religious boundary...A holistic spirituality envisions that every person is an embodied spirit with a bodiliness that is crucial for uncovering a life-giving sense of the sacred.⁵⁵

Transformation is defined by James Loder as follows: "when within any given frame of reference hidden orders of meaning and coherence arise to call the axioms of that frame into question and reorder its elements accordingly, transformation has occurred."⁵⁶ A crisis or a problem occurs to challenge a person's assumptions and beliefs. For transformation to take place a person has seriously to reflect on the problem and make choices and commitments to change. In the previous chapter missionaries are portrayed as working and living within stressful and traumatic environments. A traumatic event is capable of wounding and piercing physical, psychological, social and spiritual defences. These experiences may disconnect a person in one's relationship with self, God and others.

Jane Maynard was an AIDS Chaplain in San Francisco. In the nineties she was feeling the effects of burn-out. She felt "a loss of vitality and hope accompanied by the sickening sense that life itself is dying amid the encounter with relentless death."⁵⁷ She faced a crisis in her life. However, in reading the life story of Julian of Norwich she received new insights and hope. Maynard wrote that she found in Julian's writings:

A spiritual and theological framework compassionate enough to sooth my own painful experiences of suffering and loss and large enough to embrace the perplexing questions arising from this trauma.⁵⁸

Inspired by the vision of Julian, she continued to work with AIDS survivors. Maynard shares her insights and reflections in her writings of *Transfiguring Loss*.⁵⁹ She tells not

⁵⁵ Thomas G.Grenham, "Mutual Enrichment: Intercultural Spirituality in an Age of Cultural and Religious Pluralism" in *Lamplighters: Exploring Spirituality in New Contexts* (Dublin: Veritas, 2004), 73.

⁵⁶ James E. Loder, *Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 35.

⁵⁷ Jane F.Maynard, *Transfiguring Loss: Julian of Norwich as a Guide for Survivors of Traumatic Grief* (U.S.A., Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

only her own story of traumatic events, but also the stories of survivors of the bombings in USA on 11th September 2001, the tsunami in Asian in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005. She observes that taken together they capture certain emotional dynamics, such as helplessness, sadness, fear, guilt, disorientation and vivid sensory memories that are associated with traumatic events. Using the interpretative lens of the psychology of Robert Lifton,⁶⁰ Maynard shows how Julian's visions enabled her "to move from grief to hope as the pain of suffering and loss became transfigured through the presence of love."⁶¹

3.3 Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

Julian was born in 1342, in an era that could be compared to the twenty-first century with its wars, famine, plagues, and church scandals. Julian was a survivor of the Black Death which she would have experienced from early childhood. Maynard parallels the disaster of the Black Death to the magnitude of loss from the tsunami. Missionaries may compare these experiences to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Sahara Africa and the genocides in Dafur and Rwanda. She writes:

Julian may have experienced several psychological effects common to survivors of massive death: a sense of foreshortened future, a death-dominated life, unresolved or incomplete mourning, a restricted emotional range, and temptations to despair.⁶²

Julian and her contemporaries would have lived with dread about potential death from the plague in the same way as missionaries fear death in war and violent environments in the contemporary world.

3.3.1 The Visions and Reflections of Julian

Through her visions and reflections Julian believed that God's love is greater than the power of sin and suffering. By compassionately entering into the pain of Christ's crucifixion she experienced within it the triumph of the resurrection that transcends the

⁶⁰ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 302-5.

⁶¹ Jane F. Maynard, *Transfiguring Loss: Julian of Norwich as a Guide for Survivors of Traumatic Grief* (U.S.A., Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 89.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 88.

pain of suffering and death. She gained the insight and grace to confront death. She received a new sense of life's meaning and vitality which helped to reorder her emotions and imagery. It enabled her to reflect and write on her vision for herself and fellow Christians.⁶³ Julian's visions provided her with the means to confront death through recording and writing her experiences. The visions were the beginning of a healing path for Julian. She was reconnected to her belief in a loving God and to her fellow Christians. The transformation for Julian was from her resistance to look at the suffering of Christ, to an ability to consciously remain with Christ in His suffering. Maynard claims:

Julian achieved the symbolic immortality which Lifton states that survivors seek, for Julian emerged from her vision with Christ's assurance that she would not be overcome by sin and death. Freed from the anxiety about her death and salvation, Julian was able to devote herself as an evangelist to sharing the good news of God's love.⁶⁴

In reflecting on the experiences of Julian, missionaries, like Maynard, may find a spiritual and theological framework to give meaning to their missionary experiences in the contemporary world.

In the 21st Century, missionaries are called to proclaim the "good news" to a fast-changing world, which on the one hand, is a global village, with Internet and Web connections, and on the other hand, fragmented and divided between the rich and the poor, the developed and the developing countries. Susan Rakoczy writes:

Here the call is to dare the fullness of the journey to find one's true self in God, as Merton reminded us so often. Action without contemplation is rootless. What is the depth and richness of the soil in which grows the desire to transform the world of injustice? The unity between the love of God and the love of neighbour is precisely that, for one does not exist independently of the other.⁶⁵

However, people, respond to life-experiences differently, some are open to change, others resist change; for many change is uncomfortable. Maryanne Confoy writes:

People do not always move easily along the lifelong learning continuum. There is often greater resistance to the new in our inner world, as well as

⁶³ Ibid., 93.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁶⁵ Susan Rakoczy, *Great Mystics & Social Justice: Walking on the Two Feet of Love* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 205.

in our outer circumstances. When we are under pressure from the new and from the unfamiliar in our lives, we may be surprised to discover attitudes of resistance to change, of 'ghettoism', and of rigidity in ourselves as well as in our companions.⁶⁶

Regularly life's experiences do not immediately yield their true meaning. I offer Jack Mezirow's⁶⁷ theory of transformative learning as one way of developing a lifelong learning continuum. From this life-long learning process a transformative spirituality could be fostered. An integrative spirituality, according to Una Agnew is "to grow in holiness and wholeness in the various settings and contexts of life."⁶⁸

3.4 Development of a Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow argues that a disturbing fault line separates adult learning theories, from the actual practice of those who try to help adults learn. In other words, there is a gap between theory and practice. He claims that Psychologists, Linguists, Sociologists, Political Scientists and Philosophers often find themselves trapped within their own particular theories and paradigms. The missing dimension in theories is *meaning*. For Mezirow, "there is a need for a learning theory that explains how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experience."⁶⁹ Mezirow suggests a theory that would give a firm foundation for a philosophy of adult education which would seek to explain this new way of learning.

3.4.1 The Meaning Perspectives

In childhood one acquires culturally prescribed values and belief systems. One develops a frame of reference from the story of who one is. According to Grenham this story,

is shaped by family, school, and place of worship, media and the cultural and political environment of where I live. I become a self in relationship with others. I learn how to think, feel, and act in my environment. I learn what it is to be "religious", a Catholic Christian

⁶⁶ Maryanne Confoy, "Education for Contextual Mission" in *Reimagining God and Mission*, edited by Ross Langmead (Australia, Adelaide: 2007), 235-236.

⁶⁷ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

⁶⁸ See Handouts distributed for "Integrative Journaling" (MACS) class given by U. Agnew on 6 September 2006.

⁶⁹ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1991), x-xii at xii.

Irish and how this story is different from other stories. I inherit particular prejudices, biases, and assumptions about the world in which I live.⁷⁰

Therefore this can be the frame of reference or meaning perspective formed to guide the way one may think, or may not think, act, feel and react. From this world view, one perceives and interprets other cultural perspectives through one's own, often unquestioned, assumptions and beliefs.

For a missionary going to another culture the meaning perspective, is often not adequate to interpret the new experiences. He/she may become overwhelmed by the differences between the cultures. Not only is one experiencing differences in climate, but also in food, rituals, practices, symbols and images. These images, rituals and symbols give values and meaning to the local people, but may be challenging to the newcomer. An example of this is an Irish missionary nurse who went to Turkana, Kenya to develop a health service. She was trained in the Western model of a Health Services. Many times she felt overwhelmed by the needs of the people; the extreme poverty; the suffering of the people, the lack of basic needs such as water and food. However, she felt frustrated and angry by some of the rituals and practices she witnessed. One of these practices was the belief among the Turkana people that the first teeth of a baby caused illness. Therefore the grandmothers pulled the teeth out with a nail. Many healthy babies died from septicaemia as a result of the teeth pulling. This was a problem, as on the one hand, the local people believed that the practice of pulling teeth was for the good of the baby and, on the other hand, the missionary saw the devastating results. How was she to respond?

According to Mezirow, this experience may be called a "disorientating dilemma." The answer he proposes is a process of self-examination and critical assessment. He suggests building solidarity with the people and others for participatory research so as to discover options in new ways of planning and learning.⁷¹ In this way, the learning is not imposed

⁷⁰ Thomas G. Grenham, "Interculturation: Transformative Action for Flexible Identity" in *Milltown Studies*, No.57 (Summer 2006), 35.

⁷¹ Peter Jarvis, *Adult and Continuing Education: Theory and Practice* (Great Britain: Routledge, 1990), 103.

on the people but integrated through their own experiences. Mezirow gives a definition of learning as:

A process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience as a guide to awareness, feeling and action. There is much evidence to support the assertion that we tend to accept and integrate experiences that comfortably fit our frame of reference and to discount those that do not.⁷²

Patricia Cranton writes a further description of the development of transformative learning theory.⁷³ By carrying out a study of eighty-three women returning to college, she puts theory into practice.

3.4.2 Reflection and Transformative Learning

Mezirow suggests that reflective and transformative learning is the "cardinal goal of adult education."⁷⁴ Reflection is the central dynamic which brings about a change in one's frame of reference. The reflective process encourages a method to assess and reassess assumptions and beliefs. However, missionaries need to know their own stories before they can hold stories different to their own. Educator Linda Vogel writes:

When people have a strong sense of who and whose they are, they can be free to be open to those who are different. Fear cannot hold persons in bondage if they are secure about self-identity.⁷⁵

Part of the reflective learning process also, could be the acceptance of one's cultural and religious limitations; the importance of self-care in relationship to one's care of others. In Matthew's Gospel one reads "Love your neighbour as yourself" (5:43). From their formation background many missionaries may find this teaching difficult. Nonetheless, in following the footsteps of Christ, one is called to be vulnerable. One is committing oneself to an intercultural relationship. According to Stella Ting-Toomey:

Intercultural communication is viewed as a symbolic exchange process between persons of different cultures. The general goal of

⁷² Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 34-35.

⁷³ See Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 22-42 at 23.

⁷⁴ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 17.

⁷⁵ Linda J. Vogel, *Teaching and Learning in Communities of Faith: Empowering Through Religious Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), 10.

effective intercultural communication is to create shared meanings between individuals in an interactive situation.⁷⁶

According to Mezirow, an important aspect of the transformative learning process is memory. He says, "What we see now depends in part what we have seen in the past."⁷⁷ However, there also is a "contextual approach" to learning, memory and imagination which sees the experiences as events that have meaning as a whole. One way of gaining meaning and understanding of experiences is in telling the story. Many missionaries experience one crisis after the next. They do not have the time to reflect on their daily events. However if the frustration and helplessness is not addressed it may lead to cumulative stress and burn out. In remembering and storytelling a person finds meaning and understanding in experiences. Storytelling is an important tool for healing. Stories enable a person to reflect on their experiences. They further enable insight into the psychological, social, cultural, physical and spiritual aspect of the whole dilemma.

Throughout the Scriptures, there are many examples of story telling such as Elijah encountering God (1King19:2-21) and Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (Jn.4:5-42). The story of the two disciples going to Emmaus (Lk.24:13-35) is a classical example of story-telling. It is a framework that may be proposed as a foundation for the healing of stress and trauma in missionaries. In this context, I explore the story of the two disciples going to Emmaus through a biblical hermeneutical lens.

3.5 A Biblical Foundation for a Framework of Healing for Stress and Trauma in Missionaries

According to *The New Interpreter's Bible*⁷⁸ the story of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus may be divided into four movements. Firstly there is the meeting of the disciples with Jesus, secondly the conversation, thirdly the meal at Emmaus, and fourthly, the return of the disciples to Jerusalem.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communication Across Cultures* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 21.

⁷⁷ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 28.

⁷⁸ See R. Alan Culpepper, author of the "Introduction, Commentary and Reflections of the Gospel of Luke" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1X (USA, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 474-483.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 476.

3.5.1 The Meeting (24:13-16)

The two disciples were on a journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. In Jerusalem they had experienced a traumatic event with the crucifixion of their leader. They were followers of Jesus, but their expectations of Jesus as the Messiah, Redeemer of Israel, were not met. Similarly, missionaries' expectations are not met. The reality of a situation does not match the ideal. Many of their experiences are stressful and traumatic. The disciples were on their way to Emmaus, a safe place to escape.⁸⁰

The disciples were talking among themselves about "all that had happened" (v.14). They were discussing the events of the passion and trying to make sense of it. Missionaries regularly discuss and analyse events among themselves, but often they may reinforce the effects of the trauma. There is a need for an external intervention. The external intervention for the disciples was Jesus. He came and walked along with them. The disciples were talking about Jesus but they were so disturbed that they did not recognise him when he appeared. Numerous times missionaries are so immersed in the demands and activities of their ministry that they are not aware of the effects of the stressful environment they are living in.

3.5.2 The Conversation with Jesus (24: 17-27)

The two disciples "stopped short" when Jesus asked them what were they discussing as they walked. Luke gives a good impression of their body language when he says "their faces were downcast" (v.17). They were feeling depressed and sad. Cleopas, one of the disciples responded by saying to Jesus "You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening the last few days" (v.18). Jesus acknowledged their story by allowing them the opportunity to talk. He asked an open question: "What things?" Jesus encouraged them into sharing their version of the story. He listened while they spoke of their experiences of Jesus of Nazareth, and the hopes they had in him as the Messiah. However, they were now disappointed and confused. Two days previously the leaders had sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. Some women had gone to the tomb, and astounded the disciples by telling them that they

⁸⁰ Ibid., 476-477.

found no body but encountered two angels who said that Jesus was alive. The story of the empty tomb was confirmed by friends. One can sense the confusion of the two disciples. Missionaries similarly experience death and suffering in their ministry. When encountering the deaths of men, women and children the parallel feelings such as numbness and disbelief may arise. The disciples failed to recognise the Risen Lord. According to Denis McBride "the disciples are so obsessed with what has been that they cannot see what faces them."⁸¹

Jesus challenged them by saying to them that they "were slow to believe the full message of the prophets." (v.25). He begins the process of revealing himself and the meaning of the resurrection to the disciples. He took them on a teaching journey through the scriptures. In Jesus' story the experiences of the disciples are put into context of the scriptures. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment to which all Scripture points. However, even at this stage they did not perceive who Jesus was. They had some insights, for afterwards they would say "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked on the road" (V.32). Jesus "walked ahead as if he is going on" (V.28). The *New Interpreter's Bible* writes that this action of Jesus to walk ahead is significant theologically. It was a gesture that faith must always be spontaneous; a voluntary response to God's grace. Jesus did not want to impose on the disciples. However, the two disciples convinced him to stay with them. They offered hospitality and Jesus accepted.⁸²

3.5.3 The Meal at Emmaus (24: 28-32)

During the conversation on the road Jesus broke open the Scriptures for the disciples. In the blessing and the breaking of bread their eyes are opened. It is in the action of breaking the bread that Jesus true identity is recognised. "Their eyes were opened and they recognised him." (v.31). It was a sacred moment. Transformation occurred. They recognised the meaning of Jesus death and resurrection. They see the sufferings and death of Jesus not as a failure but the fulfilment of a divine purpose. They recognised the

⁸¹ Denis McBride, *The Gospel of Luke: A Reflective Commentary* (Ireland, Naas, Co. Kildare: Dominican Publications, 1991), 83.

⁸² R. Alan Culpepper, author of the "Introduction, Commentary and Reflections of the Gospel of Luke" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol.1X (USA, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 477-479.

Risen Jesus. The recognition of the presence of Transcendent Jesus healed them of their sadness and confusion. With a renewed sense of hope they returned to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place they had left; symbolic of the traumatic event. Now Jerusalem became the place to which they must return. Again it was symbolic of resurrection and hope.⁸³

3.5.4 The Return to Jerusalem after Healing (24: 33-35)

Luke tells us that the two disciples forgot about their caution of the dark of night. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy to proclaim the good news. They found the eleven apostles gathered together who proclaimed "The Lord had risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (V.35). The two disciples shared their experiences on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. In the recognition of the Risen Jesus their sadness and disappointment were transformed into joy and hope. By returning to Jerusalem they commenced the healing journey of their wounds.⁸⁴

In this story of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus Jesus gives us a model of an intervention for the healing of stress and trauma. This model maybe compared to forms of intervention that Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) carry out for their personnel. These interventions are known as debriefing sessions.

3.5.5 The Comparison of the Road to Emmaus and Debriefing

In many Non-Governmental Organisations there is a policy of debriefing after a critical incident. However, there is also a full debriefing of their personal and ministerial experiences when they return home on leave. The debriefing session involves a number of steps such as:

1. Creating a safe place.
2. Providing a trained facilitator.
3. Acknowledging experiences through the telling of one's story.
4. Facilitating a discussion to express the thoughts, sensory impressions and

⁸³ Ibid., 479-480.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 480-481.

emotions of experiences and events.

5. Highlighting the normal symptoms of stress and trauma.

6. Putting support systems in place at closure of session.

In comparing the steps of this framework with the movements of the story of Emmaus, there are number of similarities. Jesus debriefs the two disciples. He creates a space by travelling along the road with them. He facilitates them to share their version of the traumatic event in Jerusalem. He allows them to express their thoughts and feelings. In teaching and highlighting passages of scripture Jesus enables them to grow in understanding and meaning of their story. Their hopes were renewed through the interpretation of scripture and the breaking of the bread. They returned immediately to Jerusalem, and were able to share their news with companions who also had experienced the Transcendent Jesus. The two disciples were assisted on the journey to healing by the intervention of Jesus revealing himself. Isaiah writes "through his wounds we are healed" (53:5). Missionaries are called to be Disciples of Christ. Christ showed himself as the Wounded Healer; missionaries are called to be wounded healers to enable them to allow others to heal.

Jesus in the process of debriefing the two disciples was an agent of change and transformation. Debriefing, or formal story telling, may be used as an agent of change for individuals and congregations/organisations. Congregations/organisations could learn and make changes on the basis of what they hear during the debriefing session. However, one needs to remember the first priority is the confidentiality of individuals.

Many missionary organisations offer debriefing after a critical incident. For example, after a violent robbery, or sudden death of a missionary Critical Incident Stress Debriefers⁸⁵ are sent to help and support the missionaries. However, taking the findings

⁸⁵ See Jeffery T. Mitchell and George S. Everly, *Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): Group Crisis Intervention*, 3rd edition, revised (USA, Ellicott City, MD: International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc., 2003).

from the *Review of IMU-REAP Programme*⁸⁶ it is not in the culture of missionary organisations to have a regular personal and ministry debriefing of their members. Nonetheless, debriefing is a way of showing care and support for each other. Each time a person returns home a personal and ministry debriefing could be offered. Jesus showed he cared for the two disciples by listening and attending to their story. He helped them to normalise the present and to move on. In to-day's busy world, a sacred space needs to be created for dialogue where one listens to another's experience without judgement.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown an understanding of a transformative intercultural spirituality. It has explored the spirituality of the mystic Julian of Norwich. Maynard's book portrays that Julian's writings are still influential in the contemporary world. Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning is explored in the light of helping missionaries to transform frames of reference so as to enable them to work in solidarity with people. Story telling is an important component to Adult learning and also used in the scriptures to enable people to encounter God. The Story of Emmaus is presented as a Biblical foundation for a framework of healing stress and trauma in missionaries. This framework contains steps to healing similar to the steps in the debriefing process provided by NGOs. The debriefing process assists one on the journey of transformation and healing. Rakoczy writes that 'the journey of love is not to be "word of speech"

(1 John 3:18) and that:

While the service of the neighbour is a true act of love of God, it is not an explicit act without a living faith. Thus the activist is called also in the same dynamic: conversion, self-emptying, suffering, surrender, purification, the nights of seeking/losing/finding oneself in God – in the midst of the praxis of transforming love.⁸⁷

In the next chapter, through the form of narrative enquiry, I carry out a qualitative research on the actual experience of missionaries in the contemporary world.

⁸⁶ See Mary Jennings, *Review of IMU-REAP Programme* (Dublin: Irish Missionary Union, September 2007).

⁸⁷ Susan Rakoczy, *Great Mystics & Social Justice: Walking on the Two Feet of Love* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 205.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to provide a framework of understanding within which traumatic and stressful events in the lives of contemporary missionaries may be acknowledged and addressed. This framework would also facilitate an ongoing process for the renewal and development of a transformative spirituality. Robinson's definition that "all spirituality has its roots in the lived experience of God"⁸⁸ led to the choice of a qualitative research method. According to Bernadette Flanagan, a qualitative approach "offers the opportunity to explore in some depths and detail the sensibilities, hopes, values, beliefs or lived practices of a small number of people."⁸⁹ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley claim "The narrative mode, more than any other forms of self-reporting, serves to foster the sense of movement and process in individual and communal life."⁹⁰ For this dissertation the narrative enquiry is the qualitative method of research used.

This chapter will portray how a piece of qualitative research was conducted within the following framework:

- Data collection.
- Questionnaire.
- Ethical Issues.
- Participants.
- The findings.

⁸⁸ Denis Robinson, "The Nature and Meaning of Applied Spirituality" in *Lamplighter: Exploring Spirituality in New Contexts* (Dublin: Veritas, 2004), 13.

⁸⁹ Bernadette Flanagan, "Trailing the Spirit: An approach to Applied Spirituality Research" in *Lamplighters: Exploring Spirituality in New Contexts* (Dublin: Veritas, 2004), 89.

⁹⁰ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Ritual: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 4.

4.2 Data Collection

It was decided to send the questionnaire by email to twelve missionaries in order to research contemporary stories of people working in ministry worldwide.

4.3 The Questionnaire⁹¹

Thirteen questions were identified to allow the missionaries to tell the story of their individual missionary journey. The questions were open-ended and in-depth. In total ten responses were received which included five men⁹² and five women.⁹³ Their combined experiences cover the years from 1962 to present day. Their stories represent the four continents: Africa, Asia, West Europe and South America.

The individual countries that the participants worked in are various including Zimbabwe, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, The Gambia, Malawi, Republic of Benin, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mexico, Brazil, USA, Scotland, England, Ireland, Germany, and Pakistan. Seven have worked in three or more countries.

The response from the individual participants were returned through the following methods

- Seven responses by email.
- Two responses by post.
- One response hand delivered.

At times clarification was needed; this was facilitated through communicating via email.

The questions covered the following themes

1. The year of first assignment.
2. The countries they have worked/are working in
3. The preparation/orientation before going
4. The environment they worked/ are working in and events such as natural disasters, war, famines that have occurred/ are occurring.

⁹¹ See Appendix 1.

⁹² Male pseudonyms: Barnabas, James, John, Oisin and Philip.

⁹³ Female pseudonyms: Aoife, Orla, Rebecca, Ruth and Sara.

5. Images of Mission.
6. Mission Spirituality.
7. Infrastructure of support systems for continuum of care.
8. Recommendations for support systems for the continuum of care.

4.3.1 Ethical Issues

A letter was designed inviting people to participate in the research.⁹⁴ Each participant was assured of confidentiality. Furthermore participants were informed that the information gathered would be used for the sole purpose of this piece of research. The participants were invited to give their own pseudonym if so desired. All participants are known to the researcher through participation in one of the *IMU-REAP* workshops. The purpose of these *IMU-REAP* workshops is to promote awareness and education with regard to stress and trauma among missionaries. Furthermore, all participants have dealt cognitively and affectively with stress and trauma. They have the skills and the support they may need.

4.3.2 Selection of Participants

The participants were identified with the following criteria:

- Awareness and education in stress and trauma.
- The stories would represent actual lives of missionaries worldwide.
- The questionnaire was sent to missionaries ranging from those who went on their first assignment in 1962 (pre-second Vatican Council) to missionaries going on their first assignment in 1997. This facilitated the research in tracing the missionary movement and trends that evolved in the past forty years.

4.4 Findings and Discussion

Each participant wrote that they experienced:

- Extreme poverty.
- Famine.
- Diseases especially cholera and HIV/AIDS.

⁹⁴ See Appendix 11.

- Four lived in war situations, such as Sierra Leone, Biafra, Zimbabwe and Pakistan.
- Three other participants wrote about political violence.

Rebecca writes “within the last 48 hours we had 30 people murdered, our neighbourhood is always the hot spot!”

Natural Disasters such as earth tremors, volcanoes, drought and hurricanes are part of the fabric of the lives of six participants. Each participant had experienced events which, according to Grant, “may overwhelm an individual’s ability to cope and make sense of certain life events.”⁹⁵ In his writing of *Transformation Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Mezirow would name these events as disorientating dilemmas; experiences that may cause confusion and upset because they are outside one’s frame of reference of how the world is perceived.

In exploring deeper the stories of missionaries participants tell of the impact of poverty, war, and diseases have on their daily lives. Aoife writes of the traumatic events of the cholera epidemics in Malawi and the lack of medical supplies. Sara says that it was not “easy to live during the dictatorship era in Malawi...people were murdered, vanished and knowing one was watched and followed by CID (Secret Services).” Ruth had to travel regularly to the “nearest town to get supplies in convoy with armed soldiers...I did not feel safe all my time there.” She was in Zimbabwe. Orla was present in Nigeria when the Biafra War broke out. Oisín and James write of the extreme poverty and political violence in Pakistan. In 1995 Rebecca was sent as a postulant to Uganda which she found very stressful. She said the HIV/AIDS experience was “all new to her.” There appears to have been no awareness or education about the environment in which she was going to live and work.

⁹⁵ Robert Grant, “Trauma in Missionary Life,” in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, January 1995, 71.

4.4.1 Orientation and Preparation before going out

Four had no orientation or preparation before leaving for their missionary assignment. Five mentioned their professional and religious preparation such as Tropical Medicine, Theology, Missiology, and Anthropology. James completed a three weeks religious dialogue course and John says he “had training around culture shock, and attended summer school in Islamic Studies in Rome.” Two mentioned a personal talk with Superiors before going out. Overall this inadequate briefing is the common theme cited by all of the participants.

It is surprising that John is the only person who writes about orientation to a new culture. However according to Foyle in her research she also found this lack of preparation and orientation. She observes that several missionaries wrote “their dismay at finding that nothing at all had been arranged for their introduction to a totally different country.”⁹⁶ Adjusting to a new country, with its own culture, beliefs and value systems may also add to the stress of missionaries.

4.4.2 Images of Mission

Tracing the images of mission ranging from Ruth’s image in 1962 to Aoife’s image in 1997, there is a change of language and the development of the understanding of mission. However every participant had the image of going out to serve. Ruth writes “I imagined it was about sacrifice – giving my life to the missions...I understood I would never get home again...I was idealistic.” Aoife, on the other hand writes that her image was “Going out to serve, to liberate, to be a saviour, to be another Christ. It had to be another country, a foreign land.” John in 1978 says “Initially it was very “church” orientated. Then after more than four years of theology it was more kingdom/reign of God orientated.” In 1980 Philip’s image was based on a “liberal formation very much geared to Liberation Theology.” His congregation had “taken on the attitudes of Vatican II but principally it was the extension of the Catholic Church and the sacraments that I was geared to.” However tension arose between his formation and image of mission and the

⁹⁶ Majory F. Foyle, *Honourably Wounded: Stress among Christian Workers* (USA, Illinois: Monarch Books, 2001), 80.

local church's image. John had the same frustrations; he said that he found the local church "to be very traditional which I found alienating."

Nevertheless, from their lived experience of mission, each participant changed their image. Orla notes her change as a "greater realisation of receiving as well as giving." Many of them spoke of the sense of sharing and being partners rather than giving. Ruth writes "these people have shaped my life; taught me how to live in the present, to be patient and to hope again in the face of suffering and death." Aoife's image of being sent remains, but, "it may be one's country of origin and may not be." Rebecca sees "helping the poor is still of value, but needs to be clarified and qualified. It is not realistic to think that the carer has a twenty-four hour shift...would have been my ideal...The guilt complex is strong in us." James sees his image with "greater emphasis on the personal and communal." These experiences and reflections influence their spirituality of mission.

4.4.3 Mission Spirituality

Aoife observed that in the beginning her spirituality "depended a lot on her strength and skills...it became clear that I am only an instrument so I had to allow God to use me for his people." Four participants' spirituality is seeing God's presence in situations, peoples, places and creation. Ruth knows she is loved by God, has an intimate relationship with Christ and a deepening knowing of self. John was influenced by the Indian theology and spirituality, "but the pressures of the place and the group often forced me into survival mode." According to Oisín mission spirituality is the approach of inculturation and liberation. Rebecca "has become more reflective and sees a continuously growing need to explore the missionary question and dare to ask, why we are here?"

4.4.4 Infrastructure and Support Systems for Continuum of Care

Robert Grant wrote in 1995 "The debriefing of missionaries returning from extended tours of mission work is often a pro forma exercise."⁹⁷ He hoped through his writings to

⁹⁷ Robert Grant, "Trauma in Missionary Life," in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 January 1995, 72.

provide “a framework with which to make sense of and thus to deal with the destructive effects of unresolved trauma.”⁹⁸ I explore through the questionnaire the present day infrastructure of support.

4.4.5 The Support Systems on Mission

Physical:

Seven participants said that the living accommodation was good or simple and adequate. Three had to work to build up security and water supply. During drought periods water supply is low. Security is not a reality for Rebecca because of the high level of violence. Orla said they had medical care.

Social:

All had worked for a time in rural and remote areas. There is very little social support. Sara at one time working in a city found support among an international group of missionaries and lay volunteers. Four participants found friendship among the local people.

Spiritual:

Eight participants were supported by personal and community prayer. Retreats and days of reflections helped. John was inspired by the faith of the people. Barnabas was “nourished by working with the Ethiopian Church.” Three people mentioned the support of Spiritual Directors. However, Sara claims that since the 1990s missionaries have decreased in numbers and it is becoming more difficult to get a Spiritual Director.

4.4.6 Coming on Home Leave

Six participants said they had no debriefing from a member of leadership or any member of their congregation. Four had informal talks such as Oisín who writes that one Irish Director invited “him in for a chat ... It was not formal but it helped me understand the turmoil of my life in Pakistan.”

⁹⁸ Ibid., 71.

4.4.7 Transitions

The majority of participants had found changing country and community difficult. The reasons were varied. Oisín's transition to Ireland was self-directed and consequently he felt he did not receive much support. Aoife writes that she "carried a lot of pain from my first mission to the new mission...One of the effects was the fact that I cried uncontrollably after each death I witnessed in my new mission." Orla had a "sense of losing deep roots in Nigeria." Philip felt that "he was pushed out." Both Barnabas and James found little acceptance or acknowledgement in the new communities. John observes transition to a new country difficult and challenging and then returning home traumatic. He moved from one leadership team to another "without a needed sabbatical...but with the missionary "can do" spirituality, I went for it again with gusto." This "can do" culture was observed by Jennings among missionaries in the *Review of IMU-REAP Programme*.

Oisín, John and Barnabas note that the *IMU-REAP* programmes and transition courses were excellent with regard to self-understanding. Both Barnabas and John have continued training in order to facilitate debriefing and transition. One is reminded of Bridges' claim that change is not only an outside event but at a psychological level there is also a need for inner-orientation and self-definition.

4.4.8 Coming Home for Ministry

Six participants responded to this question. Two of the participant, such as Orla and Ruth, had decided themselves to come home. They found it easier than John and Barnabas who were called home to leadership. Ruth had time to put closure on her ministry. Sara came home sick. However she had the opportunity to return to Malawi to say "goodbyes" which was helpful.

Home to Ireland

Adjusting to the new culture in Ireland has been difficult for James, John, and Barnabas. James has the sense that he is "doing 'less' important work whereas on mission it was

doing essential works such as saving lives, protecting the vulnerable, and healing the sick.” Ruth has fears about the future.

The Support System

The experience for Sara has been good. She has friends both in her religious community and family. The *IMU-REAP* programme helped her in the process of returning home. However, Barnabas and Ruth write that they had a lot of “finding out” to do for themselves. They had left their friends and supports in Africa. Although people are welcoming, the sense is that returning missionaries feel “abandoned and directionless.” (Ruth).

4.5 Reflecting on their own experiences, what suggestions could they offer that would be helpful for the future?

All the participants responded to this question with the following answers:

Preparation before going on Mission

The suggestions for preparation before going on mission may be put into a nutshell by James who recommends “a pre-mission tour orientation, where the missionary can express their expectations and motivation for mission; be taught about self-care and also be made aware of possible exposure to culture shock, stress, trauma and their subsequent reactions.”

Between Mission Tours

Each participant wrote that debriefing is essential between mission tours. However, Rebecca stresses that during mission tours:

emphasis could be given to actually work at issues and trends, perhaps even compulsions, and hurts, true wounds and trauma. I got counselling...but only as an individual, we need to talk as community and not just talk but do workshops together. All of us are traumatised and each time something happens, it is triggered off again, some flee, others deny, others fight, others make light of it and to numb, others overreact.

In the above statement Rebecca encapsulates the effects of stress and trauma on the individual and on the community.

Ruth writes that it is important, in a crisis, to have a “policy in place and named persons whom they can contact immediately and for later, names of appropriately qualified persons who can offer more professional help.”

According to Sara “debriefing should be mandatory otherwise some of us may feel we do not need it and we are deceiving ourselves a lot of the time.” James claims “it would motivate them to keep their spirit for mission fresh.”

Oisin gives an example of a missionary congregation in USA, Maryknolls, who have used the services of a Formation Consultancy in debriefing for a few days between tours. He says “it gives a chance to express the inexpressible, or just get out what needs to be expressed or verbalised.”

Returning Home for Ministry

All the participants agree that returning home takes time. It starts before coming home, taking time to dialogue with the local community, saying the goodbyes and putting closure on the present ministry. Barnabas suggests it may take six months to reintegrate. This time, according to Orla, has to be adequate “to process one’s experiences and re-orientate oneself...to facilitate creative engagement in the new situation.” Oisin recommends that a service is needed to “listen in a structured way for missionaries who return home.” A holistic support system such as physical, psychological, and spiritual services is suggested.

4.6 Conclusion

Through the narrative mode of research the journey of ten missionaries has been told. The movements of missionaries have been traced from the beginning of their first missionary journey to the present day. The questionnaire identified the vulnerable times in the life of a missionary. Such as their first assignment, the environments they worked

in, changing mission, country or community, between mission tours and returning home to Ireland. Through their responses stories have been told of the reality of mission; the times they felt support or lack of it. From their experiences the participants have made recommendations for a foundation or a framework to facilitate on-going support. In conclusion, one is reminded of St. Bernard of Clairvaux⁹⁹ who wrote that when it comes to spirituality everyone must know how to 'drink from their own well.' By drinking at their own wells the missionaries have shared their spirituality which has its roots in the lived experience of God. Missionaries have to learn how to dig their own personal wells deeper in order to drink more deeply. There is evidence of a need to do "inner work" so that one can experience a greater sense of personhood. This aspect is often missing from on-going formation training.

In the next chapter I draw a general conclusion to this piece of research.

⁹⁹ Quoted by Gustavo Gutierrez in *We Drink from our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Matthew J. O. Connell, with a preface by Henri J.M. Nouwen (Maryknoll, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), cover page.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The aim of this limited piece of research was to explore, analyse and contextualise a life-giving transformative spirituality through exploring stress and trauma among missionaries in ministry. In order to do this, a literature review was carried out to define contemporary Christian mission and to outline theories and concepts of stress and trauma in the context of the missionary.

A common theme that was discovered in the literature review was the significant gap between theory and practice in the understanding of stress and trauma and the effects they have. Grant¹⁰⁰ and Jennings¹⁰¹ document that stress and trauma is an integral part of the work in the life of a missionary.

Grant claims that trauma, by definition, involves experiences that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope and hence to make sense of certain life events. The question may be asked how one really prepares for the violence and traumatic events that missionaries are experiencing? Foyle¹⁰² and Mezirow¹⁰³ present theories that could be helpful in the development of a framework for a continuum of care throughout the life of a missionary. In describing the components of stress, Foyle offers practical skills of problem-solving and palliation for coping. According to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, the missing dimension between theory and practice is *meaning*.¹⁰⁴

Through the qualitative research presented, it emerged that the participants found attending programmes such as the *IMU-REAP* and *Exploring Transition* were helpful with regards to self-understanding. However, at present, there appears to be no life-long

¹⁰⁰ Robert Grant, "Trauma in Missionary Life," 1995.

¹⁰¹ Mary Jennings, *Review of IMU-REAP Programme*, 2007.

¹⁰² Majory F. Foyle, *Honourably Wounded: Stress among Christian Workers*, 2001.

¹⁰³ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, 1991.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

continuum of support. Six of the ten participants had no debriefing with a member of their congregational leadership. Four had had informal sessions.

Similar to Grant's research all the participants had experienced living and working in areas characterised by violence, disease, social oppression and political corruption. All had experienced stress and trauma. Their stories mirrored the story of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. They expressed sorrow and disappointment comparable to the disciples. Aoife carried a lot of pain from her first mission to the new mission. She could not understand why she cried uncontrollably after each death. Philip brought resentment and anger to his new mission due to lack of understanding as to why he was moved. He felt he was "pushed out." Rebecca describes a pattern of behaviour that may develop after a traumatic event. She writes that after each traumatic event, such as a shooting, some people flee, others deny, others fight, others make light of the event to numb their feelings, and others react. Ruth felt "abandoned and directionless."

These participants reflect the loss, anxiety and depression that Grant says is in every trauma or wound. However Grant claims that in "every wound is a call."¹⁰⁵ The call, according to Maynard, is an "attempt to integrate the new understandings of life and God wrested from their traumatic experiences into their everyday human experiences."¹⁰⁶

Each person's journey is unique. The process modelled by Jesus could be a powerful tool in the healing journey of trauma for contemporary missionaries. In proposing the Biblical foundation in conjunction with the theory of Mezirow for life-long learning and reflection, I have created a specific structure for healing. This structure could give a framework for support and reflection at the key moments of transition in the life of a missionary. The framework could supply knowledge and skills for grounding in the personal experiences of trauma, such as teaching coping skills and reviewing life in relation to new knowledge. Renewed by the healing of their own wounds the

¹⁰⁵ Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation*, (California: undated), 63.

¹⁰⁶ Jane F. Maynard, *Transfiguring Loss: Julian of Norwich as a Guide for Survivors of Traumatic Grief* (U.S.A., Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 143.

missionaries could return to stressful and traumatic places again to share their stories of the good news. There is a paradox in the healing of trauma. Similar to the story of Julian of Norwich and the two disciples, one has to consciously move through the experiences of the destructiveness of trauma (death) to gain new life. This is the call of the wound. Each person is called to experience their own wound. In healing one's own wounds one is also enabling other people to heal their wounds.¹⁰⁷ Each is called to a new way of being. With the eyes of Faith every person has the opportunity to follow Christ in the Paschal Mystery; to be Christians of the future as suggested by Karl Rahner; a Christian who knows and experiences the life, suffering, death and resurrection of God incarnate.

I have shown that a life-giving transformative spirituality can be developed in acknowledging and appropriating traumatic and stressful events. Through the literature review and the embodied qualitative research I have portrayed that stress and trauma may be a gateway to renewal. Perhaps a more in-depth research in fostering a life-giving transformative spirituality which explores stress and trauma among missionaries would further advance putting theory into practice of the support mechanism for missionaries in these challenging times.

¹⁰⁷See Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972).

APPENDIX 1
QUESTIONNAIRE

(NB. All information will be confidential. Names will not be used in the research).

1) What year did you go on your first missionary assignment? _____

2) What countries have you worked/ are you working in? _____

3) What preparation/ orientation had you before going?

a) Within congregation/organisation? _____

b) APSO/DTALK? _____

c) Others _____

4) Before going out what was your image of mission? _____

Has the image changed? _____

If yes, explain: _____

5) In the countries you worked/ are working in what (if any) of the following situations were/are present?

War: _____ Famine: _____ Extreme Poverty: _____

Natural Disaster such as volcanoes/hurricanes/other: _____

Pandemics such as Cholera, HIV/AIDS/other: _____

Political Violence: _____

Refugee Camps: _____

Famine Camps: _____

6) Did/Do you work in rural Areas or urban Areas? _____

7) On mission what supports and resources did/do you have?

- a) Physical e.g. housing, security, water: _____
- b) Social such as friendship/recreation: _____
- c) Spiritual, give examples: _____
- d) Emotional, give examples: _____

8) What is your mission spirituality? _____

9) Has your spirituality changed during missionary experience? _____

If yes, give a short explanation of how it has changed: _____

10) Coming on Home Leave: Was there a debriefing session (a formal session of how the experience of mission was for you) with a member of your leadership? _____

11) Transitions:

If you changed mission or ministry or community, how did you experience the transition?

Good: _____ Why: _____

Not so Good: _____ Why _____

12) Between mission assignments did you have a debriefing session? _____

If yes:

- a) Explain a little about the experience of debriefing?

Who debriefed you? _____

i) The congregations/organisation? _____

ii) Outside agency e.g. Concern/Goal? _____

b) Was it helpful or not helpful? _____

Explain: _____

13) Coming Home:

a) How was it for you?

Easy? _____ Why? _____

Difficult? _____ Why? _____

b) What preparations had you before coming home? _____

c) What supports had you when you came home?

i) Physically: _____

ii) Socially: _____

iii) Emotionally: _____

iv) Spiritually: _____

14) Reflecting on your own experiences what suggestion could you offer that would be helpful for the future?

a) Before going on mission: _____

b) Between mission tours: _____

c) Returning home on mission: _____

Thanking you for completing this questionnaire. Please return to the following email:
ritakell@gofree.indigo.ie before Tuesday 26th February 2008.

APPENDIX 11
LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear

Greetings.

I am writing a research paper for MA in Christian Spirituality in Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Dublin. My thesis is *Towards a Transformative Spirituality: Exploring Stress and Trauma among Missionaries in Ministry*. I would like to invite you to be a participant in the research. I know your contribution will be very helpful.

I am attaching a questionnaire. Copy and paste it to Word. Send the completed questionnaire by attachment to the following email address: ritakell@gofree.indigo.ie

I assure you of confidentiality. I will use a pseudonym; if you wish you can suggest one to me!! The information you give me will be used only for the purpose of this research. I will keep you informed how your contribution will be used.

If you wish for any clarity, please contact me in the above email or by telephone:
Mobile: 086 101 3367 or Home: (01) 4925263.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

With every blessing,

Rita Kelly.

APPENDIX 111
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this project is to develop a new integrative approach to missionary spirituality so that the experience of stress and trauma may be seen as transformative.

Who is undertaking the study?

Margaret Kelly.

Who is involved in the study?

I invited 12 missionaries to participate in the research. 10 people responded to the invitation.

What is involved in participating in the study?

I sent each missionary who responded to the invitation an in-depth questionnaire.

Will the information you give in the study be confidential?

Yes, I informed each participant that their names would not be used. Their contributions were for this research only.

Contact details

Researcher:

Margaret Kelly. Email address: ritakell@gofree.indigo.ie

Course Director:

Dr. Michael O'Sullivan. Email address: mosullivan@milltown-institute.ie

Thank you for your help and for taking time to consider participating in the study!

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