

*“Whatever you have to do, let it all be done in the Word of the
Lord”*

**An Examination of Christological Allegiance and the Word of
God in the Spirituality of the Rule of Carmel.**

Kevin Melody O. Carm.

Heythrop College, University of London.

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Introduction.

Written some 800 years ago, the Rule of Carmel continues to influence the spirituality of numerous people across the world – friars, nuns and sisters, and lay people all make up the Family of Carmel. It is an influence that neither its author nor anonymous recipients could ever have imagined – the Rule was written by Albert, Patriarch of the Church in Jerusalem and given to a group of hermits living on the side of Mount Carmel in Northwest Palestine sometime between 1208 and 1214. It was later mitigated for the mendicant lifestyle in a European context by the year 1247.

A recent estimate is that some fifty thousand people follow the Rule of Carmel in their daily lives; in some way or other it serves as the basis of their spirituality (cf. Waaijman, 1999:13). The purpose of this paper is to examine and evaluate what I consider to be the primary characteristics of the spirituality of the Rule: allegiance to Jesus Christ and fidelity to the Word of God.

To this end, part one will examine the history of the Rule and the process by which it came into its current format. Important elements in this process will be identified and held for further analysis. Following on from this historical section will be a more theoretical consideration of the relationship between spirituality and theology with the intention of showing the necessary link between the experiential component of spirituality and its translation into theological reflection.

Part two will take a closer look at some elements within the Rule of Carmel itself, to further expand upon the issues raised in part one. First of all will come an analysis of the christological basis of the Rule and how this is strongly influential upon its spirituality. Next will come an examination of the use of scripture within the text and its impact upon the spirituality that the Rule espouses – despite the medieval language, I will attempt to demonstrate how the Rule still holds an important message

for today. All the time there will be an emphasis on the way in which the Rule calls for constant reflection upon experience as a means towards a recognition of God's presence.

The conclusion will draw together the various strands in the argument and give a final summary of the meaning of, and relationship between, christological allegiance and the Word of God in the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel.

PART ONE: THE OBJECT AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY.

Chapter 1: The Rule of Carmel: its History and Background.

1.1 Introduction to Chapter One.

As mentioned in the introduction, the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel is linked to the historical circumstances of its coming into being. Consequently it will be necessary to examine its historical context in order to see if it bears any resonance with the follower of the Rule today; such elements as the eremitic context to which it first followers were called, its later mitigation to allow for the mendicant lifestyle and the nature of the Rule itself will all be a necessary focus for our evaluation. This first chapter will focus on the context and history of the Rule of Carmel and the process by which it developed into the text we now have.

1.2 The Birth of the Rule of Carmel 1208 – 1247.

1.2.1 The Context of the “Way of Life”.

Cicconetti makes a valid point in his understanding of context which he says “may refer to the actual, physical place, or the psychological, historical or social environment in which the text or message was born, or where it can be in some way placed” (Cicconetti, 1989:23). In looking at the context of the Rule of Carmel we are trying to do more than look at mere facts; instead, we are trying to “appeal to the living force of decision-making from which ... these facts took their origin” (Cicconetti, 1989:24). It is an attempt to get to the core of the Rule by virtue of understanding the mind of the legislator in writing it. Strictly speaking, it may not be a Rule in the conventional sense; this we are told by the author who states that it is *a way of life* (vitae formula)

[3].¹ These few words are important today as we evaluate the text. In the words of Bernard of Clairvaux, “No one vows the Rule when he makes his profession. But he promises his personal conversion in a determined way according to the Rule and thereafter to direct his life in that direction.” For the Carmelite, following the Rule of Carmel is a way of life.

1.2.2 The Immediate Origins of the Rule of Carmel.

The first three chapters of the Rule of Carmel give us the basic information we need regarding its origins:

Albert by the grace of God called to be Patriarch of the Church of Jerusalem, to his beloved sons in Christ, B. and the other hermits who are living under obedience to him at the spring on Mount Carmel: salvation in the Lord and the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

In many and various ways the holy fathers have laid down how everyone, whatever their state of life or whatever kind of religious life he has chosen, should live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him faithfully from a pure heart and a good conscience.

However, because you desire us to give you a formula of life in keeping with your purpose, to which you may hold fast in the future... [1-3].

Thus: the author of the Rule was Albert, “patriarch of the Church in Jerusalem”; it was given to an anonymous hermit, B., who had in some way other hermits under obedience to him; these hermits lived near the spring on Mount Carmel. Each of these three elements are important in our examination of the context in which the Rule was written and is now read.

1.2.3 Albert ... Patriarch of the Church in Jerusalem.

The qualification in the text that names Albert as “patriarch of the Church in Jerusalem” allows us to delineate the time boundaries of the text. Albert was elected patriarch in 1205 and arrived in Acre (a few kilometres from Mt. Carmel) in 1206 where he established himself as a result of the Saracen occupation of Jerusalem. He

¹ The numbers in square brackets indicate the chapters of the Rule.

remained here for some eight years, until he was murdered during a religious procession on the Feast of the Holy Cross, (September 14th) in 1214. As well as dating the Rule of Carmel, our knowledge of the background of Albert is valuable in our understanding of the text. He was a Canon Regular of the Holy Cross, and his formation as such “entailed the constant reading of the scriptures, the sharing of goods in common, a union of hearts, as well as a certain austerity of life” (Cicconetti, 1989:25) – all significant elements in the way of life he sets down for the hermits.

Before being elected patriarch of Jerusalem, he had served as prior of his community in Mortara from 1180, was elected Bishop of Bobbio in 1184, and finally Bishop of Vercelli from 1185. Such positions meant that he had extensive experience of Church Movements such as the Lombard Paupers, the Arnaldisti, the Charari and the Humiliati. These last he had also given a “Form of Life” (cf. Cicconetti, 1984:70-84).

Given his personal history, Albert was singularly well equipped to write a way of life for the hermits; it is to these we now turn.

1.2.4 B. and the other hermits...

The eremitic origins of the family of Carmel is a second important element in the context of the Rule of Carmel; as we shall later see, the question of the relationship between the eremitic and community life is an issue which seeks resolution throughout our interpretation of the Rule.

At the time of writing, the hermits do not have an official title; they are not a formally recognized group. Nor do they live according to a religious profession. Whatever promises of obedience they had made to B. were not formally juridical – this much we can discern from the absence of any formal titles. We can seek their origins among the lay spiritual groups “which had spontaneously taken upon themselves

the obligations of mortification, simplicity and poverty which were also associated with the canonical state of penitent” (Cicconetti, 1992:18). The fact of their requesting a *way of life*, rather than a *regula*, signifies their desire to live as lay people rather than professed religious; they were at most “part of the order of penitents” (Cicconetti, 1992:19).

As hermits, the early group who approached Albert already had a certain spiritual quest; traditional forms of religious life were failing to attract candidates by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, thus giving rise to a new and different type of observance. These new groups were neither monks nor canons, but consisted of the lay faithful who decided to do a penance involving a temporary or permanent break with the world. Some retired into solitude while others remained in the city or in the country. Still others took up the “call of the desert” in a literal sense.

While the origin of these hermits is uncertain, the most compelling evidence would seem to suggest that they were feudal-crusaders from Europe who had decided to remain in the Holy Land. In part two we shall see how this feudal-crusader mentality remains a strong element (although in a much-modified manner) in the spirituality of Rule.

1.2.5 Who live near the spring on Mount Carmel.

The geographical setting of the hermits’ foundation gives further context to the Rule of Carmel; they were near the spring on Mount Carmel that has traditionally been associated with the prophet Elijah. Taking the traditional interpretation of Elijah as the first monk, the words addressed to him in 1 Kings, 17:2-4 are “also addressed, in their spiritual or mystical sense, to every religious for they reveal the twofold aim of religious life and the path which God wants us to follow to perfection” (Chandler, 1992:9).

This twofold aim: firstly, those who follow the Rule of Carmel are called “to offer to God a heart holy and pure from all stain of sin”. This is attained by our efforts, with the help of God’s grace. The second element is entirely God’s grace, a pure gift of God: “to taste in our hearts and experience in our minds ... something of the power of the divine presence” (Chandler, 1992:9).

The prophetic example of Elijah is the final characteristic; his spiritual journey in the desert is a guide for the religious seeking to follow a spiritual journey today as is his recognition of God in the “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19:12f). There is the constant tension between the command that each should “remain in his cell or near it, meditating day and night on the Word of the Lord” [10] and the recognition that there will be times when the Carmelite will be outside of his own house, or at sea [17]. This tension will become more evident as we examine the constant interplay between elements of the necessary communal dimensions of ecclesial *koinonia*. The result of this tension is a heightened awareness of the need for an integral spirituality which embraces “the search for deepened prayer life ... together with a sense of the Christian situation that takes for granted a response to the issues of the day in whatever way is possible and appropriate to the person” (Haughton, 1989:9).

1.3 Later Developments in the Rule of Carmel.

It should be made clear at this point that the development of the Rule of Carmel did not come to an end with it being given by Albert to the hermits. There are many characteristics in it betraying that it is not a *way of life* for hermits only. Together with its immediate historical context, its further developments are a necessary key to its evaluation. The nature and result of these developments will form the final part of our historical evaluation of the text.

1.3.1 *The Fourth Lateran Council, Honorius III and Gregory IX.*

At first sight, the assembly of the Fourth Lateran Council in November 1215 was of little importance to the hermits on Mount Carmel. However, decree 13 of the Council could have ended the Order of Carmel before it ever began. It stated:

“Lest excessive diversity of communities cause confusion in the Church of God, we firmly forbid anyone hereafter to start a new community; let anyone who wishes to be converted to religious life join one of those communities already approved.” (Quoted in Cicconetti, 1984:85).

In effect, anyone wishing to establish a new religious house “had no choice but to select one of the approved rules” (Cicconetti, 1984:85).

By beginning a new mode of religious life (in the sense that they did not accept one of the approved rules), the community on Mount Carmel was in an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, they could continue to observe their way of life as it had been given prior to the decree of the Council (which did not outlaw forms of life already in existence); on the other hand, “a candidate who wished to enter religious life would have been prevented from joining the hermits because the group lacked qualification as an ‘approved order’” (Cicconetti, 1984:91). Ultimately they would have passed from existence. Neither their way of life nor their approval by Albert would constitute them as possessing an “approved rule”. The easiest solution to their dilemma would have been to follow the example of other groups of hermits at the time (such as the Hermits of John Bona, or the Brittinensi Hermits) and take on and adapt a rule such as that of Benedict or Augustine. However, the road they chose was more treacherous – they appealed to Pope Honorius III for the approval of the way of life given by Albert.

A rather ambiguous approval was given by Honorius III in a letter dated January 30th 1226 that recognized the giving of norms according to which they were to live their lives. It also gave permission to observe these norms in perpetuity. In

1229 Gregory IX gave official approval to these norms, adding the imposition of strict poverty upon the hermits.

1.3.2 Innocent IV and the Return to Europe.

Given the unstable nature of life in the Holy Land since the fall of Jerusalem to the Moslems in 1197, the hermits lived in constant fear of attack and a homeward movement to Europe began in 1238, a movement not completed until 1291. Moslem and Christian warfare had made life on the mountain untenable. Pope Innocent IV wrote: “The inroads of the pagans have driven our beloved sons, the hermits of Mount Carmel, to betake themselves, not without great affliction of spirit, to parts across the sea” (quoted in Welch, 1996:9).

Despite the necessary migration “to parts across the sea” the initial desire was that the hermitic lifestyle would continue. However this was to prove impossible and a change in their way of life was necessary in order that they might live as mendicants. In the first instance what was necessary was a clarification of the text of Albert that they might present themselves to the Church as a mendicant group, rather than as hermits. The Europe that many of the hermits had left had changed; there was an increase in urbanization as well as in forms of religious life. Mendicancy was already a known way of life in Europe by now, with the examples of Francis and Dominic the most renowned, and it was to this life that the hermits felt called. Innocent IV granted the necessary adaptation in their way of life in 1247. Among other privileges, this gave them permission to celebrate the Eucharist in public, hear confessions, have churches and cemeteries of their own as well as the right to beg and live off the alms of the faithful.

Of the changes which Innocent made, some of the more important include the addition of chapter five; Albert did not envisage that the hermits would do other than

“have places in solitary areas” [5]. Of similar importance is the change made to chapter eleven, calling the community together “to say the canonical hours” and to chapter twelve which gives further details about the common life. Finally, mitigation to chapter sixteen is evident in its giving permission to eat meat outside of the community house, thus implying the fact that they travel and rely on the generosity of others.

1.4 Conclusion to Chapter One.

From this we can surmise that the Rule of Carmel as written by Albert and mitigated by Innocent IV sought to “establish a hierarchy of values” rather than create a “list of detailed observances or styles of living” (Cicconetti, 1984:165). These latter were to come from the experience of silence to facilitate living “in allegiance to Jesus Christ” [2] and by doing everything “in the Word of the Lord” [19]. The spirituality that it sought to encompass was one of constant prayer based on reflective observance of the Gospel [21]. Although it was no longer a *way of life* but a Rule in the strict sense that enabled its adherents “to profit themselves and their neighbours spiritually” (Cicconetti, 1984:207), it remains a way of life in the broader sense of being a guide for its followers. The Rule as modified was “open to the practice of two important forms of religious observance, the eremitic and the mendicant” (Cicconetti, 1984:207). Everything in it was geared towards the hermits’ experience of daily life being translated into contemplative prayer.

Thus far we have dealt briefly with the historical elements in the Rule of Carmel and the spirituality engendered by this context. While recognizing the importance of the historical component of spirituality, it is also necessary that we look at its theological component. This will be introduced and illustrated by an assessment of the

debate over the relation of spirituality to theology, with a particular emphasis on the theological elements of christological allegiance and scriptural allusion within the Rule.

Chapter 2: Theology and Spirituality.

2.1 Introduction to Chapter Two.

Now that we have seen the historical context in which the Rule of Carmel came into being, and elements of the spirituality which can be discerned from this historical component, it is necessary to examine the theological component of the Rule and the corresponding influence this has on its spirituality. Although the theological components of the Rule are many, the focus of this paper will be on two: the issue of Christological Allegiance and the scriptural emphasis implicit in the text. How these two relate to the spirituality of the text will be the basis of part two of the paper; for now I will look at the question of the points of intersection between theology and spirituality in order that we may be able to make a valid assessment of the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel.

2.2 Problems of Definition.

The academic study of spirituality necessitates the reining in of the term; as Sheldrake points out, “if it [spirituality] has no conceptual limits, effectively it means nothing” (Sheldrake, 1991:32). Within these conceptual limits lie a broad range of disciplines, encompassing psychology, history, devotional literature and theology. Consequently, “contemporary spirituality has emerged as a cross-disciplinary subject which, on the face of it, has considerable problems of coherence” (Sheldrake, 1991:32). A cursory look at the history of the term may reveal some surprising results, none more surprising perhaps than the relatively short pedigree the word enjoys. It was only in the seventeenth century that the French word *spiritualité* became “established in its technical sense to indicate the personal relation of man to God” (Rahner, 1975:1624).

Despite its rich biblical heritage and the fact of it being through the Middle

Ages and down to our own time “the distinctive description of the typically Christian” (Rahner, 1975:1624), it has more recently become a “banality”, and an “anaemic unreality” (Rahner, 1975:1624). In spite of this banality however, Rahner sees the characteristics of the word including a rootedness in the coming of divine revelation, in the historical concreteness of revelation in Jesus Christ and in the ecclesiastical tradition through word and sacrament (cf. Rahner, 1975:1623ff). When in part two we examine the Rule in more depth, we shall see how these characteristics are central to its spirituality. For now, it is sufficient that we note them as we turn to an analysis of the debate over the relationship of spirituality to theology, focusing on the work of Sandra Schneiders.

2.3 Spirituality as an Academic Discipline.

2.3.1 Sandra Schneiders: A Seminal Analysis.

In her 1989 article “Spirituality in the Academy”, Sandra Schneiders finds the “increasingly serious attitude toward spirituality in the academy” rooted in the faith experience of many of the conciliar theologians and their determination that “their work should bear fruit in the lived faith of the Church as well in its speculation and teaching” (Schneiders, 1989:677). In her analysis she identifies two basic approaches to the fundamental question of definition; these she characterises as a “definition from above” which is largely dependent on dogmatic theology, and a “definition from below” which is rooted in anthropological considerations (Schneiders, 1989:682).

2.3.2 Two Approaches: Dogmatic and Anthropological.

The dogmatic approach to spirituality has the advantage of clearly defining its boundaries and views spirituality as the “life derived from grace and therefore any experience which is not explicitly Christian can be called spirituality only by way of

extension or comparison” (Schneiders, 1989:682). One consequence of marking such boundaries however is that spirituality can be considered a theological discipline “only if theology is understood as an umbrella term for all of the sacred sciences” (Schneiders, 1989:687). This does not exclude spirituality from theology however; rather it is “a moment integral to theology because it raises questions which theology must consider and because it supplies data for theological reflection” (Schneiders, 1989:689f). The rule allows for (and indeed encourages) participation in such reflection, e.g. remaining in ones cell [10] and keeping silence [21].

The anthropological approach to understanding spirituality is located in the “structure and dynamics of the human person as such. [Consequently] spirituality is an activity of human life as such ... in principle equally available to every human being who is seeking to live an authentically human life” (Schneiders, 1989:682). Despite the lack of clarity in this approach, it has certain advantages for our understanding of spirituality and its expression in the Rule of Carmel. Firstly, it draws on personal experience – the fruit of “meditating day and night on the law of the Lord” [10], and secondly, it is drawn from “a pure heart and a good conscience” [2] i.e. authentic human living.

2.3.3 Towards a definition.

Despite being “surrounded by dense terminological confusion” (Schneiders, 1989:687), the academic discipline of spirituality has achieved a degree of clarification. While the topic is plagued by “non-religious usage whose meaning is anything but clear” (Schneiders, 1986:255) and subject to exponents who have no intention of inferring anything about the Holy Spirit, there are slowly emerging elements of a definition. Firstly, it is not simply to do with the “interior life”; nor is it about perfection but instead, focuses on growth. It has to do with the area of self-

transcendence understood as “a gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God, in Christ within the believing community. Thus, Christian spirituality is Trinitarian, christological and ecclesial religious experience” (Schneiders, 1986:267). These are three important elements in the theology of the Rule of Carmel.

2.4 The Relationship of Spirituality to Theology.

Nowadays the debate among scholars is not so much the question of whether the two disciplines relate to one another, but rather how (cf. Sheldrake, 1998:83). Sheldrake criticises Schneiders’ attempt to locate spirituality as an autonomous discipline, on the grounds of its interdisciplinary approach as “it tends to exclude proper study of those aspects of contemporary Christian spiritualities that move beyond normal theological boundaries” (Sheldrake, 1998:84). An alternative viewpoint is that espoused by Bernard McGinn who “believes that the particularity of Christian spiritual experience demands that traditions of Christian belief and practice be the primary criteria of interpretation” (Sheldrake, 1998:85).

While neither approach has yet gained the upper hand in the debate, and bearing in mind the caveats of Sheldrake, we can see that there has to be a degree of relationship between the two. On the one hand, theology without spirituality can become philosophical abstraction while on the other hand, a spirituality without a firm basis in theology risks becoming “uncritical devotionism” (Sheldrake, 1998:87) which has lost touch with the great traditions of faith. The Rule of Carmel, being some 800 years old, could well have lost any basis for contemporary usage if it had succumbed to either of these possible failings. It is perhaps best evaluated by keeping in mind the approach of Hanson. He looks at the interdisciplinary approach to

spirituality as advocated by Schneiders and on the basis of that approach puts forward a loose understanding of spirituality as a study which encompasses the subject matter of faith and is combined with “a strong existential concern to grow in faith” (Hanson, 1990:50). Consequently, he asserts that spirituality cannot be considered a discipline in itself, but belongs to the field of theology. Even within theology it cannot have “a clearly demarcated subject matter” (Hanson, 1990:50) due to its interdisciplinary nature.

Gutierrez perhaps best summarises the issue: “When all is said and done, then, all authentic theology is spiritual theology. This fact does not weaken the rigorously scientific character of the theology; it does however, properly situate it” (Gutierrez, 1984:37).

2.5 Conclusion to Chapter Two.

The ambiguous nature of the relationship between spirituality and theology has thus achieved a degree of clarity that allows for our further investigation of the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel. By seeing spirituality as a “moment of theology” we can fairly place the spiritual core of the Rule within (for example) a christological context. At the same time we recognize that “for St. Albert, the Word of God is both the person of Christ and the scriptures which offer us Christ” (Helewa, 2000:21); thus our investigation into the spirituality of the Rule probes into its strongly scriptural basis also. Given this intimate link, we begin with the christological component of the Rule and then move into the more properly defined scriptural elements.

PART TWO: THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE RULE OF CARMEL: TWO ELEMENTS.

Chapter 3: The Christological Character of the Rule of Carmel.

3.1 Carmelite Life as Allegiance to Jesus Christ.

3.1.1 The Life of Every Christian.

As Valabek understands it, “Albert immediately seizes on the essential: religious are not in the first place bound to a well-described, scheduled way of life, but they are bound to a person: Christ Jesus” (Valabek, 1989:151f). Gutierrez recognises the historical character of spirituality and its relationship with the “age in which it was formulated”, a relationship which appreciates that “the following of Jesus is something that penetrates deeply into the course of human history” (Gutierrez, 1984:26). How Albert and the early hermits interpreted being bound to Jesus Christ is different to our interpretation of it today. It is to the meaning of this allegiance that we now turn, as Albert understood it and as it can today be lived by the follower of the Rule of Carmel.

Albert recognised that every Christian “should live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him faithfully from a pure heart and a good conscience” [2], a phrase in which “to the discerning reader Albert here verbalises the two aims which apply to all forms of religious life: purity of heart and contemplation” (Waaïjman, 1999:49). Furthermore, it is closely linked to Schneiders’ understanding of spirituality as being within the realm of that which is “authentically human”. Through human effort and by cooperation with God’s grace, these two aims are fulfilled. The first, a “pure heart” speaks of our own effort and is the ascetic side of Christian life. In its turn, purity of heart is required to make us receptive to God and is the core of a good conscience. “Everything that blocks the heart must be removed, down to the innermost part of the

conscience” (Waaijman, 1999:50). The second aim, contemplation, is a pure gift of God and is understood as “the experiential knowledge of the divine power and heavenly glory” (The Book of the First Monks, 1.2). Living in allegiance to Jesus Christ was not an end in itself, but the beginnings of the journey to receiving the grace of God.

3.1.2 The Pauline Basis of Allegiance and its Understanding in Feudal Society.

While Albert used the word allegiance in its immediate, medieval sense of “feudal and military service” (Clarke, 1973:78 n.5) it is valuable for us to look at its biblical sense. Primarily it is a Pauline phrase, which Albert accompanies with the citation from the First Letter to Timothy about purity of heart and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5). Valabek summarises the Pauline perception of allegiance as a recognition that the disciple of Christ is a slave or a servant who is turned over completely to Christ; Christ himself “expects a total attachment to himself, exceeding attachment to any other person” (Valabek, 1989:152). Christ is “the Absolute, not in the sense of rules and regulations to be followed in obedience, but much more radically and demandingly in the sense of vital dependence on him for one’s very life” (Valabek, 1989:152f).

This core meaning of belonging to God, of owning service to God, took on a particular connotation in feudal times. Cicconetti sees that

“following of, or allegiance to, another implied duties on the part of the master and subject. Those living in the patrimony of a feudal lord promised good and faithful service, assistance in time of war and participation in resolution of problems or questions. In return the lord promised protection to his subjects” (Cicconetti, 1984:15).

Thus were all Christians bound to Jesus Christ; at the time of the crusades “the concept took on an even greater specificity. Christ had been expelled from his patrimony and had suffered an injustice” (Buggert, 1991:95). The popes called upon Christians,

as subjects of Christ, to assist in the liberation of the Holy Land and all who answered were Christ's special subjects. The theological understanding of allegiance to Jesus Christ has a particular resonance for the hermits living on Mount Carmel; they were to embrace poverty [4, 12], penance [15], silence [21], solitude [5] prayer [10, 11, 14], and fasting [16] and thus be "transformed into Christ" (Buggert, 1991:96).

3.1.3 Christocentric Allegiance Today.

In our earlier analysis of the relationship between theology and spirituality we saw the intimate link between the two; here we develop more fully how it is worked out in the concept of allegiance to Christ today. While contemporary christologies are numerous, "recent theology is virtually unanimous about the importance of stressing the humanity of Jesus" (Gunton, 2002:78). Constant reference back to the historical Jesus within his own society and culture is necessary to ensure that we recognise his humanity. It is "actually a composite image of Jesus (his words, deeds, self-understanding, claim, understanding of his fate) which is reconstructed through the use of historical-critical methods applied to New Testament texts" (Buggert, 1991:99).

The Rule of Carmel then calls the Carmelite today as much as in the beginning to walk in allegiance to Jesus Christ but the understanding we have of this is different to that afforded him by Albert and the first hermits, and different again to that of the disciples of Jesus and the early church. Accordingly it is important that we understand which "Jesus" we are following: at the very least we have to understand that Jesus was fully human and this is not an easy concept to grasp. Rahner's Christ is perhaps the one to whom we should turn; he is a "truly human Jesus who undergoes a truly human history with all that that implies" (Buggert, 1999:41). Jesus is divine, because he is fully human; he grew in grace (Lk.2:52) and grace is what makes possible the fully human. Growth in faith, in the spiritual life, in prayer, if it is genuine growth, is

fully humanizing and a consequence of grace acting upon our efforts – again we are reminded of the two-fold emphasis in the life of the Christian seeking to walk in allegiance to Jesus Christ.

The original Carmelite community saw allegiance to Jesus Christ as involving a capture of the Holy Land, albeit in somewhat analogous terms; the mission of the Carmelite as found in the Rule is something similar today. The mission of Jesus was about the “in-breaking of the reign of God into history, the reign of God which would embrace and transform all of creation and all of history” (Buggert, 1999:48). In the Rule it is expressed as the walking in allegiance to Jesus Christ through community living [5] and the counter-cultural expression of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience [4]. While financially worthless, these expressions of allegiance to Christ act as a prophetic denunciation of the values of the world. This is the example of the prophet Elijah who had an enormous capacity for solitude. His “ordinary dwelling places are wild gorges down which torrential waters roar, mountain heights with their grottoes and caves, the deserts of Palestine and Sinai” (Ginn, 1986:5). Such expression of counter-cultural living are all designed to expose the vulnerability and weakness of the follower of Christ and thus reveal a need for God. However without a strong theological foundation, such a spirituality would be virtually valueless – the experiential component of spirituality finds a basis in theological reflection.

These desert values of the Rule of Carmel paradoxically seek expression in the tensions between the eremitic life and the coenobitic life. Coming together for the Eucharistic celebration breaks the silence and solitude of the hermit; the community finds itself dispersed after the celebration. But it does not disperse to nothing: the “celebration is carried out into community – but a community that extends beyond the confines of the near and the local, because it is both the expression and the task of the

entire church” (Gutierrez, 1984:134). How the Rule of Carmel expresses this communal aspect will be the focus of the next section.

3.2 Christocentric Allegiance and Community Life.

3.2.1 The Fundamentally Christocentric Structure of the Rule of Carmel.

In our reading of the Rule of Carmel we are informed not only by the meaning afforded the text by its author and its subsequent living out by the early community, but also by the christocentric structure of the text itself. While the hermits experienced an individual call to make a commitment to God, this was to be lived in a community setting whereby they would come together for meals [7], prayer [11], the Eucharist [14], fraternal correction [15] and so on. Again and again the Rule empowers the Carmelite to allow reflection on the scriptures bring about an experiential based spirituality. It was closely related to the life of the early Christian community and “re-echoing the insights of Luke, Albert enjoins on the hermits a following of Christ by following the ideals and values of the Apostolic Christian community” (Valabek, 1989:150). Thus, there is a close parallel between Acts 4:32ff and chapters 10-14 of the Rule of Carmel: fidelity to the Word, perseverance in prayer, sharing of goods, fraternal unity and the centrality of daily worship.

Within the text of the Rule, the celebration of the Eucharist is both structurally central and spatially central (an oratory... should be built in the midst of the cells [14]) and accordingly, theologically central (cf. Buggert, 1991:97). Such theological centrality is further expression of the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel and the intimate relationship between the theology and spirituality. A fuller explanation of the meaning of this Eucharistic centrality will now follow.

3.2.2 *Eucharist and Community: The Basis for Christocentric Living.*

Placing the Eucharist at the heart of the Rule then makes for a two-fold focus: Christ and the community. The Carmelite who was well acquainted with the scriptures would have recognized immediately the spiritual impact of the oratory being in the midst of their cells: as Waaijman points out,

“audible throughout the whole of the Scriptures is the motif of the religious Centre. The Lord is in the midst of his people: “I will dwell in the midst of the Israelites and will be their God... (Ex.29:45) ... That which is true for Israel applies to Carmel as well: ““They shall make a sanctuary for me that I may dwell in their midst’ (Ex.25:8)” (Waaijman, 1999:116ff).

The mutual dependence between Christian community and Eucharist finds expression in the placing of the oratory in the midst of the cells. On a very material level the “coming together” [14] causes the community to assume physical form, just as was described by Luke. By coming together, those who live in the community build up that community and when they depart, they do so as members of that community. Coming together in the morning signifies the end of the night and the darkness; it reinforces the dedication of the day to Christ in the Eucharist.

This issue of Christ being at the centre of the Rule has a further importance for our understanding of the spirituality of the Rule. Not only is it a temporal, spatial and structural centre – the very act of coming together into the centre into the presence of God is *eucharistia*. The Eucharist

“begins where we allow ourselves to be gathered into one people by the Lord, who invites us to listen to his word so that it moves us, shapes the desire of our heart, and causes us to look for his Presence. He invites us to take to himself his body and blood, to remember him in total self-dedication with him...” (Waaijman, 1999:119).

Allegiance to Jesus Christ finds its ultimate meaning in the Eucharistic celebration at the heart of the Rule of Carmel. It is a Eucharistic spirituality that focuses on the experience of the community and the individual alike and recognises that one without

the other is lacking in some vital element. This spirituality finds further expression in the presence of God in God's Word, and Albert recognises this no less. It is to the correlation between these two elements of the Rule of Carmel that we now turn.

3.3 Christocentric Allegiance Expressed in the Word of God.

Equal to the appeal for the hermits to come together for the celebration of the Eucharist is the request that they celebrate the presence of Christ as the Word of God in a similar fashion. Albert requests that "the word of God, should dwell abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts" [19] and reminds them of their duty to "[meditate] day and night on the Word of the Lord" [10]. For Albert the Word of God is both the person of Christ and the scriptures offering us Christ and it was on this two-fold norm that the Carmelite spirituality was founded. Albert did not aim to give many prescriptions of "do's" and "don'ts" but sought instead to stress the fundamentals of Christian life in the knowledge that all other values would be born of this. "Fraternal love, the lived experience of evangelical life, is a hallmark of the life proposed in the Rule of Carmel" (Helewa, 2000:25). The Lukan model of Christian community is the ultimate expression of this lifestyle and serves as the spiritual foundation stone for Albert's writing. The common table, listening to scripture, celebration of the Eucharist, sharing of possessions are not the optional extras of Christianity but the essentials of life according to the gospel.

How these elements come together for Albert in the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel is perhaps best understood in the intimate link between scripture, Eucharist and community. The Second Vatican Council document *Dei Verbum* sees the Church being nourished by the "bread of life of the table, both of the word of God and the Body of Christ" (*Dei Verbum*, n.21). *Koinonia* is the result of the constant meditation

on the Word of God and “is expressed as evangelical poverty lived out in fraternal love ... [as] a harmonious expression of prayerful worship” (Helewa, 2000:33).

3.4 Conclusion to Chapter Three.

That spirituality is a moment of theology we saw in chapter two; this has been built upon in our examination of the christology of the Rule of Carmel. It is a spirituality wherein allegiance to Jesus Christ is foremost and finds expression in Eucharistic community life. The Rule sees the presence of God as the foundation for spirituality and the hermits were called to recognise Christ in the experience of coming together and the experiencing of God in the midst of their community. Christ’s presence as the Word of God is a further expression of the spirituality and it is to this that we now turn to examine the final element in the spirituality of the Rule.

Chapter 4: Christ, the Word of God in the Spirituality of the Rule of Carmel.

4.1 The Relationship Between Spirituality and Scripture.

As we have seen, spirituality has a strongly experiential component – for the hermits on Mount Carmel it was the experience of following Christ and constant meditation on the Word of God. It is from experience that spirituality comes into being; “at the heart of every spirituality there is a particular experience that is had by concrete persons living at a particular time” (Gutierrez, 1994:37). The Rule of Carmel allows for the experience of Christ in the scriptures to develop a relational spirituality wherein the message of the gospel to “come and see” (Jn. 1:38) finds expression. Similarly, the spirituality of the Rule “implies wholehearted commitment to living and growing as fully as possible in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and through him, the Father and the Holy Spirit” (Dicharry, 1985:11).

Thus scripture is informative and revealing (of God and of ourselves) and it effects a transformation through communication, dialogue, and communion between God and us. No wonder Albert was to quote the Letter to the Colossians in his appeal that the early community should ensure that “the word of God should dwell abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts. And whatever you have to do, let it all be done in the Word of the Lord.” [19]. The basic provisions had been met at this point and physical structures put in place; now was the time for structures of transformation to be put in place. But how was the hermit on Mount Carmel to recognise these structures and faithfully interpret the Word of God? The answer is found in the Rule: constant meditation on the Word [10]. This should not have been something new: the Carthusian monk Guigo (d.1188) recommended the four-step method of biblical reading: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. This process of *lectio divina*

would allow the hermit to live always in the presence of God, to let everything be done in the Word of the Lord [15].

This was not just a command of Albert for the hermits; it was something that he himself practiced and is evident in his writing of the Rule. This we can see as we examine the way in which the Rule reads the bible and its suggested method of interpretation.

4.2 How the Rule of Carmel Reads the Bible.

That the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel is a spirituality born of experience and participation in theological reflection upon that experience is evidenced in the way that the Rule uses scripture. Carlos Mesters has shown that directly or indirectly there are a number of places where the Rule recommends the reading of the bible. The most important of these include listening to the scriptures during meals [5], meditating day and night on the law of the Lord [10], coming together every day to celebrate mass [14], being fortified with holy ponderings [19], letting everything be done in the Word of the Lord [19] and putting into practice what the Lord says in the Gospel [20] (Mesters, 1999:17f). An analysis of these elements shows three important elements in the spirituality of the Rule. Firstly, that of personal reading wherein the individual comes to an experience of God and secondly community reading wherein this experience is shared, developed and corrected. Thirdly, there is the constant check on such reading through an ecclesial reading that suggests that the Carmelite should pray in accordance with the custom of the church and in the tradition of the Fathers [2]. All of this relates the spirituality of the Rule of Carmel to the experience of the church beginning with the example of the Jerusalem community.

But the Rule is more than a series of commands; it is itself an example of how the bible should be used: as a source of correction for the interpretation of experience and thus ensuring that spirituality does not fall into heresy. Mesters sees within the Rule some elements of how the experience of the hermits should be used to deepen their theological reflection and spirituality. Firstly, the Rule reads the bible with familiarity, freedom and fidelity; the author “knew the bible from memory and assimilated it in his life to the point of no longer distinguishing between his own words and the words of the Bible” (Mesters, 1999:19). Secondly, making use of both the Hebrew and Christian scripture, the Rule is careful to assimilate the whole of salvation history into the life of the hermit. Thirdly, seeing that living in allegiance to Jesus Christ is the “objective and foundation of the Rule’s reading of the bible” (Mesters, 1999:20) it is vital that this reading be in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers and as approved by the Church.

In all of this we can see that the Rule of Carmel is firmly established in the tradition of the Church and the integral spirituality which fidelity to the bible brings about. It may be argued that too much emphasis is put on scripture as the foundation for the spirituality of the Rule but it is never to the neglect of other duties. Frequently Albert modifies his stipulations: “as far as it can be done conveniently” [14], or “unless occupied with other lawful activities” [10]. As a result, “from the foundation of scripture, they [the early community] should draw understanding of the things of God, practical wisdom, and the spiritual resources and certitude needed by believers” (Helewa, 2000:21). This was not a selfish, individual basis for living, but one deeply rooted in community and strongly established in the ecclesial tradition, a reminder that “our reading of the Rule should always bring us back to the most basic realities of Christian life... the biblical word is present in the Rule as a very privileged vehicle of

expression and as a source of inspiration and guarantee of Christian authenticity” (Helewa, 2000:23f).

4.3 A Closer Look at the use of Scripture within the Text of the Rule of Carmel.

In light of these remarks about the general use of scripture by the Rule to express its spirituality, we can now turn to a more detailed analysis of one relevant passage to illustrate further some of the depths of the spirituality that it seeks to promote.

4.3.1 Being Clothed with God’s Attributes.

“However, because human life on earth is a trial, and all who wish to live devotedly in Christ must suffer persecution, and moreover since your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, you shall use every care and diligence to put on the armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand the deceits of the enemy” [18].

In our historical analysis of the Rule we saw that the first hermits were well acquainted with the reality of persecution, armour and enemies. The daily experience of the crusader would have made him readily familiar with the spiritual imagery that Albert proposed in this chapter.

This chapter of the Rule is the beginning of a more exhortative section, no longer concerned with the exercise of the basic provisions of daily life. That an important turning point had been arrived at is signalled in the opening words of the chapter, “However, because...” These words were used only once before by Albert “when he made the transition from the religious life in general to the Carmelite life in particular” (Waaijman, 1999:153). As we have seen, the Rule uses scripture to be the vehicle for expression of both the practical and the spiritual wisdom for living and it stands as a reminder that our lives on earth cannot be fulfilled with only the material goods as laid out by Albert thus far. The spiritual dimension of life needs careful attention if we are to “live in allegiance to Jesus Christ” [2]. At this point too the

language of the Rule changes to emphasise the importance of what Albert is saying. Elements which were characteristic of the Carmelite way of life are now absent – we no longer have words such as convenient [5], assent [6], permission [8], unless [10], taking into account [12], necessity [16] etc., but are now faced with a chapter in which there are no exceptions, no mitigation possible. “We are now dealing with virtues, and virtues allow for no exceptions, modifications, time provisions, and the like” (Waaïjman, 1999:154).

Despite these contrasts however, there is a degree of continuity with what has gone before; the reason for all these trials is to bring about purity of heart which is the goal of the person living in allegiance to Jesus Christ. The person seeking an authentic human life has to deal with not only the physical battles of life, but also the more subtle war against the “devil... seeking whom he may devour” [18]. The armour of God is the necessary protection for this spiritual battle.

4.3.2 *The Armour of God.*

The loins are to be girt with the cincture of chastity. Your breast is to be fortified with holy ponderings, for it is written: Holy ponderings will save you. The breastplate of justice is to be put on, that you may love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself. In all things is to be taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the wicked one, for without faith it is impossible to please God. On your head is to be put the helmet of salvation that you may hope for salvation from the only Saviour who saves his people from their sins. [19].

The motif of battle continues here in chapter 19 with the recommendation of the means of successfully coming through the battle. The armour of God has a twofold (but related) meaning: the armour that God wears, and the armour given by that we should wear in imitation of God. The roots of this motif are to be found in the Pentateuch wherein God is depicted as a warrior who liberates the people from oppressive forces and it is further developed in the post-exilic prophetic tradition. “God

put on justice like a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head; he clothed himself in the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle” (Is.59:17). Notwithstanding the anthropomorphic elements in this description, it is valuable in that it places God in a situation that can be recognised by the human. God is not a remote, unfeeling concept, but is able to recognise human situations of fear and danger.

The more immediate backdrop to this section of chapter 19 is Ephesians 6:11-13. Crucial to our reading is the fact that the “imperatives in this section are all in the plural ... we should not envisage so much a knight errant in full armour as a platoon of eager infantry men” (Muddiman, 2001:285). The emphasis is on the shared experience of community rather than the individual battling alone; the Rule guards against a solipsistic spirituality. The enemy is depicted not as a mortal enemy but as super-terrestrial powers against which only super-terrestrial weapons can be used: the armour of God.

This armour though has characteristics which seem to belie the notion of battle: they are depicted in purely metaphorical terms – the cincture of chastity, the breastplate of justice, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation. And against the war-like imagery we are presented with irenic armour – the girt loins would suggest watchfulness rather than militancy; other armour is defensive rather than offensive: breastplate, shield, and helmet. This language serves to remind the reader that God is their only true defence against evil; it is reminiscent of the Psalms – “my God, my rock of refuge, my shield” (Ps.18:3).

There is always the danger that such language will alienate the reader who is unfamiliar with medieval combat dress. But a closer reading will serve to remind the reader that what is on offer is protective rather than offensive armour. It is figurative

but in a way that will not lose its effect on the reader. The cincture recommended by Albert is not that of the soldier but is the cincture of chastity. It is meant to protect that which is vulnerable; in metaphorical terms it forms an attitude which protects against “violating the vulnerable, the intimate, the tender parts of ourselves and others ... [it is] an attitude of deference towards everything in ourselves and in others which is vulnerable” (Waaijman, 1999:177). The scriptural foundation of this spirituality comes to the fore once again – the breastplate of justice is built upon the cincture of chastity allowing for the true expression of love and in the bible love and justice are intimately linked. The shield of faith is recommended as protection for when there is an undermining in the life of chastity and of justice. Finally, to put all into perspective, the helmet of salvation serves as a reminder of the nature of salvation: an eschatological reality and a fact already present. While the spirituality of the Rule looks to the future, it keeps the hermit firmly fixed on the reality of the present day. In summary, the armour of God as outlined by Albert and drawing upon biblical motifs has as its core the virtues of faith, hope and love.

All the while, the experiential component of spirituality finds expression in the explanation of the reasons for needing the armour of God. First of all, “because human life on earth is a trial” [18] a theme taken from the Book of Job. Over and over again our experience reminds us of the lack of control we have over life. Experiences of illness and of the transience of life point to our need for God – daily meditation on the Word of God [10] brings our spiritual experience into the realm of theological reflection. Secondly, “all who wish to live devotedly in Christ must suffer persecution” [18], a direct quotation from the Second Letter to Timothy (2 Tim.3:1). Such persecution can come from both within and without the community and no doubt Albert recognised the possibility of the presence of persecutors within the early community

of hermits. He warns of the dangers of idleness allowing the devil entry into the soul of the hermit [20] and sees that this can be the result of careless talk among the hermits. This too is learned from experience and Albert advises them to “practise the silence in which is the cultivation of justice” [21]. Finally Albert counsels the use of the armour of God “since your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” [18], a direct reference to the First Letter of Peter (1 Pet.5:8), wherein Peter looks to the end times and recognises the presence of evil in the world at this time. These three reasons for the use of God’s armour “together form a dramatic whole ... both the natural life and the supernatural life are exposed to degradation and destruction issuing from the anonymous power [of evil]” (Waaijman, 1999:169).

4.4 Conclusion to Chapter Four.

The experiential component of spirituality finds nourishment in the Word of God; thus the Rule of Carmel has a particular way of reading the bible which both uses the scripture as the message and the vehicle for that message. It counsels a threefold reading by the individual, the community and the church, all of which provide a check for one another. By looking at how we can interpret the motif of the armour of God we saw that the medieval language of feudal Europe can be readily identified with today. However, this armour is defensive rather than offensive; it is in fact deeply irenic in nature. All the time it seeks the protection of the person with “a pure heart and good conscience” [2].

Conclusion.

As an historical text, the Rule of Carmel illustrates a comprehension of Christian allegiance and religious life at a particularly turbulent time in European Christian history and thus employs a language reflecting this worldview. However there is a degree of timelessness in its message of Christian fidelity – fidelity to a person rather than to a human formulation. The Rule came into being in the context of eremitic life on Mount Carmel and was adapted for the mendicant lifestyle in the Europe of the time. Its successful mitigation was in a large part due to it expressing a series of values to be lived by, rather than regulations to follow – a triumph of the spirit over the letter of the law.

At the same time the Rule of Carmel continues to be lived today in a context which was never imagined by its author or those who requested its writing. That this is possible is due largely to its emphasis on timeless values of fidelity to Christ nourished by reflection upon the experience of Christian living. The Rule seeks to provide a formula for the appropriation of “a pure heart and good conscience” [2] through allegiance to Jesus Christ. Building upon the provision of material needs, Albert stresses the value of community life to correct “excesses and faults” [15] and enable the edification of a community that is itself an expression of ecclesial *koinonia*. To this end the followers of the Rule are recommended to let everything “be done in the Word of the Lord” [19]. Constant meditation on this Word nourishes both the individual and the community while being clothed in the armour of God enables the Carmelite to “withstand the deceits of the enemy” [18].

All the time Albert is keen to stress that experience is the only guide which can be relied upon; constant prayer fosters theological reflection that is the authentic expression of the spirituality of the Carmelite. The grace of God builds upon human effort and by using scripture as both the message and its medium Albert grasps the

essentials of this spirituality. In the Rule he seeks to establish “a formula for [the Carmelite] way of life, according to which [they] are to live” [24]. This formula is not only built upon allegiance to Jesus Christ: it *is* allegiance to Jesus Christ based upon fidelity to the Word of God.

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Appendix:

The Rule of Carmel.

Paragraph numbers are in square brackets to indicate that they are not part of the original Rule. They were agreed by the General Councils of both Carmelite Orders and published in 1999. Innocentian additions are given in italics. The translation is by Kees Waaijman and can be found in his book, The Mystical Space of Carmel, (Peeters, Leuven, 1999), p.29-38.

[1] Albert by the grace of God called to be Patriarch of the Church of Jerusalem, to his beloved sons in Christ, B. and the other hermits who are living under obedience to him at the spring on Mount Carmel: salvation in the Lord and the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

[2] In many and various ways the holy fathers have laid down how everyone, whatever their state of life or whatever kind of religious life he has chosen, should live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him faithfully from a pure heart and a good conscience.

[3] However, because you desire us to give you a formula of life in keeping with your purpose, to which you may hold fast in the future:

[4] We establish first of all that you shall have one of you as prior, to be chosen for that office by the unanimous assent of all, or of the greater and wiser part, to whom each of the others shall promise obedience and strive to fulfil his promise by the reality of his deeds, *along with chastity and the renunciation of property.*

[5] *You may have places in solitary areas, or where you are given a site that is suitable and convenient for the observance of your religious life, as the prior and the brothers see fit.*

[6] Next, according to the site of the place where you propose to dwell, each of you shall have a separate cell of his own, to be assigned to him by the disposition of the prior himself, with the assent of the other brothers or the wiser part of them.

[7] *However, you shall eat whatever may have been given you in a common refectory, listening together to some reading from Sacred Scripture, where this can be done conveniently.*

[8] None of the brothers may change the place assigned to him, or exchange it with another, except with the permission of whoever is prior at the time.

[9] The prior's cell shall be near the entrance to the place, so that he may be the first to meet those who come to this place, and so that whatever needs to be done subsequently may all be carried out according to his judgement and disposition.

[10] Let each remain in his cell or near it, meditating day and night on the Word of the Lord and keeping vigil in prayer, unless he is occupied with other lawful activities.

[11] Those who know *how to say the canonical hours with the clerics* shall say *them according to* the institution of the Holy Fathers and the approved custom of the Church. Those who do not know their letters shall say twenty-five Our Fathers for the night vigil, except on Sundays and feastdays, for the vigils of which we establish that the stated number be doubled, so that the Our Father is said fifty times. The same prayer is to be said seven times for the morning lauds. For the other hours the same prayer is to be said seven times, except for the evening office, for which you shall say it fifteen times.

[12] Let none of the brothers say that anything is his property, but let everything be held in common among you; to each one shall be distributed what he needs from the hand of the prior - that is from the brother he appoints to this task - taking into account the age and needs of each one.

[13] *You may, moreover, have asses or mules as your needs require, and some livestock or poultry for your nourishment.*

[14] An oratory, as far as it can be done conveniently, shall be built in the midst of the cells, where you shall come together every day early in the morning to hear Mass, where this can be done conveniently.

[15] On Sundays too, or on other days when necessary, you shall discuss the preservation of order and the salvation of your souls. At this time also the excesses and faults of the brothers, if such should be found in anyone, should be corrected in the midst of love.

[16] You shall observe the fast every day except Sunday from the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross until Easter Sunday, unless sickness or bodily weakness or some other good reason shall make it advisable to break the fast; for necessity knows no law.

[17] You shall abstain from meat, unless it be taken as a remedy for sickness or weakness. *And since you may have to beg more frequently while travelling, outside your own houses you may eat food cooked with meat, so as not to be a burden to your hosts. But meat may even be eaten at sea.*

[18] However, because human life on earth is a trial, and all who wish to live devotedly in Christ must suffer persecution, and moreover since your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, you shall use every care and diligence to put on the armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand the deceits of the enemy.

[19] *The loins are to be girt with the cincture of chastity. Your breast is to be fortified with holy ponderings, for it is written: Holy ponderings will save you. The breastplate of justice is to be put on, that you may love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself. In all things is to be taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the wicked one, for without faith it is impossible to please God. On your head is to be put the helmet of salvation, that you may hope for salvation from the only Saviour who saves his people from their sins. And the sword*

of the Spirit, which is the word of God, should dwell abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts. And whatever you have to do, let it all be done in the Word of the Lord.

[20] Some work has to be done by you, so that the devil may always find you occupied, lest on account of your idleness he manage to find some opportunity to enter into your souls. In this matter you have both the teaching and example of the blessed apostle Paul, in whose mouth Christ spoke, who was appointed and given by God as preacher and teacher of the nations in faith and truth; if you follow him you cannot go astray. Labouring and weary we lived among you, he says, working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you; not that we had no right to do otherwise, but so as to give you ourselves as an example, that you might imitate us. For when we were with you we used to tell you, if someone is unwilling to work, let him not eat. For we have heard that there are certain people among you going about restlessly and doing no work. We urge people of this kind and beseech them in the Lord Jesus Christ to earn their bread, working in silence. *This way is holy and good: follow it.*

[21] The apostle recommends silence, when he tells us to work in it. As the prophet also testifies, Silence is the cultivation of justice; and again, in silence and hope will be your strength. Therefore we direct that you keep silence from after *compline* until *prime* of the following day. At other times, however, although you need not observe silence so strictly, you should nevertheless be all the more careful to avoid much talking, for as it is written-and experience teaches no less- where there is much talk sin will not be lacking; and, he who is careless in speech will come to harm; and elsewhere, he who uses many words injures his soul. And the Lord says in the gospel: For every idle word that people speak they will render account on judgement day. Let each one, therefore, measure his words and keep a tight rein on his mouth, lest he stumble and fall by his talking and his fall be irreparable and prove fatal. With the prophet let him watch his ways lest he sin with his tongue; let him try attentively and carefully to practice the silence in which is the cultivation of justice.

[22] And you, brother B., and whoever may be appointed prior after you, should always have in mind and observe in practice what the Lord says in the gospel: Whoever wishes to be the greatest among you will be your servant, and whoever wishes to be the first will be your slave.

[23] You other brothers too, hold your prior humbly in honour, thinking not so much of him as of Christ who placed him over you, and who said to the leaders of the churches, Who hears you hears me; who rejects you rejects me. In this way you will not come into judgement for contempt, but through obedience will merit the reward of eternal life.

[24] We have written these things briefly for you, thus establishing a formula for your way of life, according to which you are to live. If anyone will have spent more, the Lord himself will reward him, when he returns. Use discernment, however, the guide of the virtues.