



Anton D'Amato

Healing a Turbulent Past

Reconciling Church and Politics in Malta

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
S.Th.L.

May 2019

Faculty of Theology,
University of Malta



L-Università
ta' Malta

University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.



FACULTY/INSTITUTE/CENTRE/SCHOOL Theology

DECLARATIONS BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Student's I.D. /Code 534284M

Student's Name & Surname Anton D'Amato

Course S.Th.L.

Title of Dissertation

Healing a Turbulent Past: Reconciling Church and Politics in Malta

(a) Authenticity of Dissertation

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Dissertation and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of higher education.

I hold the University of Malta harmless against any third party claims with regard to copyright violation, breach of confidentiality, defamation and any other third party right infringement.

(b) Research Code of Practice and Ethics Review Procedures

I declare that I have abided by the University's Research Ethics Review Procedures.

As a Master's student, as per Regulation 58 of the General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, I accept that should my dissertation be awarded a Grade A, it will be made publicly available on the University of Malta Institutional Repository.

Signature of Student

ANTON D'AMATO
Name of Student (in Caps)

May 30, 2019
Date

Abstract

Although officially the relations between the Maltese Church and current Labour administration are cordial – indeed the two often collaborating to assist the most vulnerable – one can still sense a level of animosity towards the Church from some Labour supporters. These past four years, the contribution of ecclesiastical authorities in the public sphere has been met with anger by those who claim the Church should not be involved in “politics” while recalling the turbulent *sittinijiet* as a time when the Church aggressively opposed the Labour Party and its supporters. This conflation of partisanship with politics would seem to limit the local church from being prophetic in the public sphere and this study suggests that this is because past wounds have not healed. The study focuses on this particular historical period, in its political, cultural and ecclesiological context. The first chapter analyses why the *sittinijiet* were the genesis of a traumatic experience for Labour supporters, while the second chapter seeks to understand why the wound seems to persist to this day. The theory of cultural trauma, as developed by Alexander and Eyerman, together with various sociological constructs that explain the deep factionalism that characterizes Maltese culture, offer a robust hermeneutic to explain why these echoes of trauma are still evident today. But, as the third chapter shows, the local church has done little to heal these wounds that partly continue to fester because our ecclesiology also continues to echo a pre-VCII mindset. Thus, the chapter will proceed to argue for a renewal of our understanding of church as “kenotic” and to propose a model of being church in the world that lives Christ’s kingship as servanthood, his priesthood as healing and his prophetic office as witnessing a politics grounded in communal living. The healing and reconciling of our turbulent Maltese past is also about our ongoing conversion as local church.

Keywords

Church and Politics, *sittinijiet*; cultural trauma; healing and reconciliation; Church in Malta.

*To those who have suffered;
hopeful that their woundedness may be healed.*

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Introduction: A Prophetic Church that contributes to the public sphere.....	1
Chapter 1: Genesis of a festering wound.....	6
1.1 The emergence of the Maltese State and the weakening of a theocracy.....	6
1.2 Safeguarding souls:.....	11
the reasons behind the struggles.....	11
1.2.1 Pulpit above throne.....	12
1.2.2 Constantinianism and clericalism.....	16
1.2.3 The condemnation of Communism.....	22
1.3 The politico-religious clashes in Malta.....	26
1.3.1 The first clash: Strickland vs Caruana.....	26
1.3.2 The second (series of) clash(es): Gonzi vs Mintoff.....	29
1.4 Summary.....	55
Chapter 2: Perpetuating the wound.....	56
2.1 Creating a trauma.....	56
2.1.1 Cultural trauma: a social process.....	57
2.1.2 Perceiving victimhood.....	60
2.2 Remembering, narrating and grouping: a case for a Maltese cultural trauma?.....	64
2.2.1 Creating a narrative and its effects.....	64
2.2.2 Passing on the narrative.....	69
2.2.3 Identity and group consciousness leading to factionalism.....	72
2.2.4 A case for a Maltese cultural trauma.....	74
2.3 The Maltese fertile ground.....	81
2.3.1 Us-them factionalism.....	81
2.3.2 Zero-sum game politics.....	85

2.3.3 Patronage	88
2.3.4 Amoral familism.....	94
2.4 Summary.....	96
Chapter 3: Church as community: agent, space and presence for healing and reconciliation	97
3.1 Forming community	97
3.1.1 Church as <i>koinonía</i> : an ecclesiology of <i>kenosis</i>	101
3.2 Kingship as service: Church as the communion of the laity conformed as <i>alter Christus</i>	108
3.3 Priesthood as sanctifying: Church as agent, space and presence for healing and reconciliation	114
3.3.1 Healing and reconciling the <i>sittinijiet</i>	115
3.3.2 Reconciliation: changing the <i>status quo</i>	121
3.3.3 Repentance: a genuine ecclesial response which heals and restores wholeness ...	126
3.3.4 Regeneration: healing through a mimesis of blessing.....	131
3.4 Prophecy as transforming presence: witnessing through encounter.....	134
3.4.1 Proposing the Gospel through the Social Teaching of the Church	138
3.4.2 The Church’s transformative presence within the public sphere.....	141
3.5 Summary.....	146
Conclusion: Merciful discernment: healing and reconciling woundedness	147
Bibliography.....	151
Appendices	165

Acknowledgements

Whole hearted gratitude goes to Dr Nadia Delicata, my tutor, who along this journey followed with great interest and enthusiasm my work. Leaving no stone unturned, she guided and encouraged me constantly, patiently discussing and listened to my ramblings so that I could clear my thoughts. I would also like to thank Prof. Edward Warrington my co-tutor for his insights, dedication and patience.

My appreciation goes also to Prof. Joseph M. Pirotta for his advice on historical matters, and for taking time to review and discuss this work. Conversations with him and with H.E. Mgr. Charles J. Scicluna, H.E. Mgr. Mario Grech, H.E. Mgr. Joseph Galea Curmi, H.E. Dr Vanni Xuereb, Mgr. Francisco Javier Diaz Tenza, Mgr. Vincent Deguara, Mgr. Giuseppe Mifsud Bonnici, Can. Nicholas Doublet, Fr Nicholas Aquilina and Mr Ranier Fsadni and many friends were all fruitful one way or another to get a clearer picture; I appreciated their willingness to spare some of their precious time.

My gratitude goes also to my father for proofreading the text and my family for their encouragement and support, as well as to the staff of the Archbishop's Seminary Library and Librerija Informa and Prof Vern Neufeld Redekop, Professor Emeritus of Conflict Studies Saint Paul University, Ottawa Canada for their help. Lastly my gratefulness goes to Fr John Ph. Curmi, Parish Priest of Imqabba, and the parishioners for their support and understanding.

Without the backing of all these and the encouragement of many more, this work would not have seen the light of day.

Abbreviations

Magisterial Texts

AA – *Apostolicam Actuositatem*

AL – *Amoris Laetitia*

CL – *Christifideles Laici*

CV – *Christus Vivit*

DCE – *Deus Caritas Est*

DeE – *De Ecclesia*

DH – *Dignitatis Humanae*

EG – *Evangelii Gaudium*

EN – *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

ES – *Ecclesiam Suam*

GME – *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*

GS – *Gaudium et Spes*

LG – *Lumen Gentium*

MV – *Misericordiae Vultus*

NMI – *Novo Millennio Ineunte*

OA – *Octogesima Adveniens*

PDV – *Pastore Dabo Vobis*

PP – *Populorum Progressio*

QA – *Quadragesimo Anno*

RM – *Redemptoris Missio*

RP – *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*

Political parties and other organisations

BLG – Boffa Labour Group

CP – Constitutional Party

LLY – Labour League of Youth

MLP – Malta Labour Party

PL – Partit Laburista

PN – Partit Nazzjonalista

UPM – Unione Politica Maltese

GWU – General Workers Union

Introduction

A Prophetic Church that contributes to the public sphere

During my first years of formation at the Seminary, while going for a short walk with other seminarians after lunch, we were approached by a man who was praying the rosary. Seeing us approaching the gate he asked whether we were seminarians. He obviously had recognised us as such, and a conversation ensued. I do not remember the details of that conversation: what, however, I remember very clearly was the plea that we as future priests work for a church that heals the past. He told us how hurt and humiliated he felt in being rebuked by priests, especially in the confessional when he was still a young boy (possibly not even an adolescent) because he was a *Laburist*. His past experience not only remained vivid to his mind but also to many others who were treated likewise. What is meant to be a sacrament of healing was transformed by some to a torture chamber for many. (*cf.* EG, 44)

What follows is not a simplistic attempt at securing justice for those who suffered, but an attempt at understanding what happened, why it happened, what prolonged it till this day and what can be done to heal that turbulent past in seeking to reconcile Church and Politics in Malta. My contribution is prompted by the fact that I love both Politics and the Church and should in no way be interpreted as an attempt at demeaning either. On the contrary: it is a quest to reconcile both.

The faces of those I have spoken to about my studies, and the conversations which followed,

over the past months spoke volumes. Although some (few – actually two – an ecclesiastic and a Government Minister) have told me that such a study is not necessary, the rest (many) were genuinely intrigued and have encouraged me, indicating to me that this was not only an interesting subject, but also a necessary and an arduous one. Trevor Zahra wrote: “Il-Maltin għandhom karattru kulurit daqs luzzu u esplossiv daqs il-murtali tal-festa” (The Maltese are as colourful as a *Luzzu*¹ and explosive as fireworks), and indeed the interrelation between Church and Politics along the years has been at times colourful and explosive.

Church and State intersect so much that Malta cannot be considered a secular state but rather a semi-secular state where there is: 1. partial privatisation of religion; 2. ambivalence towards religion; 3. peculiar attachment to certain religious roots, such as Catholic culture and religious functions; 4. a succession of political regimes in which religion plays a determining role over centuries;² 5. a national identity imbued with religious narrative, symbols, tradition and ritual whereby the national and the religious community are virtually co-terminous.³

There is a strong awareness (confirmed in this study) that although Malta remains strongly semi-secular, the past politico-religious struggles have contributed greatly to cause a schism between faith and politics, both necessary for our common life, and which are still a wound in many and a woundedness within the ecclesial body. Unfortunately, although studies of a historical nature have been carried out, attempting to demythologise the confrontation, little if anything has been done to attempt to understand the causes and the effects of these struggles from a theological point of view. And therefore, my main (but not sole) focus in this study will be theological.

The feeling among many that Church and Politics should not mix translates into a schism between faith and political and social engagement. This not only misconstrues Church and Politics but also hinders the Church in Malta from being a prophetic voice in Maltese society,

¹ A Maltese fishing boat painted in several bright colours.

² See Appendix 1.

³ “Church attendance remains high and religious tradition, symbols and rituals permeate popular culture. Some important spheres of public and institutional life have been secularised, whilst others, no less important, have remained strongly connected with religion.” Adam Liwak, “Secularisation and Church State Relations: Towards a Typology,” *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 30, no. 3-4 (2017): 193, 196.

specifically within the public sphere. But this conviction that many espouse did not materialise out of thin air. If one listens carefully to what is said and notices attentively the reactions which this topic elicits one may notice that these are echoes which reverberate and resonate with past events. It has an origin and has been passed on from one generation to the next.

This origin cannot be identified in one particular event or episode, but rather in a period and a struggle which lasted decades but which, in common parlance and understanding still echoes as the *sittinijiet* (the sixties), *interdett* (interdict), *mizbla* (refuse dump), *id-dnub il-mejjet* (mortal sin). Chapter 1 inquires into the socio-political phenomenon. The inquiry consists partly of historical narrative and partly of sociological observation, which concludes with important propositions about the consequences of the phenomenon for society, polity and Church. Historical events will help to outline and understand events that took place; a theo-historical point of view will offer an ecclesiological understanding of ecclesiastical reasoning.

Starting from a socio-political-historical background, this chapter proceeds to analyse the ecclesiology which was predominant during the two politico-religious struggles. These will be outlined in detail, though emphasis will be put on the second. What will emerge will be an ecclesiology grounded in Vatican I from which the Maltese ecclesiastical hierarchy failed to read the signs of the times. What emerges is a structural sin⁴ of clericalism which takes the form of prestige and ecclesio-centricity and a top-down attitude, in an attempt to defend the visible Church and safeguard the salvation of souls from ideologies which contradicted the Church's. Rooted through the ranks and trumped by those who were *tal-Knisja*, this would significantly be renewed by an ecclesiology that would emerge in Vatican II, but the ecclesiastical authorities still persisted in preserving *Kattolicissima* Malta.

The original hurts were passed on and today Maltese society witnesses their effects. Chapter 2 analyses why the *sittinijiet* have such lasting effects on our society. This chapter applies theoretical constructs drawn from sociology (cultural trauma) and anthropology, and

⁴ I am understanding 'structural sin' as defined by Oscar Romero in his Second Pastoral Letter in 1977: "the crystallisation of individual egoisms in permanent structures which maintain this sin and exert its power over the great majorities." Osmond Rush, "Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II: Renewing 'The Face of the Church' to reflect 'The Genuine Face of God'," *Theological Studies* 74 no. 4 (2013): 793.

formulates a theological proposition that is then considered in Chapter 3. What will be presented is a dysfunctional power dynamic which facilitated the emergence of a cultural trauma. This consolidated a structure of social sins of dis-unity which take the form of factionalism, a belief in politics as a zero-sum game and patronage all enabled by amoral familism within the social structural dynamics of the Maltese sociological *humus*. This chapter will analyse how and why the interpretation of the events was perpetuated, whereby the *sittinijiet* become the birth trauma which abruptly transformed the age of *Malta Kattolicissima* to the era *Malta Socjalista*. These events, or rather the combination of history, woundedness and myth embodied in the term “*is-sittinijiet*”, undeniably left an indelible mark in many, individually and collectively, becoming defining moments for many and indeed for society. When a whole society is affected, such events become milestones in the formation of that nation. These become an integral part of its history, culture and identity. Influencing the narrative that some people call “us,” these events will be engraved in the story that society narrates of itself, defining the present and future cultural frame of reference.

But the *sittinijiet*, difficult and lacerating as they were, were never truly reconciled. On the contrary, as will emerge in Chapter 3, these events were avoided if not repressed; never properly discussed or analysed by the Church. This final chapter consists of a theological reflection on the conclusions and propositions emerging from the previous two chapters, and proceeds to elaborate an ecclesiological proposition that has pastoral consequences. What becomes evident is that the longer the wound is left to fester the longer it will take to heal. It will become evident in this chapter, that the two structural sins identified in chapters 1 and 2 intertwine and together with the emergence of cultural trauma, make the contribution of the Church within the public sphere tortuous. This requires healing and reconciliation, for the Church has a transformative prophetic contribution to offer to Politics, and equally prophetic must be her effort to reconcile herself with the public sphere. A journey towards healing and reconciliation will begin when a much-needed ecclesiological shift towards the actualisation of Vatican II becomes bolder. Emphasising an ecclesiology of *kenosis*, the ecclesial body must become more like a community in the image and likeness of the Trinity and its *praxis* should be modelled on the *munera Christi*.

Although criticism towards the Church from all quarters (including internal) are non-ending, many have witnessed a Church which makes hope tangible. It must be emphasised, affirmed and acknowledged that along the decades (including the 60s) there have been a great number of priests and lay organisations which were, and still are, beacons of the best practices of ministry and which have brought healing and consolation to the anguish and desolation of many. Neither can one say that the Church in Malta made no progress; the various pastoral and social initiatives we see today are the fruit of the authentic Church animated by the Spirit. Culminating in the Diocesan synod (celebrated between 1999 and 2004) the Church in Malta made important steps forward in translating a Christo-centric ecclesiology within the Maltese *ecclesia*, and a lot has been achieved.⁵ What follows are not the words of a prophet of doom but of someone hopeful that the Spirit of God enlightens our paths towards an ecclesial discernment and a restorative process.

⁵ See Documents of the Diocesan Synod and the reports presented during the Diocesan Assembly, held between 22-23 November 2018.

Chapter 1

Genesis of a festering wound

1.1 The emergence of the Maltese State and the weakening of a theocracy

A triumphal, militant and medieval Church was “in every sense the centre around which the life of the village[s] revolve[d],”¹ and long after the nation states modified feudal Europe, Malta was still run like a theocracy where ecclesiastical authorities were the dominating social and political force. Religion determined greatly the collective narrative, the cultural mindset and the social relations of the Maltese and shaped our self-understanding and self-identity. Starting with the magnificence of the megalithic temples and sealed with St Paul’s shipwreck in 60 AD, (Acts 27) religion takes pride of place in Maltese popular history. As certain aspects are mythologized, religion and religious symbols become corner stones within our collective narrative and take different forms and shapes. This continues with the subjugation by Muslims of the Maltese islands, then saved by Count Roger.² The Feudal period³ followed and

¹ Jeremy Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks: Religion and Politics in Rural Malta*, (Valletta: Progress Press, 1993), 31; See also Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress (1800-1976)*, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 41, 192.

² Highly mythologised figure, who is thought to have given us the Maltese National Flag, but the incursion was little more than a *razzia*.

³ Popularly little is known about this period.

continued throughout the stay of the Knights of St John⁴ (1530-1798) who with the help of the Maltese, (the national myth continues) prevented the Muslim invasion of Europe ultimately saving Christendom.⁵ The Great Siege becomes the definite crowning of religious triumph on the islands and in Europe. From the 1565 events, our popular history will go directly to the short stay of the French (1798-1800) and the longer period of colonialization by the British. This lasted for 164 years (1800-1964) till Independence and ten years later (1974) Malta shed the Monarchy to become a Republic. During the 20th C., religion starts receding, but still maintaining its dominating influence. The 1970s⁶ are considered by a sizeable sector as the definite period of freedom from the foreign invader (the British) and the internal oppressor (the Church), but these led to the rough 80s, the economic development of the 90s and the first decade of this century and the accession within the EU in 2004.

If “[c]ollective identities are rooted in beliefs that are maintained in everyday life through routine practices,”⁷ then religious practice was indeed an essential component of Maltese identity. Describing Maltese rural society in the 1960s, Boissevain characterises it as a society whose daily and yearly calendar was regulated by religion and where the chimes of Church bells synchronised the people’s routine.⁸ An archipelago dotted with Catholic references cannot but be Catholic and whereby people’s lives revolved around religious happenings. Insularity made it possible for the Maltese to close themselves within this single reality⁹ and mono-chromatic identity.¹⁰

⁴ Who were de-facto Feudal Lords of the islands, ruling them as a vassal state of the Kingdom of Sicily.

⁵ This view is a highly romanticised ideal story.

⁶ In 1969 – The peace agreement between the Church and the MLP is signed, 1979 – the British military bases are closed.

⁷ Ron Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma: Emotion and Narration,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ronald N. Jacobs, and Philip Smith (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2012), 572.

⁸ Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 55.

⁹ It was during and after World War II that the Maltese started being exposed significantly to foreign media. The foreigners that arrived were either simply ‘*barranin*’, outsiders, or purely invaders, both ‘others’. This started a slow process of opening up to the rest of the world.

¹⁰ This explains the phrase “*Imbasta nsara!*” (And they call themselves Christian!). This indicates that the presumption is that Christianity intertwines with the Maltese identity, and that

Effectively, until the Knights left, Malta was a theocracy governed by a religious (and military) order,¹¹ where religious and temporal fused completely until the end of the 19th C. With the arrival of the French and the British, the Maltese were governed (for the first time ever) by a secular entity.

While during the 18th C. nationalism and secularism were flourishing in Europe, in Malta a separation between State and Church, secular and religious, emerges as an issue in the 1920s and 1930s and becomes more evident in the mid-20th C.¹² Until then the Church in Malta remained the undisputed dominant cultural force. Albeit much later than elsewhere, in Malta, a sense of state starts gaining momentum during the 19th C.¹³ and consequently the slow separation of Church and State at the beginning of the 20th C. Jealous and protective of their dominion, the ecclesiastical authorities in Malta resisted tooth and nail these ideas which threatened the ecclesial hegemony.¹⁴

The British understood well the influence that religion, and most of all Malta's religious leaders, had through the loyal and obedient clergy with its ramifications over the whole population. An integral part of Maltese culture, narrative and identity, religion found its representative and promoter in the ecclesiastical authority (the *de facto* leaders of the people) where the *Kappillan* (Parish Priest) was considered as "the head of the village,"¹⁵ supported by the religiously linked apparatus in villages and towns.

Having a population in revolt, as happened during the final period of the Knights

the Maltese as a people are inherently Christian, specifically "Roman Catholic". Not having any significant non-Catholic denominations in Malta, the term *Insara* (Christians) denotes Catholic.

¹¹ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 22-26.

¹² Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 42.

¹³ Especially with the birth of political parties in 1880 and their natural pretensions to govern.

¹⁴ The Church being one of the three pillars (together with the British over-lordship and the civil service) which ordered Maltese society, understood that the transfer of power re-orders "the sources of power and the status of power holders." Edward Warrington, "The Fall from Grace of an Administrative Elite: The Administrative Class of the Malta Civil Service and the Transfer of Power – April 1958 to September 1964," quoted in André Debattista, "'Centred in self yet not unpleased to please': The Arts of Political Leadership in Post-Colonial Malta (1964-1979)," in *Public Life in Malta II: Essays on Governance, Politics and Public Affairs in the EU's Smallest Member State*, eds. Mario Thomas Vassallo and Carmel Tabone, (Malta: Department of Public Policy, University of Malta, 2017), 32.

¹⁵ Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 43.

(*Rewwixta tal-Qassin* [the Revolt of the Clergy] in 1775) and during the French occupation,¹⁶ would thwart British strategic objectives. To avoid this, the British “tried to honour the pledges given in 1800, [that is] to guarantee and protect the beliefs and customs of the local population [and adopt a] policy of non-interference in religious affairs.”¹⁷ They also did their utmost “to endear [themselves to] the Bishop of Malta, by bestowing rank and prestige, [but] as quid-pro-quo, the British wanted a finger in the pie when appointments to high ecclesiastical offices, especially the Episcopal See,” were to be made.¹⁸

When the Maltese placed themselves under the British, they expected to govern themselves. The British were chosen as protectors not as dominators, but obviously the British Government had other intentions. Being considered ‘illiterate’ and ‘superstitious’ by the British, an elected Maltese popular government was deemed an ‘unworkable folly.’¹⁹ Nonetheless the British Government recognized the growing strength of Maltese politicians who started garnering support and, if it wanted to secure its interests locally and internationally,²⁰ Britain had to make a balancing act of sorts between the growing power of the newly formed parties and the still powerful Church authorities. The 19th C. saw the introduction of the Council of Government, on which members of the Clergy, and for some time the Bishop too, sat. Eventually in 1857 they were disqualified from membership, but this didn’t mean that ecclesiastical influence was curtailed

¹⁶ Bonaparte sought to implement a harsh separation of Church and State in the light of the French Revolution but was politically foolish. With the arrival of the French, while the Diocesan Church received a blow, at the same time her two competitors (the Order and the Inquisition) were expelled with the result that religious authority became more centralised. Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 29-31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁹ ‘It must be a basic principle that the military authority should be free from all restraint in superceding the Civil Power whenever the security of the Island appeared to demand it’. Liverpool to the Commissioners of Inquiry, 1 May 1812, quoted by Lee Hilda, *Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development* (Malta: Progress Press, 1976), 16-17.

²⁰ Imperial Britain and the Holy See would come in conflict during the 19th C. over appointments of high-ranking ecclesiastical positions. The Holy See knew that it could not jeopardise its relations with the Empire for the sake of all the Catholics who were subjects to the Crown. The British knew this and used it to control the Maltese Church.

considerably.²¹

Following the First World War (1914-1918) political enthusiasm towards self-government gained momentum,²² leading to the introduction of Responsible Government in 1921.²³ Now a stronger variable was introduced: the Maltese Administration. Koster observes that this created a 'rival' for the Maltese Church which "would gradually penetrate all spheres of social life and thus usurp tasks, duties and competences of the Church."²⁴ A 'rival' however, with whom the Church was expected to share power. This threw the Church into the political fray, becoming effectively "a political party" contending with the others in the running of the public sphere.

Until this point in time, religion permeated almost completely "the structure of Maltese society to an extent that [it was] quite impossible to classify many institutions as either religious or secular."²⁵ Although we witness the rising of the separation of Church and State, this is not simply a legal construct. Although technically, the decisional power stood ultimately with the British and with the elected (and appointed) Maltese Legislative authority, practically, the Church authority had a bigger say than the number of seats she was apportioned and the clergy that were elected through various political parties. It was the first step towards separation, but it would take decades for it to sink into the people's consciousness and the Church authorities were not ready to relinquish what had been theirs for centuries. The boundaries between secular and religious were anything but distinguishable, and likewise, the limits and extensions of what is properly political and religious. All this created the ideal ground for the politico-religious struggles that characterised Malta's 20th C., ultimately defining anew what it meant to be Maltese.

²¹ See Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 49-50.

²² See Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel: L-Ewwel Ktieb (1900-1933)*, (Malta: n.d., 1977), 188-196.

²³ See Appendix 2

²⁴ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 72.

²⁵ Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 32.

1.2 Safeguarding souls: the reasons behind the struggles

In hindsight, granting the Church seats in the Legislative Assembly didn't give a voice to the Church, but rather weakened her by placing her in competition with her own people, first with the Constitutional Party (CP) and then with the Malta Labour Party (MLP); struggles which were personified in Bishop Mauru Caruana²⁶ and Lord Gerald Strickland²⁷, and Archbishop Mikiel Gonzi²⁸ and Dom Mintoff.²⁹ From being the unifying and safeguarding institution of the population, the Church became a competitor in the political arena.

The first struggle erupts when the Church, while being part of the state mechanism, through representatives of the clergy in the legislative assembly, at the same time she places herself above the state. It is within this context of a dual function that the ecclesiastical hierarchy is stuck; on the one hand a legislator representing a party; on the other a spiritual guide of all. Inevitably the roles conflated. During the second struggle, while the hierarchy was not officially part of the state mechanism, its authority in spiritual matters conflated and went on to influence the temporal matters. It was a role the hierarchy expected, some were willing to accept but a growing number wanted to abolish. Bishops and clergy will essentially try to propound spiritual wellbeing of the nation and citizens through political struggle.

It is not the intention of this study to analyse the historical facts *per se*. Nonetheless, it is important to get a clear picture of what happened primarily to demythologise the events and understand better the complex entanglement of threads the 20th C. was. From an ecclesial point of view, what will emerge are two issues. Firstly there is the ecclesiological outlook of the ecclesiastical hierarchy which will characterise the understanding of the

²⁶ Archbishop of Malta 1915-1943.

²⁷ Prime Minister of Malta 1924-1932.

²⁸ Senator in the Malta Legislative Assembly 1921-1924; Bishop of Gozo, 1924-1943; Bishop (then Archbishop) of Malta 1943-1976.

²⁹ Prime Minister of Malta 1955-1958, 1971-1984; Leader of the MLP 1949-1984.

roles of Church and State, throne and pulpit. Secondly, specifically concerning the conflict between Church teachings and political ideologies, in particular Communism. While the former will concern both struggles, the latter will concern particularly the second politico-religious struggle.

1.2.1 Pulpit above throne

The distinction between Church and State (which in local terms is defined as Church and politics³⁰) and to be more precise the distinction between altar and throne³¹ starts with Christianity.³² One cannot distinguish between the two before Christ confronts Pilate and claims: “My kingdom is not from this world.” (Jn 18, 36) It is a distinction which does not exist in Monotheistic Israel or in the pagan world “where the ancient religion was essentially *political religion*, public cult which had as its finality the good and the greatness of the *polis* and the *imperium*.”³³ Christ’s revolution reveals that the Kingdom of God is not of this world, but it manifests itself within this world mysteriously and sacramentally, transforming hearts, fertilizing the world since it is God’s creation, while at the same time contesting it and undermining its web of illusions, lies and seductions.³⁴

It is the Theodosian edict in 380 AD which marks the first turning point and shifts the understanding of this relation and which along centuries to come, would be interpreted and actualised in various ways.³⁵ The distinction of a clear boundary between what

³⁰ The concern within the Maltese scenario is the mingling of Church representatives in political matters, and not as such in the distinction between the Institutional Church and the State – still fuzzy and not quite distinct on certain matters but quite so on others and at times conflating with partisan matters.

³¹ Until the 18th C. we cannot speak of states.

³² Without discarding whole centuries of Church history, this is an attempt at highlighting the turning points which are of importance to the subject study.

³³ Massimo Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica: Da Agostino a Peterson – La Fine dell’Era Costantiniana*, (Genova: Maretti 1820, 2016), 28 (my translation, original italics).

³⁴ Olivier Clément, *Il Potere Crocifisso: Vivere la fede in un mondo pluralista*, trans. Laura Marino (Magnano: Qiqajon, 1999), 34.

³⁵ Borghesi remarks that Augustine’s distinction between *civitas Dei* and *civitas mundi*, becomes

belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar (what is Civil and what is religious/spiritual/moral) is nowadays blurred if non-existent. But before 380 (where for many periods the Church was persecuted), the *Patres* distinguished clearly between Church and polis and were ardent defenders of freedom of religion and based their understanding on Christ' commandment of love and not of the sword (Mt 26, 52). Following this line of thought we find Christian Apologists like Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolitus and Tertullian who writes that:

it is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion – to which free-will and not force should lead us.³⁶

Consequently, this brings along the freedom of conscience (not yet intended as freedom of individual conscience)³⁷ which as a concept apart from being revolutionary, was 'extraneous and subversive' to paganism for which, religion and politics were 'intimately linked.' Eventually from being a 'subversive' religion and many a times a persecuted community, Christian communities are granted rights and favours. But at the same time Constantine's Edict (313) ushers in the problem of the *libertas ecclesiae* from the State which demands that religion functions in favour of its unity. It is for political rather than theological reasons that schisms and heresies are fought by state apparatus. Religious unity and political consolidation went hand in hand, and consequently the two will become identified with each other once again.³⁸ From now till 380, when Theodosius declares Catholic Christianity as the only licit religion, the Fathers, amongst whom Athanasius, Osio of Codova and Hilary of Poitiers, criticise the imperialist

in *Unam Sanctam* (Bonafice VIII, 1302) unified in a theocratic notion. With Charlemagne it becomes the *Sacrum imperium*. See Borghesi, *Critica della teologia politica*, 12.

³⁶ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, Chapter 2, trans. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0305.htm>.

³⁷ It will take the Church more than eighteen centuries to dogmatically reaffirm this principle as a right of the human person in *Dignitatis Humanae*, promulgated on 7 December 1965, 101 years and a day after Pius IX declared liberty of cult and consciences as '*deliramentum*' (mental insanity - quoting Gregory XVI) in *Quanta Cura* promulgated on 8 December 1864.

³⁸ It is for this reason that Constantine as Emperor calls for the Council of Nicaea. On the links between religion and empire see Marie D. Chenu and Mauro Pesce, *La Fine del'Era Costantiniana*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013), 13-15.

Roman-Christian political theology.³⁹ Hilary of Poitiers already in 364 writes:

I ask you dear bishops, ... on which powers did the apostles base themselves to preach the Christ ... was it according to the edicts of the king that Paul gathered the Church for Christ? The temporal protections recommend divine faith, and the virtue of Christ is accused of impotency because ambition unites with his name ... Amongst this lost ancient Church, and that which we have in front of our eyes today the contradiction is strident.⁴⁰

And Athanasius in criticising Costanzo, an Arian Emperor writes:

Our Saviour is so gentle that ... He does not force them, but knocks at the door and says, 'Open unto Me, My sister, My spouse' (Song of Songs 5:2); and if they open to Him, He enters in, but if they delay and will not, He departs from them. For the truth is not preached with swords or with darts, nor by means of soldiers; but by persuasion and counsel. But what persuasion is there where fear of the Emperor prevails?⁴¹

With Augustine the demand for a coercive intervention of the State against pagans and heretics gets prominence in the 'ecclesial communion.' Yet Augustine retracted his ideas; until 405 he was against this coercive use of force by the civil authorities, but subsequently changes his ideas because of Emperor Honorius. His reasoning is based, on the parable of The Great Dinner (Lk 14, 15-24) specifically v. 23 with the Master's command to "compel people to come in", and Paul's forced conversion by the Lord "throwing him on the floor" and "physically blinding him." Borghesi claims that through this peculiar exegesis, Augustine inaugurates "political theology"⁴² that becomes foundational for medieval politics. Augustine will shift his thoughts again in *De Civitate Dei*, which is "perhaps Augustine's greatest book ... crucial to the development of Western political thought [in that it explains the relationship] between the political sphere and the sphere of faith."⁴³ Augustine claims that Christianity cannot

³⁹ Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 30-37

⁴⁰ *Io vi domando, o vescovi, ... su quali poteri si sono basati gli apostoli per predicare il Cristo ... È per gli editti del re che Paolo radunava la Chiesa per il Cristo? Le protezioni terrene raccomandano la fede divina, e la virtù di Cristo è accusata di impotenza poiché l'ambizione si unisce al suo nome ... Fra questa chiesa del passato, oggi perduta, e quella che noi abbiamo sotto gli occhi la contraddizione è stridente.* Hilary of Poitiers, *Contra Auxentium*, 3-4, quoted in Borghesi, *Critica della teologia politica*, 34.

⁴¹ Athanasius, *Historia arianorum*, trans. <http://newadvent.org/fathers/2815.htm>, 33.

⁴² For a more detailed analysis on Augustine's political theology see Joseph Ratzinger, *A Cesare e a Dio: La Teologia della Politica Di Agostino e la Sua Attualità*, in *Liberare la Libertà: Fede e Politica nel Terzo millennio*, (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2018), 39-62.

⁴³ Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine*, (San Francisco: Ignatius

base its justification on the theo-political conception, of the God of force. Even if Christianised, Ratzinger⁴⁴ would claim, the State for Augustine remained “worldly” and the Church a community of “strangers,” for whom the world is never home.⁴⁵ Ultimately, we are citizens in heaven (Phil 3, 20) and the Church will find her fulfilment, not in the political arena but in the eschatological moment.

Two other major turning points worth mentioning occur when at the beginning of the second millennium the papacy establishes itself, through the *Dictatus Papae* (1090), above all princes and as the supreme authority which no one can judge.⁴⁶ By this time the ecclesial functions came to be understood not on the New Testament understanding of love and service (Mt 20, 25-28) but on Roman Law and the ‘juridification’ of the ecclesial ministry of ruler and ruled. So evident was this that Bernard of Clairvaux⁴⁷ reminds Pope Eugenius III (d. 1153) that he should “be the successor of Peter, not of Constantine.”⁴⁸ Within this context during the first centuries of the second millennium, altar and throne clash more frequently (not solely) on issues concerning territorial and economic control, primarily concerning the temporal authority of the Papacy and its “*lunga manus*” (the Bishops and the clergy), rather than on theological matters.⁴⁹ For the next nine centuries the ecclesiastical authorities will gradually continue to strengthen their hierarchy with the Papacy becoming the central axis of command. This partly caused the reformation schism and the counter reformation epitomised in the Council of Trent.

Press, 2008), 186-7.

⁴⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, “L’Unità delle Nazioni: Una Visione dei Padri della Chiesa,” (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2009), 113-4, quoted in Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 41.

⁴⁵ Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 37-41.

⁴⁶ Ernest F. Henderson, *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1910), 366-367.

⁴⁷ In *De consideratione*, I, 4, 4, 3 in Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 41.

⁴⁸ Francis Oakley, “Obedience and the Church’s Teaching Authority: The Burden of the Past,” 58 in Charles Taylor, Jose Casanova and George F. McLean eds., *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, (Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 53-70.

⁴⁹ One may say that the major theological formulations have been ‘sorted’ in the first few centuries, and the Protestant reformation is still four centuries away. The promulgation of *Clericis Laicos* (1296) and *Unam Sanctam* (1302) by Boniface VIII would be significant during this period.

After this period we witness the theology of absolutism and divine right of kings (16th – 18th centuries) and slightly earlier the advent of the print revolution and the scientific revolution. Continuing throughout the second half of the millennium, the concerns, apart from being temporal questions, become increasingly so dogmatic, philosophical and theological.⁵⁰

After Descartes, and the European Enlightenment, Europe starts witnessing the dawn of atheism, naturalism and modernism during the 18th and 19th C. with “derivative movements of liberal democracy and industrial capitalism.”⁵¹ Scepticism towards religion and religious belief began emerging. This would cause an untying of people from their beliefs, diminishing the ‘sacral’ power the Church could wield, and in response an attempt on the part of theology to fight against political and philosophical theories which pushed in this direction. This period coincides with the emergence of the ‘state’ and later with Vatican Council I (1868-1870). Abruptly halted due to the Italian *Risorgimento* and the start of the Roman Question this period becomes the stage for the beginning of the end of the effective temporal authority of the papacy.⁵²

1.2.2 Constantinianism and clericalism

Through *de Ecclesia*, Vatican Council I centralised Christ’s redemptive mission as “eternal shepherd and guardian of [souls]” and Church in the person of the Supreme Pontiff, as successor of Peter.

And since the gates of hell trying, if they can, to overthrow the Church, make their assault with a hatred that increases day by day against its divinely laid foundation, we judge it necessary, with the approbation of the Sacred Council, and for the protection, defence and growth of the Catholic flock, to propound the doctrine

⁵⁰ Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age 1740-1958*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 11-12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵² During the 19th C the papal states were dissolved and reinstated several times, but in September 1870 the Italian army breached the Aurelian wall conquering the last bastions of the Papal states – Rome, only to be recognised once again with the resolution of the Roman Question in 1929 at the signing of the *Patti Lateranensi*, whereby the Italian Government “agreed” to the “reconstitution” of the Vatican City State.

concerning the 1. institution, 2. permanence and 3. nature of the sacred and apostolic primacy, upon which the strength and coherence of the whole Church depends. (DeE, 6)⁵³

During this Council the Church strengthened dogmatically its hierarchical structure and its relationship to society⁵⁴ with great insistence on the condemning of Modernism⁵⁵ and Communism⁵⁶ forging a mentality and an ecclesiology which the Maltese ecclesiastical authorities espoused during the politico-religious struggles. Reinforced by Vatican Council I, the dictum "*Extra ecclesia nulla salus*", becomes an underpinning theological outlook.⁵⁷

Although by the 20thC. no religious authority sat on the governing throne in Malta, the ecclesiastical authorities had the power to influence sacramentally and verbally, from the altar and the pulpit. For most, and the British were aware of this, there was little difference between purely civil/political matters and purely ecclesial/religious ones. Ultimately the primary concern for the British was to maintain order. Born and bred within this ecclesiology, the Maltese ecclesiastical hierarchy considered themselves to be the spiritual fathers of Malta, and the "guardians of morality of [their] spiritual children and responsible before God for the salvation of [their] souls."⁵⁸ In having both religious and political roles, they could defend the Catholic sentiment of the Maltese and "strengthen and safeguard Malta's Catholic heritage."⁵⁹ Strongly patriarchal, the Church

⁵³ trans. <https://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V1.HTM#6>.

⁵⁴ Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 55.

⁵⁵ This was done by an anti-modernist decree *Lamentabili sane exitu* (1907), followed by an encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis* (1907) and an anti-modernist oath *Sacrorum antistitum* (1910) which was required to be taken by all clergy, pastors, confessors, preachers, religious superiors, and professors in philosophical-theological seminaries.

⁵⁶ See next section.

⁵⁷ This is clear in Gonzi's 1953 pre-electoral Pastoral Letter (just to mention one example) which noted that "it was not enough that all the political parties had affirmed their loyalty to the Catholic Church and its teachings." It was individuals who implemented policies; therefore "the electors were duty bound to scrutinize the public and private lives of the candidates in order to assess their moral and religious qualities... [I]t was not enough for someone to call himself a Christian; he had to live like one." Joseph M. Pirotta, *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*, vol. 1 (Valletta: Studia Editions, 1987), 366.

⁵⁸ Mikiel Gonzi and Giuseppe Pace, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, March 6, 1960

⁵⁹ Joseph M. Pirotta, *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*, vol. 3 (Valletta: Studia Editions, 2001), 730.

was represented prominently in the figure of the Bishops and his clergy. It was not simply an organisational organogram, but a whole *modus vivendi* and *docendi* which defined roles and relationships. If the *paterfamilias* was the one in charge in the family, so was the priest in the parish and the Bishop in the diocese (in our case the whole country). The Bishop as representative of Christ on Earth not only had authority to teach and lead but had the power (or so it was thought and taught) to demand that his authority be respected, with the ultimate aim being the safeguarding of souls.

It is within this framework that the vociferous ecclesiastical authorities and the clergy functioned even in respect to political matters. In a nation where throne and altar were practically indistinguishable (especially when for centuries this distinction was unnecessary), a priest's involvement in affairs of the throne was tantamount to extend to affairs pertinent to the altar and to some extent vice-versa. But with the emergence of the Maltese state and the curtailing of the theocratic order, Bishops and clergy came to be seen as overstepping their role, and as interfering in the political order. By 1921, accusations of partisanship against Bishops and clergy emerged profusely through Strickland's newspapers.⁶⁰

By participating in the Legislative Assembly, the representatives of the hierarchy wore two hats: the authority to represent Christ and that to decide political matters. While the first was indisputable (in both clashes, especially the first), the second meant that they become political opponents of part of their flock. These blurry lines were not only facilitated by canon law,⁶¹ but strongly encouraged by the theo-political atmosphere of the time. Inspired by Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, various Catholic movements, political parties and workers' unions were founded across Europe.⁶² Now that States had substituted Christendom, each with their political and economic theories in the wake of the European Enlightenment and Modernity, the Universal and the particular

⁶⁰ See Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 89-90.

⁶¹ Nowadays Canon Law (Can. 285 §3) prohibits "Clerics [from assuming] public offices which entail a participation in the exercise of civil power" but the 1917 Code was mute on the issue. For a more detailed discussion see John P. Beal, James A. Coriden and Thomas J. Green, eds., *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2000), 374-7.

⁶² A list of Catholic parties and unions can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2T4DyX1> (retrieved on 20 January 2019)

Church(es) still made an effort to assert their position, within the political spectrum, not to be “pushed to the margins of European society.”⁶³ Malta was not alien to this wave of politically active clerics, eager to engage vigorously in the various political and social dimensions.⁶⁴ Faced with secular pressures, the beginning of the 20thC., witnessed the emergence of first (contemporary) Catholic Lay movements⁶⁵ with priests leading ‘armies’ of laity who became engaged in religious activism and mobilisation, inspired by “the Leonine strategy” of being pro-active in social reform.⁶⁶

The ecclesiastical authorities demanded that their authority would be unquestioned even when, as politicians, they disagreed with other politicians. Homogenous in their religion, Malta and the Maltese, differed considerable on political ideals. The Maltese were practically all practising Catholics (in the common sense of the word: Mass, sacraments, confession, rosary etc), but the political outlook was not as homogenous and politicians and their followers started to differentiate between faith and political ideologies.⁶⁷ This instilled within the hierarchy the scare of liberalism and a-religiosity,

⁶³ Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 107-110.

⁶⁴ During the 1921 elections **Panzavecchia**, founder and Leader of the UPM, (later the UPM and the PDN became the PN) together with **Gonzi** on behalf of the PL were elected from the same district to the Senate. In a 1978 interview Gonzi said, that he wasn’t interested in politics, but was ordered by Archbishop Caruana to enlist. Eventually he resigned upon his nomination as Bishop of Gozo.

Apart from these there were also: **Carmelo Bugelli** who during the following election (1924) changed ticket and was elected on behalf of the PL. **Enrico Dandria** and **Francesco Ferris** who was the first Minister for Education (October 1921 – October 1923) followed by Dandria (July 1923 and August 1927; June – July 1932). Both were also elected on the UPM ticket in the Legislative Assembly together with **Alfons Maria Hili** on behalf of the PDN, whilst **Anastasju Cuschieri** was co-opted on behalf of the Graduates. Apart from these, two special seats were allotted to the clergy in the senate between 1921 and 1933.

For further information see Max Farrugia, *Enrico Dandria: Qassis, Politiku, Patrijott*, (Malta: Kite, 2017), 59-80, 183-205; Mario Sciavone, *L-Elezzjonjiet f’Pajjizna: Fl-Isfond Storiku (1800-2013)*, (Malta: PIN, 2013), 94-105, 1222; Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 82.

⁶⁵ Notable for their international spread one finds the Legion of Mary founded in 1921 (in Malta in 1936) and the Catholic Action founded in 1922 (in Malta in 1929). <http://thechurchinmalta.org/en/posts/category/catholic-movements>.

⁶⁶ Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 15-16.

⁶⁷ A strong division in ideas, evident strongly for example on the Language question, it was also a question determined by the different social classes that existed in Malta. The differentiation can be witnessed already during the 30s; the votes garnered by Strickland and his party and later the increasing number of votes in favour of Mintoff and his party indicated that people started

specifically through atheist communism, which they fought in seeking to defend the island's Catholicity, seeing no distinction between spiritual and temporal dimensions.

The State was deemed to be the rightful administrator of material wellbeing, but anything that could jeopardise the wellbeing of the soul became a religious concern. In such cases it was the hierarchy that would have the final say, for hers was by divine right the correct way, whereas that of the government only human.⁶⁸ The Church wanted to maintain Malta *Kattolicissima* and made sure that through the person of the bishop she spoke whenever the government's proposals "might be opposed to Catholic morals."⁶⁹ This was not a fight against a party (the CP or later the MLP), but a fight against anything that, according to the ecclesiastical authorities, threatened the Church and the children entrusted to her care.⁷⁰ Criticised of intromission within the political debate, the ecclesiastical authority saw the Church, which it embodied, as the Kingdom of Christ on Earth; a perfect society⁷¹ within which one enters for safety and salvation and this

making a distinction between altar and throne.

⁶⁸ Lent Pastoral Letter February 26 1956.

⁶⁹ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 155.

⁷⁰ It is noteworthy to mention Gonzi's disagreement with the PN on the issue of the Child Emigration Scheme whereby Maltese children, mostly orphaned boys, were to be admitted into Catholic Institutions in Australia. The scheme had the Archbishop's blessing but was opposed by Mizzi and the PN who "were not fully satisfied about the spiritual welfare of the boys." Apart from the clash on ideas, Gonzi rebuked Mizzi and Borg Olivier for they were critical of the Church. Following a tit-for-tat between Lehen is-Sewwa and Borg Olivier (then Deputy Leader of the PN), Gonzi wrote to Mizzi complaining that Borg Olivier: "criticized the Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority of this Island ... He declared in Parliament that my opinion carried no weight, since the question (of emigration) is not a political question. (I admit that in matters of a strictly political nature I have no authority to speak as a Bishop, but only as a simple citizen) [but] Notary Borg Olivier treated the question also from the spiritual point of view, and set himself up as the teacher to the Archbishop in spiritual matters."

Borg Olivier was echoing Mizzi's view, so the Archbishop's "reprimand was also in part levelled at him." Gonzi himself made the distinction between matters of a strict political nature and those which are not. The issue would still remain when it comes to the interpretation of "strict." Moreover, Gonzi had an issue with the fact that the "Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority" was criticized.

Instances of Gonzi's involvement in political issues were many in number. His involvement in the Emigration drive in the 50s can be seen in Gonzi's drive towards social housing. It is interesting to note how Gonzi reacted to comments made by Borg Olivier (then Minister) with regards to how the Church should lead by example in aiding the poor with housing issues. See *Ibid.* 184-185, 335 *et seq.*, 398-9.

⁷¹ This was the punch line of the Lent Pastoral Letter, February 1956. This concept was imbued

legitimised a militant attitude.

The polarisation that characterised the politico-religious struggles reinforced, on both sides of the conflict, the understanding that the hierarchy represented religion. On the Church's part, being anti-clerical became tantamount to being anti-religion. On the opposing side, some grew in their antagonism against religion *per se*, others found it difficult to relinquish their faith and became more and more anti-hierarchy – personified in the person (not so much the office) of the Archbishop. Nonetheless the Church still enjoyed great power and people were still predominantly religious.

Strickland's and Mintoff's antagonism were perceived – and in some cases this was true – as a direct attack on the Archbishop and the Clergy, and hence diminishing the latter's esteem in the eyes of the flock. Since ecclesiastical status (and dominance) was considered to be directly proportional to the island's Catholicity, such antagonism posed the risk (the Hierarchy believed) of diminishing the faith and hence the “chance of salvation” of the flock. Their attacks were deemed to jeopardise the faithful. ‘Ignorant’ in discerning matters of conscience and of forming the right judgement about moral issues the faithful needed instruction and protection primarily against those who would wish to derail them on paths away from their faith.

Viewed as insubordination, such ‘disrespectful’ attitude was not to be accepted, especially when rebellious Maltese Catholics confronted the divine authority granted by Christ to the Church (personified in the hierarchy) to interpret God's law.⁷² Remaining silent on the part of the Church was not an option.⁷³ While it is true that this may seem as a dire attempt at withholding power, it should not be seen as a superficial struggle. At play, the ecclesiastical hierarchy believed, there was the salvation of souls, and there

in the Catholic way of thinking at the time, even though for decades things were moving slowly towards a renewed conception of Church. However, we must keep in mind that Gonzi was a product of his time and Vatican Council I. More recently, the encyclical *Quadrogesimo anno* (1931) considered the Church as “a perfect and juridical society [founded] by Jesus Christ” and not “as an association amongst others” as Socialism held.

⁷² Lent Pastoral letter 1956

⁷³ In the 1956 Lent Pastoral Letter, Gonzi quotes from St Gregory the Great: “*Tot occidimus, quot et mortem ire quotidie iepidi et tacentes, vidimus, quia peccatum subditi culpa praepositi, si tacuerit, reputatur.*” DeE, 3.5.

was no possibility of bargaining for a middle ground – *mors tua vita mea*.

1.2.3 The condemnation of Communism

Ensuring that the pulpit remained above the throne meant that the Catholicity of the Islands and the faith of the people could be maintained. But adding to this during the second politico-religious struggle was the worry that people would lose their faith because of atheistic communism – the kind of which was gaining ground in Eastern Europe and was challenged by the Church. Communism and socialism were feared, not just by the Church on a theological level, but also by the British Government on the politico-strategic level. The convolution of all this made the concoction even more explosive, making the post-war period anything but peaceful.

After the Second World War, two political blocs were formed, drawing the Iron Curtain over Europe and the World. Being a British colony, Malta was on the Western side of the line and hence any sympathy towards the East would be suspicious. By 1947, Mintoff had already been labelled as a communist by his political rivals and was “constantly referred to as ‘Comrade Mintoffovitch’.”⁷⁴ Communism, being the number one enemy of the Church at the time, became the first tug of war between Mintoff and Gonzi already in 1948. Following a dinner attended by Mintoff,⁷⁵ during which the *Red Flag* was played and sung, Gonzi’s interpretation of the event was that Mintoff was a communist and that “communism, had infiltrated Malta.”⁷⁶ As a consequence, the “Catholic sentiment of the Maltese people” was being jeopardised. The same dynamic of previous clashes between the Church and its opponents will become more evident as time goes by.

Although not hostile to the Labour movement, especially when inspired by the Catholic Social teaching of the Church, Gonzi feared that extreme fringes had infiltrated the MLP

⁷⁴ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 104.

⁷⁵ Still a Minister in Paul Boffa’s 1947 cabinet. Paul Boffa was Prime Minister of Malta (1947-1950); Leader of the Labour Party (1927-1949), Malta Worker Party/Boffa Labour Group (1949-1955)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

and that Mintoff was one of them. Consequently, he demanded—because he implicitly had the ‘power’ to – that Mintoff be “admonished for participating in a most indecorous celebration.”⁷⁷ What can be considered as a storm in a tea cup, went on for weeks with Mintoff having to defend himself in Parliament.⁷⁸ Tracing the draft lines of what his future arguments will be, in replying to an opposition member who remarked “that the Archbishop had expressed displeasure at the incident,” Mintoff was quoted to have replied that “the Archbishop was not an authority on politics.”⁷⁹ What would become one of the greatest clashes in Maltese history between Church and politics had just started.

After this incident, an anti-communist sentiment became evident during the 1950 elections with all political parties pledging in their manifestos to fight communism. By being loosely associated with communism, the MLP⁸⁰ was attracting already-existing anti-clerical elements and young ‘rebellious’ voters. Nonetheless, the MLP fought these accusations in its manifesto declaring loyalty to the Church,⁸¹ and promising “to fight communism with all its powers should it ever become a menace.”⁸² Gonzi, in his customary pre-electoral pastoral letter wrote: “were any party to attack the Church in the open it would be sure to get no votes” and encouraged the faithful “to vote only for those individuals who guaranteed to ‘respect and guard the religious interests and true temporal welfare of Malta.’”⁸³ “However, rumours of clandestine help by Gonzi to Boffa were so strong that Mgr. C. Bonnici – the Archbishop’s Delegate – formally denied that

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Shrewd as he was, Mintoff made it a point to emphasise that such an anthem was sung during the British Labour Party (then in government) meetings and that it had nothing to do with communism.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 152.

⁸⁰ Since the *Red Flag Incident*, the Labour Party had split in two parties, the MLP with Mintoff as its leader, and the Boffa Labour Group (BLG) with Boffa as its leader.

⁸¹ The opening sentence read: “In all our actions we take our inspirations from the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ as propounded by the Roman Catholic Church ...” Ibid., 213.

⁸² MLP newspapers wanted on the one hand to dismiss the accusations but didn’t want to outrightly distance themselves. See *Is-Sebh*, 10-8-50, in Ibid. (My underlining)

⁸³ Ibid., 213-4.

nuns had been instructed to vote for the BLG."⁸⁴

The Church feared communism because she believed it proposed a God-less society and was against Christian values. In *Rerum Novarum* (1891), in what was to become a milestone for Catholic Social Teaching, workers' rights, and an inspiration for labour movements, Leo XIII criticised communism as a system which violates human rights, namely the right of property.⁸⁵ Again in *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), Pope Pius XI condemned communism for its opposition to religion and as a threat to the existence of the Church, and in *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) as being "a system full of errors and sophisms", with a "pseudo-ideal of justice, equality, and fraternity" and "a certain false mysticism." This contrasted with the humane society (*civitas humana*) the Church advocated. It considered Socialism as being utterly contrary to the Catholic conception of individuals in society and therefore "no one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist." (QA) Eventually in 1949 the Decree Against Communism issued by the *Sant' Uffizio*,⁸⁶ prohibited Christians from joining communist parties, of voting for them, of reading communist newspapers, together with a whole list of other don'ts. Communist leaders were deemed to be hostile to God and the true religion and the Church of Christ, even though they may verbally support or profess not to be contrary to religion. Therefore, the Decree continued, they are *ipso facto* excommunicated and are not to be admitted to the sacraments.⁸⁷ This will become the crux of the issue in Malta.

Communism was considered not just a political and economic theory but, as summarily described above, an anti-Christian and anti-religion. Mintoff's insistence about the "non-interference by the Church in what he described as actions solely intended to secure purely political objectives"⁸⁸ were adding to the suspicion that, once in power, he would not blink an eye at the idea of creating a situation similar to what was happening

⁸⁴ Ibid., 214.

⁸⁵ Leo XIII was following on Pius IX's encyclical *Nostis et nobiscum* which had already opposed communism in 1849.

⁸⁶ Today's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), was replying to *Dubia* raised by Bishops.

⁸⁷ "La Condanna dei Comunisti", Treccani, accessed September 12, 2018, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/la-condanna-dei-comunisti-del-1949>.

⁸⁸ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 741.

behind the Iron Curtain.⁸⁹ Apart from the continuous verbal and written confrontation, communism was condemned in the 1961 Lenten Pastoral Letter. Referring to *Divini Redemptoris*, the Bishops emphasised that this was not motivated by political reasons “but because it was greatly harmful to humanity and sought to destroy the social order; it was atheist ... and stripped man of all dignity and freedom.”

Some considered it to be opposed to workers and in favour of the upper classes. But one cannot deny that the Church, even locally, was at the forefront of workers’ rights. In their Pastoral Letter the Bishops made it a point to refer both to *Rerum Novarum* and to efforts by Maltese clergy to set up the first workers’ organisations namely the *Società Operaia* and the *Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe*. They reiterated that even “the Labour Party was founded by people animated by the desire to improve workers’ conditions according to the teaching of the Church and he (Gonzi) had been one of them.”⁹⁰ It is possible that Gonzi was also irked personally by such comments due to his working-class background. “It was on the basis of his social work, that in 1921 Gonzi was nominated and elected a member of the Senate for the newly founded MLP.”⁹¹ Referring to *Ad Petri Cathedram*, the first encyclical by John XXIII published in 1959, the pastoral letter held that those working in favour of workers’ rights “must never have recourse to those who hold doctrines condemned by the Church.”

⁸⁹ Bishops (Cardinal Jozsef -Mindszenty of Hungary, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński of Poland, Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac of Yugoslavia and Auxiliary Bishop Frantisek Tomasek of Czechoslovakia) were being imprisoned for their opposition to communism; the Maltese knew about these stories. *Ibid.*, 743

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 774-5.

⁹¹ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 82.

1.3 The politico-religious clashes in Malta

1.3.1 The first clash: Strickland vs Caruana

With the emergence of the Maltese state, the Church in Malta acquired a dual-role – the overarching religious authority with almost indisputable power, and the institutional Church which takes part in the realpolitik of the nation. While sitting at the discussion table as equal, the Church still retained the ‘above others’ complex – this would immediately lead to the first politico-religious clash. Starting in the 1920s and prolonging for over a decade, the clash between Caruana and Strickland, would be the first attempt to trace the boundaries between the political and religious realms.⁹² At first, Ganado holds, Caruana was not prejudiced politically against Strickland; on the contrary, politically they were both pro-British.⁹³ But the “Religious war,” as Strickland called it, while strengthening the idea that anti-clerical meant anti-religious, degenerated into demonstrations against the clergy and the Church. In fact, Dandria writes that before the 1921 election:

[Strickland] started an anti-clerical and anti-Catholic campaign from which he never desisted, truly and sincerely, to this very day. From 1921 to 1927 that campaign had been going on, sometimes open and defiant, but mostly camouflaged under a puritan cloak of reformism and had more than once elicited protests and condemnations of the most public kind from the Bishops of Malta and Gozo.⁹⁴

With the condemnation of “*Il-Ħmar*”⁹⁵ we see the surfacing of the first accusations of intrusion in Maltese politics. Strickland accused the Church of acting for political, rather than religious, motivations. The implication was that the Church was bullying her way around, using her religious mantle to achieve political goals. The Church authorities rebutted that Strickland was doing all his best to alienate the people from Catholic faith and traditions by denigrating the clergy. This series of events, which started in 1921, led

⁹² But at the time it crossed nobody’s mind to try and understand the conflicting roles that the Church had.

⁹³ Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, vol. 1, 406.

⁹⁴ Farrugia, *Enrico Dandria*, 86-7.

⁹⁵ “The Donkey”, a newspaper owned by Strickland.

to the “*Aide Memoire*” by Mgr. Robinson,⁹⁶ and a public letter by Cardinal Gasparri,⁹⁷ in June 1929. Both very critical of Strickland, who by then was Prime Minister. In reply, Strickland and his ministers wrote a memorandum refuting the accusations and declaring themselves loyal Catholics, claiming that they were not attacking priests *qua* being priests, but as political adversaries.⁹⁸ But the Church authorities did not appreciate the distinction; the priest is above all the one who represents Christ. Neither the distinction between throne and altar, nor that between the two hats the Church wore, as we have seen, were obvious.

Pius XI weighed in as well with an address to a group of Maltese pilgrims in an audience in August 1929. “Being with the Bishops and with the Pope means being with Peter, with the Church and with Christ.” The only politics the Church does, according to Pius XI, was that in favour of the salvation of souls. “When one, while claiming to be Catholic, disobeys the Bishops,” one not only damages oneself, but others as well. All this started a tit for tat between the British Government and the Holy See.⁹⁹ The elections were fast approaching, and the bishops issued their customary Pastoral Letter¹⁰⁰ (1 May 1930) which, echoing the Pope’s words and sentiment, concluded that supporting Strickland in his anti-clerical campaign would be tantamount to a grave sin. Clearly enmeshing the dual role of the Church, the Bishops wrote that the Church was not involved in politics but:

when politics threatens the interests of Religion, when the hierarchy is disrespected and its authority is attacked, when politics gets closer to the altar, and public order is in danger of being subverted, the Church has a right to speak the truth to the voters and admonishes anyone, whoever he is, about his duties.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Apostolic Delegate of the Holy See in Malta.

⁹⁷ Secretary of State of the Holy See.

⁹⁸ See Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, vol. 1, 405 *et seq.*

⁹⁹ As reported in the Osservatore Romano Report, August 23, 1929 - See Appendix 3, see also *Ibid.*, 415 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁰ By the time Ganado writes the first volume of *Rajt Malta Tinbidel* published in 1977 it seems that many were attributing this Pastoral Letter to (the then) Bishop of Gozo, Mgr. Gonzi, who by the time the volume was published had had his own fair share of politico-religious clashes. Nonetheless Ganado notes (*Ibid.* 420) that it was Caruana who wanted the Pastoral Letter and was not ready to budge, pointing out his intransigence when matters of religion came to the fore.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 417.

Vassallo was correct at the time in claiming that: “The Pastoral Letter had a shock-effect: people felt they had lost their freedom in the election, as they had to vote according to the dictates of their Bishops”¹⁰² if they wanted to keep the Church’s “teachings”. Ganado further notes that:

though many of Strickland’s supporters were stung to the quick, the moderate ones put their consciences first and took the view that the bishops, contrary to what the irreconcilables were saying, had not created a new mortal sin and were not interfering in politics.¹⁰³

Three days after the publication of the Pastoral Letter, Governor John Philip Du Cane¹⁰⁴ proclaimed a state of emergency and suspended the elections, since, because of the imposition of grave sin, it was no longer possible to vote freely.¹⁰⁵ Strickland would eventually sign a letter of apology addressed to the Pope on May 28, 1932 delivered to Rome by Gonzi. “Just before the election¹⁰⁶ on June 3 1932 the bishops, in a circular letter, declared that since the Pope had accepted Lord Strickland’s apology, the previous two Pastorals stood annulled.”¹⁰⁷ The CP and the MLP lost the election, yet still managed to get 37.5% of the votes! The Nationalist party was jubilant and declared it to be a win for Church and nation.¹⁰⁸

The ecclesiastical pressure was successful, but the Church had “lost its grip on an important part of the votes, in spite of the pompous show of power it produced,”¹⁰⁹ but didn’t realise that. What the ecclesiastical authorities said still mattered for a substantial proportion of the population; it was becoming more glaringly evident that those politically committed were difficult to convince otherwise, not even with the strictest of moral sanctions in place. It was a lesson the Church failed to learn possibly because of the obfuscating support and was doomed to repeat the same mistake.

¹⁰² Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 106.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁰⁴ Governor of Malta (1927 – 1931).

¹⁰⁵ Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, vol. 1, 419.

¹⁰⁶ To be held between the 11 and 13 June.

¹⁰⁷ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 112.

¹⁰⁸ In that order. After all the PN’s motto was *religio et patria*. See Appendix 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

1.3.2 The second (series of) clash(es): Gonzi vs Mintoff

In between the two politico-religious clashes, Malta had its constitution suspended and suffered greatly the effects of war. Being a British colony with a sensitive military and strategic position, the islands would suffer badly the agonising attacks of Axis Powers (especially German and Italian forces). Following the suspension of the constitution in 1933, until 1947 Malta was effectively governed by the British Governor, even though elections were held (in 1939 and 1945) and there was a Council of Government. The 1947 election was won by the MLP with 59.8% which was led by Paul Boffa.¹¹⁰ With the first politico-religious clash still lingering and very fresh in the mind of everyone, the post-war period witnessed the birth of the clash between Gonzi and Mintoff¹¹¹ – a war with many battles.

“The Archbishop’s opinion in secular matters carried a totally disproportionate [and decisive] influence in Malta”¹¹² and his interference angered many members of the MLP Executive Committee and was the cause of disagreement among them.¹¹³ The key question was whether to confront the Church directly and attract the ire of the Archbishop, or whether to bow down as Strickland did. Boffa, weary of a second politico-religious quarrel, believed that “a rift with the Church could be avoided.” He was determined that “as long as [he had] the slightest share in the Government of Malta he would do his utmost to ensure the preservation of the good relations that existed between Church and State.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ See Schiavone, *L-Elezzjonijiet F’Pajjiżna*, 207-260.

¹¹¹ See above: “The Condemnation of Communism.”

¹¹² Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 150; Joseph M. Pirotta, *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*, vol. 2 (Valletta: Studia Editions, 1991), 102-122, 185-195.

¹¹³ “Gonzi always tried to cultivate members of the MLP whom he considered as moderate in their outlook. This helped him to be well informed about the Party’s internal affairs and gave him the opportunity to try to influence party policy. With the [eventual] advent of Mintoff to the leadership, Gonzi was progressively less successful ... An unconfirmed rumour which is credible but not verifiable says that he” [Dr Flores (deputy Leader of the MLP – considered to be the party’s most prominent moderate) was in contact with the Archbishop to remain in the Party, following his clear intentions of stepping down from political life.” Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 320; vol. 2, 11.

¹¹⁴ Moreover, concrete steps signaling this were taken by Boffa: the granting of the land where

Opposed to this sentiment, Mintoff “would have a point of view and fight for it.”¹¹⁵ Characterized by mistrust¹¹⁶ and the struggle to maintain, on Gonzi’s part, Malta *Kattolicissima*,¹¹⁷ or obtain, on Mintoff’s part, a liberated Malta, this second clash would divide Malta in two for a second time. They had a different vision for Malta, and both fought tooth and nail for it. On the one hand, Gonzi feared that Mintoff “posed a threat to Malta’s traditionally Catholic way of life,”¹¹⁸ and that he would open the floodgates to communism, as was happening in other European nations. On the other, Mintoff wanted to undo the Church’s control and influence over the people of Malta and the government, and therefore considered Gonzi’s actions more political than religious, and thus as overstepping his remit.

Pro or con factions continued to harden around these two figures. For Gonzi,¹¹⁹ who early on in his Episcopate as Bishop of Gozo, “soon established a reputation as a strong protagonist of the primacy of the Church,”¹²⁰ it was a question of being for or against the Church, and therefore for or against maintaining the Catholic way of life of the Maltese. “On his part Mintoff viewed the Archbishop as a serious political irritation which he

today there is the Catholic Institute in Floriana to Church at a nominal rent of £1 p.a. and the inclusion of communist writings under prohibited subversive literature. “Boffa’s Administration also attempted to amend Parliamentary Standing Orders to include ‘His Holiness the Pope and His Grace the Archbishop’s names no member could mention ‘disrespectfully in Debates, or for the purpose of influencing the House in its deliberations.’ Colombo, who had moved the motion, was forced to withdraw it in the face of fierce opposition from P.N. and D.A.P. Boffa’s efforts succeeded in retaining Gonzi’s covet support and also won him the important public backing of Lehen is-Sewwa.” Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 182.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 149.

¹¹⁶ Their relationship would be characterized by mutual distrust so much so that during the Integration issue “the Lieutenant-Governor had been asked by Mintoff to accompany him to the Archbishop’s Palace – in the role of neutral witness.” Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 2, 104.

¹¹⁷ Uber Catholic.

¹¹⁸ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 231.

¹¹⁹ Gonzi considered Mintoff, and his lack of reverential attitude toward Ecclesiastical authorities, to be “a corruptor of youth” and a communist. Sir J. Martin of the Colonial office, would report that “The Archbishop is, of course, bitterly opposed to Mr Mintoff, whom he regards as a corruptor of youth, and evidently, though he did not say this in so many words, as a communist.” He by far preferred Boffa rather than Mintoff who was more easily influenced “regarding any possible policy decisions that were not to the Church’s liking.” Ibid., 182.

¹²⁰ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 85.

would remove as speedily as possible.¹²¹ At the same time, he could not ignore the reality of the Church's influence in Maltese society, and consequently, the need to tread warily if he wanted to achieve his political goals. Governor Laycock¹²² was aware of this too and in advising the Round Table Conference on the Integration issue, thought it to "be a complete waste of time to recommend any drastic changes in the Constitution ... unless they [had] at least the acquiescence of the Church," adding that it was essential to ensure the "Archbishop's consent and preferably his active co-operation."¹²³

On Gonzi's part, his primary intent, contrary to what is generally thought, was not to favour the PN as opposed to the MLP, but rather to make sure that Malta and the Maltese remain Catholic and not be derailed into the fangs of Communism. In fact, following a huge rise in the cost of living between 1950 and 1952, (during the PN led government) he supported the Unions who called for an increase in cost of living bonus. "The MLP strove to make it wholly their own, in an attempt to project itself as the sole champion of the workers," with the consequence that the GWU feared that it would be "reduced to a mere political tool". On the other hand, "the other political parties, as well as the Church, considered the MLP's actions as a manoeuvre by Mintoff to enhance his chances of becoming Prime Minister."¹²⁴ Gonzi was adamant not to see Mintoff become Prime Minister, primarily because of his fear of Communism:

Archbishop Gonzi was doing his best to prod the British ... to accede to the GWU's demands. He believed in the justice of the workers' claims and was moved by their suffering. He was also concerned by what he considered Mintoff's wild declarations, which he judged were contributing to the MLP's leader's growing appeal especially amongst young workers.¹²⁵

¹²¹ He will repeatedly make a distinction between Sir Michael Gonzi and Mgr. Michael Gonzi, so as to push forward his idea that the Archbishop should not unduly interfere in politics; sounding the same trumpet Strickland did decades before.

¹²² Governor of Malta (1954-1959).

¹²³ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 2, 104. (Underline in original)

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹²⁵ Gonzi feared Mintoff becoming Prime Minister and directly stated this to the new Colonial Secretary of State, Mr J. Griffiths whom he met in England on 25 September 1950. During the meeting, "The Archbishop plunged straight into politics without any apparent feeling that this needed explanation from an ecclesiastical dignitary ... clearly indicating his preference to a Mizzi-Boffa coalition rather than a Mizzi-Mintoff one following the 1950 election." During his meeting with Griffiths "The Archbishop revealed that: immediately after the elections all the

Gonzi had a twofold target: securing the rights of the workers and consequently, diminishing the credit Mintoff could take for solving the issue. Thus, he acted as a broker between the British Government and the GWU. This meant that the GWU “would reap the credit, while Mintoff and MLP would be upstaged.”¹²⁶ This irked the MLP, pointing their guns in the direction of the Archbishop who was termed as the ‘discreet Maltese broker’ (*Is-sensar Malti li ma jdoqqx trumbetti*).¹²⁷

This was simply a sketchy attempt at showing the dynamics and the ambience in which the Church acted in the post war period. Some claim that the relation between the Gonzi and Mintoff was ambiguous or a clash of personalities. However, those close to them have refuted this.¹²⁸ On the frontstage most saw them as archenemies who opposed each other openly and made sure their message was heard. For example: “Upon taking office Mintoff signalled his intention to keep the functions of State and Church separate by failing to pay the customary call on the Archbishop.” This “served to deepen the Archbishop’s distrust ... in an island still devoutly and at times fanatically Catholic, it exposed Mintoff, his government and the MLP to the charges of anti-clericalism and of lack of respect towards religion.”¹²⁹ According to Pirotta:

the mutual distrust had become well entrenched. Mintoff saw Gonzi as the principal obstacle to the social changes that he wanted to bring about in Maltese society. On

party leaders except Mr. Mintoff had called on [him] and he had proposed ... the formation of a National Government of all parties except Mr. Mintoff’s to keep the latter out of power.” Moreover, “Gonzi left no doubt as to his feelings about Mintoff, [in a fascinating monologue ... not a conversation with Griffiths]: ‘I know we live in a democratic age’, said the Archbishop with a slight smile. ‘But’ he went on, ‘would it not be desirable for H.M.G. to use all the influence they had without breaking democratic forms, to keep Mintoff out of office?’” Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 231, 303-4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 304

¹²⁷ Gonzi didn’t hide the fact that “he had intervened during the strike because it was his duty as spiritual leader. He had done his best to ‘ensure peace and avoid trouble and bloodshed amongst the workers whilst they strove to obtain their rights.’ [and accused] certain individuals [who] were seeking every occasion to undermine the prestige and influence of the Church’s authority.” *Ibid.*, 316-317.

¹²⁸ Few are aware that following the 60s Gonzi was crucial in securing deals with the British, on behalf of Mintoff’s government. Curiously, it is claimed that after a particularly rough meeting between the two, where loud shouting was heard coming out of the room, Gonzi, after being asked what had happened said: “That’s because we are both from Cottonera.” See Joseph M. Pirotta, *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*, vol. 4 (Valletta: Midsea Books, 2018), 17-20.

¹²⁹ Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 2, 103.

the other hand Gonzi, who saw himself as the custodian of the Catholic Church's role in Maltese life, considered Mintoff the primary danger to his charge and to the people's faith. While Mintoff's self-imposed mission was that of establishing the supremacy of secular State, Gonzi was the jealous guardian of ecclesiastical primacy.¹³⁰

But others, "merely looked at what was going on and termed it a disguised 'struggle for power' that went on 'beneath the surface between the Archbishop and Mintoff.'" ¹³¹ It seems to me that both these views can be fused into one. While both felt to have a higher mission, there was an escalation of personal issues between the two but it cannot be reduced to that. Within a micro-state like Malta where shouting-politics loom large, sociological and anthropological circumstances¹³² amplifies antagonisms. As things were presented and eventually evolved, it was simply not possible that both would achieve their goals – in the circumstances a clash seemed inevitable.

Lorry Sant personally interdicted

Sant's interdiction was sparked by the reaction to the Lenten Pastoral Letter of March 6, 1960.¹³³ The Pastoral Letter, apart from asserting the 'rightful' position of the Church within state and culture, held that no one could claim to be a Catholic and at the same time a Socialist.¹³⁴ The Bishops claimed that it was the duty of the Church "to interfere and pass judgement" against those principles which, "those who either hate[d] the Church or [did] not want to have anything to do with her" were, through their teaching, exposing the faithful to the danger¹³⁵ of losing their souls for the sake of economic welfare. This, the Bishops claimed, should not be interpreted as political interference.

¹³⁰ Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 1, 320.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² See Chapter 2

¹³³ See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 641-9, for more details.

¹³⁴ The magisterial background was QA, where Pius XI confirmed that Socialism "cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth." (QA, 117) "Christian socialism, [is a] contradictory term; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist." (QA, 120)

¹³⁵ Because of 'ignorance,' as mentioned above.

"[They] prayed that Socialist principles would not continue to be spread ... If this did not happen it would be a sign that the MLP's leaders were satisfied with the situation in which unfortunately Malta found itself. The Bishops were not."¹³⁶

Anton Buttigieg¹³⁷ contested as 'unfounded accusation' the claim that the MLP had become "an organization advocating and practising the true form of socialism condemned by the Church." Through an article penned on the *The Voice of Malta*,¹³⁸ Buttigieg replied that the MLP was "animated by the same spirit of good faith which [had] always guided the [party], whose policies and behaviour [had] always been inspired by the teaching of the Church." He denied that the MLP tried to undermine the Church, but claimed that "if Socialism meant social reform, they were proud to be Socialists." Replying against the indirect accusation of the Bishops that the Labour Brigade was spiritually poisoning children, Buttigieg held that it was the "unscrupulous, biased members of the clergy, who turned the pulpit and other places of religious instruction into political platforms to sling mud at the Maltese Liberation Movement," and that some Brigade children "had been thrown out of Catholic lay organisations and in certain cases even from churches." Buttigieg concluded that:

Let there be peace by all means. But not at the expense of Malta's FREEDOM. True and lasting peace cannot be achieved until and unless the Ecclesiastical Authorities in these Islands stop behaving in such a manner as could be interpreted by the British Government to mean that the Maltese people are happy with their present lot.¹³⁹

*Lehen is-Sewwa*¹⁴⁰ entered the fray as well as did *The Struggle*,¹⁴¹ which described the Pastoral letter as "an opportunity for an attack against the MLP" in order "to confuse people's minds." In an article, entitled "Clay Soldiers" Gonzi "was accused of being a soldier of clay who as 'Dun Mikiel' contested on behalf of the MLP, but who has now

¹³⁶ See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 642-3.

¹³⁷ At the time President of the MLP and Editor of *The Voice of Malta*.

¹³⁸ The MLP's Newspaper.

¹³⁹ Anton Buttigieg, "At the Bar of Public Opinion We State our Case," *The Voice of Malta*, 13 March 1960, in *Ibid.*, 643-5.

¹⁴⁰ Catholic Newspaper of the Malta Catholic Action. See *Ibid.*, 645

¹⁴¹ Monthly newspaper of the Labour League of Youth.

changed 'according to circumstances.'" Branding religion as a political weapon,

it was now being used in favour of the British Protestant Government against the Catholic Maltese people ... so that they might receive some decoration or reward. Some people would have to account for their actions like the Nazis at the Nuremberg Trials."¹⁴²

The article caused mayhem¹⁴³ and a series of meetings and exchanging of letters between the LLY and the Curia involving also the MLP Executive. Some members of the Executive were not at all pleased at how the LLY was conducting its affairs, with some urging a softer approach. Ultimately, on April 10, 1960 a personal interdict was pronounced and delivered directly to Sant¹⁴⁴ in accordance to Canon 2344 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law.¹⁴⁵ Pirotta comments that through this action

the Bishops had indicated in an unequivocal manner their readiness to impose canonical sanctions [and, at the same time, it showed that the MLP was not] prepared to change track. There was to be no turning back by either side.¹⁴⁶

Unlike Strickland in the 1930's, Mintoff was firm in his belief that he wouldn't bow in front of ecclesiastical authorities to the detriment of personal freedom. He was determined "to whittle down the influence of the Church by depicting Archbishop Gonzi as a British collaborator against the political aspirations of the Maltese people."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Under the editorship of Lorry Sant. See *Ibid.*, 645-6.

¹⁴³ Written by League's President Joe Camilleri under the pseudonym J. Rizzo, the said article irked people like Lino Spiteri for the strong language it used, and who had suggested that it should not be published. Lorry Sant had said he would remove it, but it was still published. Lino Spiteri in an interview with Joseph Pirotta said that Sant's reply was "It must have slipped by." See *Ibid.*, 646-7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 648.

¹⁴⁵ Canon 2344 (1917) stated: "Whoever gives injury to the Roman Pontiff, a Cardinal of the H.R.C., a Legate of the Roman Pontiff, to Sacred Roman Congregations, Tribunals of the Apostolic See, and their major Officials, and their own Ordinary by public journals, sermons, or pamphlets, whether directly or indirectly, or who excites animosity or odium against their act, decrees, decisions, or sentences shall be punished by an Ordinary not only at the request of a party but even by office with censures and, in order to accomplish satisfaction, other appropriate penalties and penances for the gravity of the fault and the repair of scandal." Its parallel within the current (published in 1983) Code of Canon Law is Canon 1373 which states: "A person who publicly incites among subjects animosities or hatred against the Apostolic See or an Ordinary because of some act of power of ecclesiastical ministry or provokes subjects to disobey them is to be punished by an interdict or other just penalties."

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 649.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 727.

Not only was Sant's interdiction ignored, but he "was given pride of place next to [Mintoff]."¹⁴⁸ A living martyr was canonised *sull'altare del popolo*.

MLP Executive interdicted

Few months later a personal interdict against the 31 members which formed the MLP Executive was pronounced. Against the background of the Cold War, the interdict came following a Policy Statement issued by the MLP on the issue of Independence and specifically, in relation to the fact that, if in government, the MLP would not exclude getting help from anyone willing to offer it.¹⁴⁹ On the one hand, the MLP was "depicting Archbishop Gonzi as a British collaborator;" on the other hand, the Church "had not made any public pronouncement regarding Independence, but was worried that it might lose the traditional protection of the British authorities and be faced by a hostile Maltese government led by Mintoff."¹⁵⁰ The British, on their part, were weary of Mintoff's position and feared that, if Independence would be granted and the MLP would be in government, Mintoff wouldn't think twice to solicit the financial aid of the USSR, who would be more than willing to give it, in exchange for naval presence in the Mediterranean.¹⁵¹

In its struggle for the liberation of Malta from Britain, described constantly by Mintoff as 'the oppressors,' the MLP portrayed the Church and the British government as collaborators and hence obstacles to Malta's flourishing.¹⁵² Moreover, "Mintoff was convinced that if the MLP's dual objectives, immediate Independence and the significant

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 732.

¹⁴⁹ Mintoff's plea at the UN fell on deaf ears and made it his policy (and eventually that of the government once elected) to get money for Malta and the Maltese wherever this would come from.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 727.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 727-730.

¹⁵² "The British tried to ensure that in Archbishop Gonzi they would find an ally so that their plans would succeed. British and Ecclesial interests in Malta stood or fell together." It was clear that the mutually beneficial relationship which guaranteed easy government for the British and pride of place for the Church, would end once Independence was attained, as confirmed by Mgr. Carmelo Xuereb. See Ibid., 732-733.

reduction of the Church's influence, were to be attained, he had no alternative to confronting H.M.G. and the Church simultaneously."¹⁵³ Yet "when addressing the party faithful," he would insist that "discussions with foreign leaders concerned solely politics; matters of faith and religion did not feature at all."¹⁵⁴ In fact, Gonzi was "angry" at the double campaign run by Mintoff: 1. to bring the MLP closer to communism through its membership in the Socialists International and AAPSO;¹⁵⁵ and 2. to "diminish the Church's stature in the people's eyes and to overt anti-clerical sentiments."¹⁵⁶

Fuelled by a lack of formal discussions between the MLP and the Church, and by articles penned by overzealous extremists on both sides, there was no possible rapprochement between them.¹⁵⁷ The situation was getting exponentially out of control. On February 28, 1961, a few days before the interdict of the MLP Executive, an instruction for confessors was issued. While confirming that it was sinful to speak badly of priests and the

¹⁵³ In a taped interview Mintoff held that: "It was in our interest to go the whole hog because we knew that the Church was so tied to the British government and the British government tied to it that we had to fight them both. See *Ibid.*, 728, 756.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 756.

¹⁵⁵ AAPSO (Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation). This organisation was thought to be a communist front organisation through which the Soviets could acquire a toe-hold in Malta and therefore in the Mediterranean. See *Ibid.*, 727, 741-745.

¹⁵⁶ The College of Archpriests and Parish Priests weighed in as well. In a circular (August 1960) read in all parishes declared that through such international contacts Mintoff and his associates were:

- a) Causing great confusion in the minds of the people on the systems of Catholic sociology and those condemned by the Catholic Church;
- b) they (were) increasing sympathy for the Communists, Socialists and other elements which [were] entirely anti-Catholic, sympathy which cannot but prepare the people, especially children and youths, to abandon their Faith and turn against Mother Church as [had] happened elsewhere;
- c) [opening] the door to Communist, Socialist and anti-Catholic ideas and principles. See *ibid.*, 759

The MLP counter-attacked through its newspapers *Il-Helsien* and *The Voice of Malta* (on September 25 and 27, 1960 respectively) replying: "We categorically deny this organisation to be a Communist one. We do not know it to be such." See *ibid.*, 759-60.

Eventually in January 1961 AAPSO would nominate the MLP as a Council Member, an invitation the MLP Executive approved unanimously. On this and the debate on AAPSO between the MLP and the Church see *ibid.*, 766 – 771.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 760.

Archbishop, it encouraged confessors that they should approach the penitent with love and not with scorn. Confessors should advise the penitent like a father would do; if the penitent is not willing to stop such offences he should not be thrown out, and if the confessor suspects that one had committed these sins but is not confessing them, because one would consider them only a political issue, then the confessor should instruct the penitent with prudence.¹⁵⁸ All in all, the tone of this circular was patronising but moderate, compared to the circular issued months later (May 26 1961) where the MLP newspapers were condemned and mortal sin was imposed.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, many still lament till this day, the rough and humiliating manner they experienced in the confessional when at the time, they were still children or youth.

The rallying of troops was now a full swing show of force, with both sides organising demonstrations. In March 1960 “Mintoff had suggested that in view of the attacks on the party” a circular, which was later approved as a Policy Statement,¹⁶⁰ should be drafted and distributed to all local committees and read in an extraordinary general meeting. In brief, this Policy Statement reiterated what had already been said, namely: affirming their struggle for independence, their Christian beliefs, and accusing Gonzi of being against the people’s struggle.¹⁶¹ The Statement also accused the British government of exploiting “religious belief as a weapon against the party.” On its part the MLP, using religious language, solemnly declared that it was:

ready to make peace with everybody provide[d] they [were] not obstructed in the sacred fight for independence; and promise[d] that they would never take steps which [would] really (and not in the imagination) threaten the religious beliefs of the Maltese people. All that the party expect[ed was] non-interference in matters purely political and in political manoeuvring indulged in by all governments in the interest of their respective countries. [They had] been taught to render unto Caesar what [was] Caesar’s and unto God what [was] God’s.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Circular 227 issued on February 28 1961. See Appendix 5

¹⁵⁹ See Appendix 6.

¹⁶⁰ See Anthony Azzopardi, *Il-Qawmien tal-Haddiem Malti: Storja tal-Partit Laburista, It-Tieni Volum*, (Malta: SKS, 1986), 150-157. 35.

¹⁶¹ Gonzi was being accused of being the cause why they were required to seek foreign help wherever this may come from in their struggle to free the people, especially after the Western powers had “turned a deaf ear.”

¹⁶² Abstract from the Policy Statement, in Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 777-9. (My

Evidently, Mintoff and the MLP were describing themselves as the underdogs, portraying the Church, the British Government and the whole Western bloc as enemies of the Maltese. Considered by the Curia as anti-Catholic and anti-clerical, a reaction to the Policy Statement was issued out a few days later. Mintoff and the executive were asked “to make public reparation for the grave offences committed [which caused] scandal to all who have Catholic sentiments – against the Ecclesiastical Authorities of Malta and Gozo,” otherwise they would be forced to impose Canon 2344 and to do so by Tuesday 28th.¹⁶³

While some had encouraged some degree of caution and others wanted heads to roll,¹⁶⁴ Gonzi was stuck between Scylla and Charybdis. He was not “‘one hundred per cent convinced’ that the imposition of the canonical sanctions ‘was correct.’”¹⁶⁵ But “Mintoff was determined that he would never do a Strickland.”¹⁶⁶ Within this scenario, the National Executive’s reaction was to inform the Curia that the General Conference had to be consulted¹⁶⁷ before replying. Some proposed that they should speak directly to the Curia before the General Conference, but the motion was dismissed. Instead it was decided to inform the Curia, “that it was impossible for the whole National Executive of 31 persons to meet and deliberate properly in view of the short time given and the fact that the time limit coincided with the Holy Week festivities,” in view of which the Bishops extended the deadline to April 10 but the General Conference was rescheduled to April 9.¹⁶⁸

Ultimately, the Curia, anticipating the General Conference, reasoned that since it was a statement issued by the Executive, this had nothing to do with the General Conference

underlining.)

¹⁶³ Correspondence between the Curia and the MLP on, 23 March 1961 quoted in *ibid.*, 780-1.

¹⁶⁴ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 27.

¹⁶⁵ This was confirmed by Mgr. Fortunato Mizzi who claimed that Gonzi however relied on the last person to have spoken to him. See Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 782.

¹⁶⁶ As confirmed by Mintoff himself. See *ibid.*, 782.

¹⁶⁷ The conference was to be held on April 16. Such a move could easily be interpreted as either buying time and/or as purposefully escalating of things.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 783

of the party. The “Bishops therefore felt compelled to inflict the penalty of personal interdiction” on the National Executive. While this avoided the interdict of all the members of the General Conference,¹⁶⁹ the Church appeared to have acted unilaterally and forcefully without entering into discussions, attracting more and more the ire of those present at the General Conference.¹⁷⁰ In these circumstances, would it have been much worse had the Church waited for the General Conference to convene? Probably, yes. Both the Church and the MLP were aware of what the result at the General Conference would have been. Nonetheless the MLP insisted that it was the General Conference, not the National Executive, that had to issue the final say with regards to the Policy Statement issued by the Executive, condemned by the Church.

The result would be: 31 persons elevated to heroes by the MLP supporters and the ecclesiastical authorities, accused of acting vindictively and of being a political bully using harsh religious measures.

The final and biggest blow: *id-dnub il-mejjet* (mortal sin)

The whole situation was now heating up quickly. Within this whole fray, following the interdict of the MLP executive, people in Catholic associations were asked to pledge an “unqualified support for the Archbishop,” or otherwise be expelled from that same organisation. The names of those who didn’t do so were reported. This was “a systematic scrutiny ... to weed out actual or potential MLP sympathisers.”¹⁷¹ Now, the battle had reached the climax and the confrontation was feverish:

meaningful dialogue and a willingness to compromise were conspicuous by their absence... In popular parlance those who sided with the Church saw things in terms of saint versus devil; supporters of the MLP viewed the affair as a fight for freedom of conscience and the establishment of a secular society.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Ganado is of the opinion that the Bishops were not ready to impose sanctions against 400-500 people and that’s why they anticipated the General Conference, so as not to implicate them, but just the Executive. See Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel (Vol. 4)*, (Malta: n.d., 1977), 350-1.

¹⁷⁰ Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 783-4.

¹⁷¹ Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 98; Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 41-2.

¹⁷² “In October 1961 ... Mintoff published his famous pamphlet *Priests and Politics in Malta*, in

Newspapers on both sides were waging war against each other, never missing a beat.¹⁷³ The tone was high and the drumbeats of battle were the order of the day – editorials and articles replying to accusations issued by the opposite side and firing fresh attacks at the same time. The generals¹⁷⁴ were getting ready for a ‘sacred’ war in defence of their respective leaders, heating up the debate and preparing their foot soldiers, while waiting for and provoking the other side to make an official declaration of war first. Things got violent at times.

The Gozo incident (May 21, 1961) was just one of such examples of violent tension. Not only did the Gozitans interrupt the MLP speakers by tolling the bells, but the MLP supporters were refused transport by Public Bus drivers from Rabat to the ferry and on their way were ambushed and rather badly mauled by zealous men, women and children. The Gozitans were so proud of all this, that they even published a commemorative booklet entitled “*Għawdex jiddefendi l-Knisja*” (Gozo defends the Church) and a pilgrimage of reparation led by Bishop Pace of Gozo was organised.¹⁷⁵ Five days later moral sanctions were imposed.

The May circular¹⁷⁶ entitled “*Dnub Mejjet għal min jistampa, jaqra eċċ ġurnali tal-MLP*” (Mortal Sin for whoever prints, reads etc MLP newspapers) condemned the “grievous offences towards the Archbishop and clergy” and “the support given to the MLP Leaders, until they were at war against the Church and they keep contacts with Socialists, Communists and AAPSO.” The stress, however, was put on the offences against the Archbishop and clergy which, in the few lines of the declaration was repeated

which he refers to the forthcoming elections’ basic issue as being freedom of conscience.” Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 179 *et seq.*; see also Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 51-7.

¹⁷³ Skimming *Il-Lehen is-Sewwa* and *Il-Helsien* (Catholic Action and MLP Newspapers respectively) of the time makes this very evident.

¹⁷⁴ Another element in the fray was the *Diocesan Ġunta* composed of Catholic lay organisations which were rallying their membership in favour of the Archbishop and the Church and against the MLP and anything connected with it. The confrontation was high, and the 1962 election was inching closer. The *Ġunta* became involved in the propaganda encouraging strongly the electorate to vote in favour of those parties which were on their good books and hence, as nicknamed by MLP supporters, “*ta’ taht l-umbrella (tal-Knisja)*, the MLP was definitely not one of them.

¹⁷⁵ Other similar violent incidents happened in Birkirkara, Żurrieq, Żebbug and Żabbar among others. See Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 101-2; Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 43-50.

¹⁷⁶ Circular 229a, See Appendix 6

twice, the second time specifically with reference to the request for a debate. This means that no one could “print, write, sell, buy, distribute or read these” newspapers without committing mortal sin. It also reminded the parents of the dangers of sending their children to the *Brigata* and to confessors that, since many of these are church goers and received communion often, they should prudently investigate these matters. As the Maltese adage goes: “*Malta żgħira u n-nies magħrufa*” (Malta is small and everyone knows one another), and confessors would know who was who, and which political party they supported. Some even made it a point of going to Church with the prohibited newspapers visibly showing.

Obviously, the reply¹⁷⁷ from *Il-Helsien* came swiftly. In their view, this condemnation was associated with the fact that the MLP had asked the Archbishop to participate in a public debate/questioning during an MLP meeting in Bormla, promising that he would not be heckled!¹⁷⁸ Although this was a tad provocative, surely it was not the reason why the condemnation was issued. In Gonzi’s own words¹⁷⁹ he was doing this with a broken heart, but this was in response to those “who wanted to reduce the power of the Church in Malta.”

Supporting the MLP in any shape or form meant that (practically) one would forego the Sacraments and not be allowed to be a godparent in baptisms and confirmation. Many were hackled in the confessional and humiliated, and were not granted absolution – meaning that they were precluded from receiving communion.¹⁸⁰ Some preferred to not baptize their children because of the prohibition.¹⁸¹ Moreover, the parish priest would not bless their house during the typical Eastertide house blessing (this was done even during the clash with Strickland); the parish priest would not help find a job, by means of a reference letter or anything of the sort. People were made to resign from

¹⁷⁷ See Appendix 7.

¹⁷⁸ One cannot but doubt how that could have been stopped from happening, considering the escalation of events.

¹⁷⁹ During a homily in Hal Ghaxaq –May 18, 1961

¹⁸⁰ One has to consider the strict idea that one goes to confession (every Saturday) before receiving communion on Sunday.

¹⁸¹ Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 98-9.

organisations like the Catholic Action, the main social centres for women, men and youths¹⁸² and those interdicted were forced to marry in sacristies or behind the altar.¹⁸³ Considered important in the Maltese cultural setup today, one can assume an even deeper impression back then.

Adding insult to injury, there was a more serious consequence which stuck in the common myth about the era. This partly defines symbolically the politico-religious struggle of the *sittinijiet* till this day. Being interdicted, or being in a state of mortal sin and non-repentant, meant that one would not be given a 'proper Catholic funeral' and burial and consequently buried in un-consecrated land,¹⁸⁴ which was termed *il-miżbla* (the refuse heap). Considering the great significance funeral services had (and still have) in Malta, this gesture was either purely vindictive or plainly stupid. Seven¹⁸⁵ people were buried there for this reason, with Guzè Ellul Mercer being made the victim par excellence. This was the line that should not have been absolutely crossed; it led towards a road of no return. It was not simply a strategic move; it was a 'definite damnation'¹⁸⁶ that the Church appeared to be inflicting on those who supported Mintoff. It was 'obdurately unforgiving' towards the deceased and his or her families. To add insult to injury, four died of fatalities, one of whom while returning home from church.¹⁸⁷ The

¹⁸² Jeremy Boissevain, *A Village in Malta*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 66.

¹⁸³ One notes the incongruence, for is marriage not also a sacrament? Were they trying to prevent further chaos? Or what is simply an exemplary 'punishment'?

¹⁸⁴ The same treatment was given to (the few) persons who would be cohabiting. Mgr. Vincent Deguara recounted to me the sorry tradition that such funerals were greeted by women who would wave broomsticks as the cortege passed, obviously without a priest present.

¹⁸⁵ Gorg Gravina (August 1961), Guzè Ellul Mercer (September 1961); Toni Zahra (November 1961); Karmenu Cini (February 1962); Ganni Spiteri (June 1962); Toninu Caligari (June 1962); Liza Zammit (November 1963). Another person who was refused a Catholic funeral was Sgt Emmanuel Falzon who died in Libya (October 1961) while trying to save his mates from a burning plane which had crashed on take-off. He died after an Italian priest heard his confession. His family was denied permission to bury him at the Naxxar cemetery by the Archpriest but was given a Catholic burial at the Military Cemetery in Pembroke. See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 188.

¹⁸⁶ The allusion to damnation was constantly in the air. Placards attached to churches were quite clear. One read: "*Tahraq ruħek u darek jekk tivvota għat-Torċa*" (By voting MLP you damn your soul and household). Those on MLP property weren't sugary either.

¹⁸⁷ Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 187-91.

Church saw herself as having a God-given right over people's life, death and conscience – this was nothing more than an abuse of the power she had and made sure to use it with full force. It couldn't be any more obvious to those on the receiving end that the Church wanted absolute control.

The growing divide

Persons who lived through this period and its aftermath would immediately tell you that indeed the tension was high and one could feel a sense of unease. The *Interdett*, the *dnub il-mejjet* and *il-miżbla* have become symbolic of this series of events, which became known as the *sittinijiet*, and indeed considered as “the event” where the Church clashed against *Mintoff* and the *Mintoffjani*. This is the reason why a reflection is being made here on the before and after of these moments in Malta's history, since up till this day, when the topic of Church and politics comes up, those are key words and indeed sore points.

While it had been unthinkable for practically anyone not to go to Church daily, or at least weekly, starting with the sixties, many starting absenting themselves.¹⁸⁸ During Sunday homilies, priests insisted that the Church was under attack, echoing Pius XII's 'slogan': “Either with Christ or against Christ.” Nonetheless, many MLP supporters continued to attend mass and to support Mintoff openly; when “told from the pulpit that it does them no good”, sometimes quietly, sometimes vociferously, some would leave the service. The rationalisation of it all was simply what Mintoff had been repeating for over 15 years: “the Archbishop of Malta is acting for personal and political motives; as long as the Pope himself does not condemn the MLP, they will continue to support [the Party].” They continued to do as they were brought up to do, even if this meant that they went to Church ‘defiantly’ with a copy of the prohibited newspapers in their pockets. Other MLP supporters, not wishing to lose their job or to cause problems

¹⁸⁸ In 1967 (when the first Mass attendance census was conducted) 81% attended mass. Claire Caruana, “Mass attendance set to collapse in years to come,” *Times of Malta*, January 27, 2019, accessed May 23, 2019,

<https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20190127/local/mass-attendance-set-to-collapse-in-the-years-to-come.700305>

with family and friends, supported the Party in secret and read the newspapers discretely (having to buy them from MLP clubs when no one was in sight – after midnight when the village square was empty). Others stopped supporting the Party but were “bitter about having been forced to make the choice.”¹⁸⁹

If the faithful Catholics and Labourites could not bring themselves to vote for the PN, an alternative had to be found.¹⁹⁰ Knowing full well that people were struggling to keep both loyalties, towards Mintoff and toward the Church, it became an urgent matter to offer them the possibility of keeping their Labourite credo, while supporting a different party. It wasn't enough to tip the balance against the MLP; Mintoff had to receive a mortal blow. The solution was to create a Left-wing Christian party – The Christian Workers Party (*Ta' Pellegrini*) – with Gonzi's blessing, obviously, and whose most enthusiastic proponent was Rev. Felician Bilocca.¹⁹¹

Both sides continued with their rhetoric, especially in view of the approaching electoral ballot of 1962. Mintoff, as has been noted, in his published pamphlet *Priests and Politics in Malta* (October 1961), considered the main electoral issue to be one of freedom of conscience. He considered the ecclesiastical sanctions as corrupt practice, which hindered democratic liberty, and the Church as the “staunchest ally of the ‘colonial oppressors.’” Therefore, for him and the MLP, the main issue was that of freedom: from the Church and the British. One must also note that the other parties had another common denominator: their stand on Independence. The MLP still kept close to its Christian beliefs but wanted the abolition of mediaeval privileges that opposed the social

¹⁸⁹ Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 99, 102-3; Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 41-42.

¹⁹⁰ Contrary to what many imply, the Hierarchy was against Mintoff and before that against Strickland, not because it was pro PN and/or pro-Italian. In the 30s there was a high Italo-phile percentage of the Clergy, but not necessarily so the hierarchy. Gonzi was not comfortable with the PN, in fact (see above) rumours had it that the Curia was pro-Boffa. Moreover, the *Ġunta* (obviously in line with the Curia) ‘proposed’ an array of parties.

¹⁹¹ This would eventually add another party to the list already existing and which opposed Mintoff. It was surely not a difficult task to unite forces against a common enemy, creating an “anti-MLP political coterie professing loyalty to the Church;” a “common front against a common enemy” as was suggested by Gonzi. But apart from their loath for Mintoff these parties (CWP, PCP, PDN and PN) were politically divided. Moreover, Borg Olivier was not in full agreement that the interdict was helpful; on the contrary. See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 28-39, 148-160, 185, 208-212.

and economic progress of Malta.¹⁹²

From the Church's side, *Lehen is-Sewwa* was doing its best to demonise Mintoff, comparing his methods and objectives with Castro's.¹⁹³ Again, a pre-electoral letter was issued on 25 January 1962 urging Catholics to behave like Catholics and therefore to vote for those who would offer a "sincere defence of religion" and were "inspired by Catholic principles." The Bishops were urging Catholics to vote vigilantly, to avoid the possibility that what was happening to Catholics in Cuba, would also happen to Catholics in Malta.¹⁹⁴

The likelihood that the ecclesiastical authorities would impose moral sanctions again against those who voted for the MLP was real in the eyes of the British government.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, both Koster and Pirotta (relying on seen documents) claim that, on 30 January 1962, Gonzi issued unpublished directives to confessors indicating that voting for the MLP was tantamount to mortal sin.¹⁹⁶ What's more, the MLP claimed that another Instruction addressed to confessors and preachers was given by hand by the Archbishop on 7 March 1962 indicating that confessors had to ask whether the penitent voted or not and whether he voted for any party hostile to the Church, or whether he omitted voting, both deemed to be sinful grievances to be corrected, and absolution should not be granted unless the penitent has a sincere disposition meriting absolution.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, in disagreeing with Gonzi, Bishop Pace of Gozo, interdicted the three MLP candidates

¹⁹² Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 179-181.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁹⁴ The Maltese situation was being compared to that of Cuba, whereby the USSR had by then installed a military base on the door steps of the US, eventually this would lead to the Cuba Missile Crisis, in October of that same year surely strengthening the comparison. It was even the Holy See's fear that Malta could end up in the same situation as Cuba. Mgr. Casaroli too had told Sir P. Scarlett, that they could not 'risk Malta turning into another Cuba.' Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 932.

¹⁹⁵ As had happened in Germany and Australia. What is certain is that the messages didn't tone down: on the Feast of St Paul of that year the Archbishop claimed that the insults against Church authority and clergy were evidently an attempt to rob the Maltese of their heritage which only those led astray could not see. See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 242-7. See Sergio Grech, "Church and politics in Malta, 1955-1970" (MA History diss. University of Malta, 2008), 174.

¹⁹⁶ See Appendix 8.

¹⁹⁷ Azzopardi, *Il-Qawmien tal-Haddiem Malti*, 161-2.

in Gozo.¹⁹⁸

In view of all that was happening, two days before the ballot, Mintoff asked for the suspension of the elections claiming that moral pressure was hindering a free vote. This might have had a double intent: attacking the Church and attacking the British who, if they did not cancel the elections as they did in the 30s, could be considered as accomplices with the Church. Then, if he lost the election, Mintoff would have a scapegoat on whom to lay part of the blame.¹⁹⁹ The 1962 electoral results, with a record turn-out of 91%, were those wished for by the Church. The anti-Mintoff camp got 66.2%.²⁰⁰ Still, 32% of Catholic Malta, which boasted an almost 100% mass attendance, voted for the MLP and 8,675 persons voted particularly for Mintoff. No other candidate managed to get even close to these results.

Mintoff's interpretation was that these electoral results were the "most unfair in the history of the island" and that the Church was in fact being partisan, acting against the MLP and in favour of the British, and therefore against the welfare of the people. While the *Ġunta* was jubilantly claiming: "*Alla maġhna u rbaħna*" (God is with us and we won), the following Sunday all the churches intoned a *Te Deum*. Gonzi was aware that Mintoff was still very popular. Notwithstanding the jubilation, although he had been wounded, no mortal blow had been inflicted; on the contrary, the Church was strengthening Mintoff. The *ad personam* attacks not only worked in Mintoff's favour, as always happens, but made him The Saviour.²⁰¹

Rapprochement, twice failed

With PN winning the elections, Independence was immediately put on the table. In the

¹⁹⁸ Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 247

¹⁹⁹ In his speeches Mintoff "ruthlessly ... kept castigating the Church of what he called her interventions in the elections; there was increasing stridency in his talks and his last speech, on election-eve, reached the apex of vituperation." Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 182.

²⁰⁰ See Appendix 9 for 1962 and 1966 Electoral Results.

²⁰¹ See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 270-76.

months preceding September 1964, thorny discussions centred inevitably on constitutional 'safeguards' for the Catholic Church.²⁰² But in the meantime, some took the initiative to approach Mintoff seeking a rapprochement. The first attempt would be that by Rev. Gundislavus Grech O.P.²⁰³ who in June 1962, agreed with Mintoff on six unconditional points.²⁰⁴ Two intermediaries, Mr Paul Naudi and Rev Bartoli Galea, would stand in for Mintoff and Gonzi respectively, trying to bargain an agreement between the two. They decided that it would be better if Mintoff and Gonzi did not meet face-to-face, knowing full well that that would make things worse. But both leaders complained that the attacks from the opposite side had not stopped. Furthermore, Mintoff moved the goalposts wanting reconciliation to be linked with early elections and an Independence Constitution. Each side was now insisting on the "righteousness of its cause [rendering] a mutually face-saving compromise improbable as it required retraction of what had hitherto been presented as 'immutable' principles." Retreating would be considered as a defeat and an admission of being wrong and worse still, malicious in intent.²⁰⁵ While by now Gonzi was 77 years old, Mintoff was still 46, and had many other struggles to win and didn't want to jeopardise his reputation and aura of *Salvatur* – he was definitively not going to Canossa.²⁰⁶ It seemed no one was willing to give in first. A waiting game had begun for no one could see any other possible conclusion.

Another attempt was bargained through Rev Prospero Grech OSA²⁰⁷ with the help of

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 931 *et seq.*

²⁰³ Not Rev Prospero Grech o.s.a. (now Cardinal), see further down.

²⁰⁴ 1) Government and Church respect each other's reciprocal rights; 2) Relations between State and Church to be established according to the rules of the Code of Canon Law (1917 – Author's note); 3) Problems arising from mixed matters will be dealt with according to the Papal teachings contained in their encyclical letters. 4) The declaration must be bilateral, that is the ecclesiastical authority also promise to respect the rights of the government and not to interfere in purely material matters; 5) There will not be any apology; 6) A [conciliation] meeting should take place on neutral ground. *Ibid.*, 807.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 806-12.

²⁰⁶ And do like Strickland did 30 years before him and ask pardon from the Church. For him it was the Church that was treating them badly and acting 'un-christianly.' To this he made constant reference in his speeches and writings along the years. See *Ibid.*, 310-327.

²⁰⁷ Now Cardinal Prospero Grech.

Bishop Emmanuel Gerada.²⁰⁸ Mintoff wanted to make peace with the Church, but on condition²⁰⁹ that the Church would need to consent to a number of proposals/conditions. What would become known by the Church as Mintoff's six points²¹⁰ (*is-Sitt Punti*) will be considered by the Church as a further attempt by Mintoff to laicise²¹¹ Malta. Thus, what was deemed as a 'poisoned peace' handshake was refused and considered anti-religious. On the other hand, Mintoff and the MLP were claiming "that what the Curia wanted 'were not talks, agreements and peace, but to continue the fight to the end.'"²¹² But now Malta was preparing for Independence and, when eventually this was secured, the Church had lost its principal guarantor, the British Government.²¹³

In a gesture which may have surprised many, during a Pontifical mass at St. John's Co-Cathedral on the September 22 1964, Gonzi lifted the Interdict against Mintoff and the Executive, but retained the ecclesiastical sanctions related to the MLP newspapers. As will be indicated below, the censorship of the MLP newspapers, remained till 1968,²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Auxiliary Bishop to Mgr. Gonzi, consecrated in 1967 and appointed Coadjutor in 1968.

²⁰⁹ 1. Separation of Church and State as in any other modern State; 2. Malta should be a religiously neutral State, without giving preference to one religion over the other; 3. Civil marriage should be recognised, and possibly also divorce for those who believe in divorce; 4. In State schools Catholic religious education is given only to those who desire to be so instructed; 5. Private schools must agree to State inspection as a condition for being considered on a par with State schools and receiving State subsidies; 6. Social Services will be the same for everyone, without favour, particularly as regards illegitimate children, who should not be discriminate against; 7. The Church has to make financial sacrifices and the *privilegium fori* must be restricted in its application; 8. State censorship of books and films is to be free from Church intervention; 9. The Church must not meddle in politics.

²¹⁰ 1. Separation of Church and State; 2. The State to be secularist, with equal treatment of all marriages, 3. Recognition of civil marriage; 4. *Privilegium fori* to be limited; 5. Censorship of films and books to be carried out exclusively by the Government without allowance for Church interference; 6. Violence, in certain cases, to be admissible.

²¹¹ This is not simply 'secularisation' in today's understanding i.e. a free Church in a free State – indicative of healthy separation of State and Church. In a Pastoral Letter on laicism (21 June 1963) it was evident that the ecclesiastical authorities smelled the stink of atheism and persecution of religion. *Ibid.*, 829-830.

²¹² For further discussion on these points and linked discussions on the Independence Constitution see *ibid.*, 821-830; Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 185-192.

²¹³ Gonzi was not keen on Independence and neither with the constitution as it was being proposed. See Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 887-896; Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 192-3.

²¹⁴ The reason for this is that while the Interdict is a punishment against a delict as per Canon 2344 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the prohibitions were considered preventive measures to

but the removal of the Interdict was considered as a “gesture of political peace,”²¹⁵ towards the MLP leaders.

Vatican II: hope in sight

While all this was going on in Malta, Vatican Council II (1962 – 1965) was underway. The winds of change that were blowing out of Rome brought the *aggiornamento*. MLP exponents saw this as an indication of how their claims, more than those ecclesiastical hierarchy, were in line with the Church’s teaching. At the same time, a younger and a more moderate – not necessarily Labour leaning – clergy was also finding it easier to appreciate “the conflicting loyalties of solidly Catholic Labourites [which] brought these people in severe conscience conflicts [and the] disastrous consequences for the Church” due to the hard-line policy maintained during the struggle.²¹⁶

The ecclesiological underpinning of Vatican II was in sharp contrast with the dominant ecclesiology of the Maltese Church. This marked the eclipse of the Constantinian era,²¹⁷ an era characterised by a mutually beneficial alliance between spiritual and temporal powers and cultural influence, bringing forward a new Christian humanism and sociology.²¹⁸ The ‘Constantinian era’, more than a chronological era spanning over centuries, was a mental and institutional construct, which solidified over various periods of history. This was so especially after the Council of Trent sought to counter the Protestant Reformation and Vatican I the emerging Modernism and Relativism. Influencing the Church’s magisterium, behaviours and spirituality, it became an ideal which sought to reinforce the Papacy and the centrality of Rome and consequently

safeguard the people from falling into the traps of communism.

²¹⁵ “Malta Archbishop Removes Interdict,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 1964 (See Appendix 10); see also Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 4, 1132.

²¹⁶ Mintoff too seemed to understand this and did not underestimate the damaging effect this had on his supporters who were faithful Catholics. But the feud was not over yet; a peace agreement was still far from sight. See Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 199-200.

²¹⁷ Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 10-12.

²¹⁸ Chenu, *La Fine dell’Era Costantiniana*, 13-26.

reinforcing the episcopacy in their dioceses. But in losing territorial powers, the Constantinian *modus* began to be liquidated (first at Westphalia and subsequently with Napoleon) but it was still an integral part of the mental and ideological framework within which the Church functioned.²¹⁹

And therefore, what today is termed as Church-State separation, was sought first on the level of church-polis, then throne-altar. What emerges mostly, but not just, is that clashes and relations shifted from the theological and philosophical plane, to temporal matters and subsequently to the ideological plane. With the emergence of modern politics based on ideological orientations (what in the 20th C came to be defined as right and left), theology started clashing with politics as well. On the *glocal*²²⁰ level this boiled down to how powerful the Church is in influencing the ideological framework of society. Although we speak of a separation of Church and state in Malta, matters cannot be more intertwined – we cannot, as yet, speak of Malta being a lay state.

Hence with Vatican II the theological outlook towards socialism and the role of the Church in the public sphere had changed. Yet communism was still rampant in the East, and was still considered by many as an anti-Catholic and anti-religious ideology. By adopting the Johannine “spirit of dialogue” before and during the Council a greater effort towards dialogue was sought. A renovated ecclesiology meant that the Church began seeing herself as “in the world” rather than contraposed to it. Paul VI and the Holy See negotiated and consolidated diplomatic relations with some of the Communist regimes, easing, step-by-step, the belligerent atmosphere that was prevalent in the previous century.²²¹ All this placed the Maltese ecclesiastical authorities in a delicate position; the Holy See encouraged a rapprochement with the MLP,²²² but negotiations

²¹⁹ See Jacques Maritain, “Du regime temporel et de la liberte,” in Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 118; see also, Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2002), 26-38.

²²⁰ “Glocalization is a combination of the words ‘globalization’ and ‘localization’, used to describe a product or service that is developed and distributed globally.” “Glocalization” *Investopedia.com*, accessed on March 12, 2019,

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glocalization.asp> retrieved on 12 March 2019

²²¹ George Weigel, *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism*, (New York: Oxford, 1992), 67-76.

²²² First through Mgr. Cardinale, Apostolic Delegate (1963-65) and then Mgr. O’Connor, the

would not be easily started, maintained and definitely concluded.²²³

Edging closer to the 1966 elections,²²⁴ the situation was as thorny as ever. Borg Olivier stated that “the Church could not fail to give her support” to the PN; Mintoff claimed that peace with the Church was imminent (which was evidently illusory); and the Church, through the customary pre-election Pastoral Letter, maintained that people should vote “for candidates from whom Religion and the Church have nothing to fear.”

Prohibitions removed and deal struck

The censorship attached to the MLP newspapers was still in force. Eventually on the June 14, 1966, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared that the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* no longer has the force of ecclesiastical law with the attached censure. In line with the new theological outlook of *aggiornamento* brought forward by Vatican II, the censorship was removed by Gonzi, on December 13, 1968,²²⁵ and rapprochement became even more plausible. Gerada negotiated and drafted an agreement²²⁶ with Mintoff. Gonzi, unable “to settle a better settlement [but tired of the

first Nuncio to Malta.

²²³ See Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 201-3.

²²⁴ 26-28 March: The MLP increased votes by 9% probably getting back what it had lost to minor parties in the previous election.

²²⁵ Curiously enough no mention of this is made in: Azzopardi, *Il-Qawmien tal-Haddiem Malti*.

²²⁶ This read:

“After various discussions between Mr. Dom Mintoff, leader of the Malta Labour Party and His Lordship Mgr. E. Gerada, Bishop Co-Adjutor on behalf of the Ecclesiastical Authorities of Malta, agreement was reached to sign this document.

The Church Authorities in these islands and the representatives of the Malta Labour Party make the following declaration:

“In modern society it is necessary that distinction be made between the political community and the Church. The very nature of the Church demands she does not interfere in politics.

The Church Authority has the duty and the right to safeguard her spiritual and temporal interests and whenever need arises to teach which principles are correct and which are wrong. The Church does not impose mortal sin as a censure.

We are pleased to declare that in the light of Vatican Council II, relations between the

conflict], reluctantly agreed."²²⁷ Koster reports that the Holy See sent some reservations to this draft and on April 2, 1969 indicated and proposed to resume negotiations and avoid haste. Gerada on his part, considered the deal was struck and proceeded with the publishing of the statement two days later on Good Friday 1969.²²⁸

Although one can only guess what these objections are,²²⁹ two problematics stand out immediately with the declaration. It may make sense within the Maltese jargon and common parlance, but theologically the Church by her very nature should get involved in politics, not in a partisan manner, but nowhere in Catholic theology does the Church exclude herself from contributing in the public sphere. This clause deserved to be drafted much better, avoiding straightforward and to a certain extent incorrect statement. Another significant problematic stems out when one considers that this document is being signed just after Vatican II. The ecclesiology expressed and emphasised in the second clause on Church Authority and her duty and right to safeguard her spiritual interests in no way do they match the theology strongly brought forwards during the council. What would these be? A better drafting would have included the faithful's spiritual interests and not that of the Church Authority – such is not only cosmetic or syntactic but essentially ecclesiological. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

As a conclusion, with the signing of the Agreement the Church appeared to have retracted; Mintoff did not go to Canossa; but a peace agreement was signed, with hopes

Church and the Malta Labour Party had improved considerably.

We hope that through the guidance of Our Lord this goodwill in future would be instrumental for peace to reign amongst us." (My underlining.)

²²⁷ It seems that Gonzi was not happy with the agreement; apparently, my sources have told me, he used the word "stultifikajtuni" from *stultus* – Lt. Fool. See also Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 209.

²²⁸ It is rumoured, that Gerada wanted Gonzi's seat at all costs, and as soon as possible. Koster basing himself on his aural sources holds that he did not inform of any reservations the Holy See must have had, and proceeded to the signing. See *ibid.*, 207-210, 223-239.

²²⁹ The Curia Archivist has informed me that he has found no document that can be traced with certainty to Gerada at the Curia's Archives. Moreover, if any such reservations were in fact sent, no document could be retrieved at the Apostolic Nunciature in Malta which has archives going back to 1983. Any previous documents, if in existence, would have to be retrieved from the Holy See archive or in particular in that of the Holy See Secretariat of State's Second Section.

of good will and a brighter future. Hot heads, for the time being, cooled down a bit. But did it lead to reconciliation?

1.4 Summary

With the emergence of the Maltese State and the weakening of theocracy, combined with an ecclesiology which saw pulpit above throne, the hierarchy's fear that communism was to become a reality in Malta and topped with the guttural mistrust between Mintoff and Gonzi, the relation of the hierarchy and the political elite was destined to explode in a nationwide fire. As anti-clerical sentiment surged and Mintoff's popularity increased, the Church fastened tighter her quarters and rallied her troops, as did Mintoff on his side. While the latter needed troops to be able to govern, the former rallied troops to prevent it. As in the 30s, desperate times called for desperate measures. The moral sanctions issued 30 years earlier had yielded their desired result, forcing Strickland to Canossa. Mintoff however, made it clear that he was not Strickland; Malta was not the same, the Church was losing ground, but still employed the same tactics. What would become a tragedy in three acts, will determine the course of Church's role in Malta irrevocably.

The strength of the Church lay in a religious power imbued with moral authority which she exerted forcefully and, in some cases, abusively, on those who did not know otherwise. Stuck in a militant frame of mind, the Church was demanding that her authority be respected without questions asked. The Constantinian *modus* was still ingrained and perpetuated the structural sin of clericalism which manifested itself in a structure of prestige, ecclesio-centricity and a top-down attitude.

Chapter 2

Perpetuating the wound

2.1 Creating a trauma

If the previous Chapter showed the genesis and the unfolding of turbulent relations, this chapter will identify why these relations mattered so much as to be described and narrated and eventually remembered becoming integrally part of the collective narrative as a trauma, perpetuating wounds that have as yet to be healed. These events, generally collated as one happening and collectively remembered as the *sittinijiet*, became symbolic of an era effecting a collective and indeed a whole nation, emerging as a cultural trauma which survives 50 years after the 'truce.'

The consequences of the imposition of the *dnub il-mejjet* (more than the *Interdett*), the *mizbla*, the shaming in confessionals and from the pulpit, not receiving the Eastertide house blessing and so on, had all the potential of becoming traumatic instances for those who incurred them and for their families. The great tension and ultimately the canonical sanctions inflicted on a segment of the population had effect on the collective Maltese social fabric which revolved around the social character of the Church and the individual and collective religious identity of many (an identifier in being Maltese) creating a schism between religious identity and social identity which spread to the whole nation. Nowadays this still has effects and is a benchmark of how Church and politics are expected to interact (or not).

Evidently the 'peace agreement' of 1969 was not enough to placate the rifts. With no stretch of

the imagination can it be said that that was the conclusive chapter of Malta's turbulent history. In the decades to come, various turbulent periods can be highlighted, between the Church and the MLP¹ during the 70s and 80s and the physical violence that ensued but also on the inter-party level between the MLP and PN. But no other event as the *sittinijiet* has cemented and influenced the interaction of Maltese society and the Church in Malta, determining a dominant narrative the nation still must reconcile with, as the politico-religious struggles of the *sittinijiet* and the cultural trauma that emerged.

2.1.1 Cultural trauma: a social process

Cultural trauma is different from psychological trauma.² This does not mean that the psyche of the individual and the collective are alien to this understanding, but central for cultural trauma is the discursive process, within a society and/or collective, through which an event or a series of events are described and made sense of. The event becomes a wound still 'at work' within a culture and within the collective memory of those who appropriate the narrative affecting even unconsciously socio-cultural relationships, emerging when triggered either by the carrier group or new circumstances which are described as the re-actualisation of the cause of the wounds.

Ron Eyerman, a major proponent of the theory describes it as:

A discursive response to a tear in the social fabric, occurring when the foundations of established collective identity are shaken by one or a series of seemingly interrelated occurrences [wherein] a central aspect ... is the collective attempt to locate the causes of suffering, to place blame and to point to remedies.³

¹ In government between 1971 and 1987.

² Freud described trauma as "a foreign body ... still at work" whereby an event is stored in the memory and affects the cognitive process of the individual. Important for Freud was the context in which the event occurred; trauma is not a thing itself but becomes a thing by virtue of the context in which it is implanted. Freud's idea of trauma is just the starting point for today's understanding of psychological trauma. The field has developed significantly and the debate in psychology is an ongoing one. See Neil J. Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma," in Jeffrey C. Alexander *et al.*, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004, 33-4.

³ Ron Eyerman, Todd Madigan and Magnus Ring, "Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the

Occurrences do not emerge as a cultural trauma because a group of people feel ‘similar’ hurts pain or loss. A narrative and a coding (or framing) is needed. Although major disruptions to the social routine occur in societies, these are not directly responsible for the emergence of cultural trauma.⁴ It is the discursive process, where a carrier group⁵ interprets the occurrences, attributing a particular reading which the collective appropriates, and shapes the collective identity, traumatising or healing it. This narration fills the gaps, creating a spiral of signification, between the occurrences and their presentation attributing a meaning through which the collective understands what happened to them.

For traumas to emerge at the level of collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Cultural trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain, but the result of this acute discomfort entering into and moulding the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity through the interpretation of the occurrences. Jeffrey C. Alexander⁶ holds that:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.⁷

“This approach focuses on the trauma of the collective or the trauma of the social identity” whereby “a socio-political event, a psychophysiological process, a physical and emotional

Vietnam War,” *Croatian Political Science Review* 54, nos. 1-2 (2017): 13. (My underlining.)

⁴ For example, it has been shown that the bombing of Nazi Germany by Allied forces during WWII has not created a cultural trauma within the German society even though the casualties and the destruction had been widespread. See Volker Heins and Andreas Langenohl, “A Fire that Doesn’t Burn? The Allied bombing of Germany and the Cultural Politics of Trauma,” in *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering*, ed. Ron Eyerman, Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elizabeth Butler Breese (London: Paradigm, 2013), 3-26.

⁵ “[These] are the collective agents of the trauma process, [and] have both ideal and material interests ... situated in particular places in the social structures; ... have discursive talents for articulating their claims – for ‘meaning making’; ... not necessarily elites; ... prestigious leaders or those who the majority has designated as spiritual pariahs; ... generational (one generation against the other); ... national, pitting one’s own nation against a putative enemy; ... institutional, representing one particular social sector or organisation against others in a fragmented and polarized social order.” Alexander *et al.*, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 11.

⁶ Another major proponent of the theory.

⁷ Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 6. (My underlining)

experience, and a narrative [become] explanations of individual and social suffering."⁸ What happened (the event) and how it is represented (the meaning-making of the event), are not the same but:

claims about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply. [The] cultural construction of trauma begins with ... the claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process and a demand for emotional, institutional and symbolic reparation and reconstitution.⁹

For events to emerge as a collective and cultural trauma, these necessitate a narrative process whereby what happened is interpreted and made sense of. In compacting or creating an 'us' the narrative of the 'story-teller' construes a meaning of the event. Creating a common understanding, this then passes from one generation to the next. The event is appropriated by second and third generations, seeping into collective consciousness. And therefore, the carrier group construes this as "a matter of collective concern, of cultural worry, group danger, social panic, and creeping fear" where the 'fallen ones' become "victims of irresponsible chicanery. Carrier groups tie their material and ideal interests to particular scripts about who did what to whom and how society must respond if a new collective identity is to be sustained."¹⁰ Doing so through symbolic representations, authoritative voice and resources are important but not the only contributing factors.

For cultural trauma to emerge it is not the number of the victims that counts or their suffering which depicts the event as triumph or trauma but whether the losses contributed to collective glory or were simply in vain.¹¹ What matters is not the scale and the historical significance sustained in the consciousness over time, but that the event must "constitute a case that embodies deeply contested meanings that are continually reworked in a divided society that has yet to develop a wide consensus view of the event."¹² The way these are remembered and

⁸ Ana Ljubojević, Mia Jerman, Kosta Bovan, "Cultural Trauma Set in Stone? The Case of Shelling of Dubrovnik," *Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. 1-2 (2017): 199.

⁹ Alexander, *Trauma*, 15.

¹⁰ Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elizabeth Butler Breese, "On Social Suffering and Its Cultural Construction," in *Narrating Trauma*, ed. Ron Eyerman, Alexander and Butler Breese, xi-xvi.

¹¹ *Ibid*, xi-xvi.

¹² Akiko Hashimoto, "The Cultural Trauma of a Fallen Nation: Japan, 1945," in *Narrating Trauma*, ed.

transferred from one generation to the next becomes a collective narration of trauma; a trauma drama which for Alexander and Butler Breese “can be consensual or polarizing” leading to social reconciliation and divisive conflict respectively.¹³ When the narration instils a collective sense of victimhood it perpetuates unhealed collective memories as basic elements of meaning, identity, worth and purpose, through carrier agents like politicians who see in the trauma a way of unifying and mobilizing a group. A sense of collective victimhood can become a moral justification even for violence against those who were construed as the perpetrators of that victimisation.¹⁴

2.1.2 Perceiving victimhood

Acts of real or perceived threats on collectives, missed opportunities of proper dialogue and lack of an attitude of openness and listening are generally not one sided and the more time passes, the more the real reason for this misunderstanding and conflict would be buried under anecdotes and perceptions that make it difficult to determine and resolve, with generation after generation adding its own interpretation.

Following situations of conflict, whether being a ‘victim’ or a ‘perpetrator’,¹⁵ one must necessarily make sense of past events. The distinction between the two is not always clear cut,

Ron Eyeran, Alexander and Butler Breese, 30.

¹³ Alexander and Butler Breese, “*On Social Suffering and Its Cultural Construction*,” in *Narrating Trauma*, ed. Ron Eyeran, Alexander and Butler Breese, xxx-xxxi.

¹⁴ Johanna Ray Vollhardt, “Collective victimization,” in *Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict*, ed. Linda R. Tropp (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 147-8.

¹⁵ On the one hand victims stress the sense of self-preservation and strengthen their identity, and a collective trauma may be helpful to be kept alive, leading “subsequent generations to incorporate the trauma into their collective self.” On the other hand, on the part of the perpetrators there is a sense of denial and discomfort and a sense of trying to make the past more palatable, trying to reduce the collective responsibility. Alternatively, it could be the catalyst of the construction of a new social representation that, if successful, can support a collective self that acknowledges past transgressions in a manner that is neither defensive nor crippling; one that promotes positive social identity.” Gilad Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9, (2018): 1-3.

creating what Primo Levi described as a *grey zone*. A group which identifies as a victim may have been perpetrators themselves and vice versa, with members of these groups trying to “highlight their sacrifices and downplay their crimes.”¹⁶ While the “perpetrator” needs to go through a well-meaning transformation of its identity and *raison d’être*,¹⁷ the victim needs to adapt to a different world-view on its part. Similar to post-traumatic reactions of hyper-vigilance and “conflating well-meant criticism with hate,”¹⁸ the group may still harbour unhealed collective memories as the basis of narratives which are in conflict with each other. The interplay between the unconscious choice of the one receiving the narrative and conscious repetition by the carrier group is vital. Once the narrative goes into circulation those who indirectly act as carrier groups (like family members who retell the story they themselves have received) consciously re-propose what has been fed (possibly unconsciously) into ‘their’ narrative to others. The carrier group would then just maintain that narrative and sustain it.

Narratives are created and memories of events are not necessarily factually true. Hence if it is true that memory and history do not tally, conflicting narratives arise and invariably, the dominant one will prevail over the others which are silenced, together with the identities and memories attached to that narrative, either fracturing or consolidating the collective identity even of a whole nation.¹⁹ Conflicting narratives diverge especially when a turbulent past becomes the subject matter. This is significant as it “might represent a key to understanding how power relations are articulated and composed within a social or national context.”²⁰

In the case of Jasper, Texas, where a black person was killed by white persons, the interpretation of these events by carrier group, amongst which were black religious leaders,

¹⁶ Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*. (New York, NY: The Orion, 1959) quoted in *ibid*.

¹⁷ As one could witness in the German distancing itself from Nazism.

¹⁸ Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 4-6.

¹⁹ See Eyerman, Madigan and Ring, “Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the Vietnam War,” 11-31; Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 3-4; Kalina Brabeck and Ricardo Ainslie, “The Narration of Collective Trauma: The ‘True Story’ of Jasper, Texas”, *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 13, (2008), 134-6; Daphna Canetti et al., “Collective Trauma From the Lab to the Real World: The Effects of the Holocaust on Contemporary Israeli Political Cognitions,” *Political Psychology* 39, no. 1 (2018): 3–21.

²⁰ Ana Lisa Tota “Public Memory and Cultural Trauma,” *Javnost – The Public* 13 no. 3, (2006): 82-83; See also Brabeck and Ainslie, “The Narration of Collective Trauma,” 131.

consolidated the whole community of Jasper interpreting the happening as a tragic moment in their otherwise peaceful routine, but one which unites the various collectives in their sorrow, avoiding the triggering of the racial divide. One African American minister said: “[W]e knew that as a community, we had to live here together after this was over ... There was no need to say anything that would divide us. It was a time for reconciliation.”²¹ Had this not happened, the community would have fractured, whereby those who have perceived themselves as victims, see the past events as justification for their suffering, all of which becomes self-pity, self-love and self-referentiality.²² This inexorably transforms itself in a defensive moral justification for revengeful violence by those who considered themselves victims of those they perceive as ‘others’. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today, perceived victimhood self-defence requires an antagonism against the enemy. Alexander and Dromi note that:

According to the Israeli right, to recognise the rights of Palestinians is to become an enemy of the Jewish people. Solidarity cannot extend beyond the boundaries of one’s own group... So reconstructed, the trauma drama of the Holocaust is a recipe for conflict without end.²³

The choice in representing an event, one way or another, is the responsibility of carrier groups but how these are reflected upon “is certainly a matter for individual conscience, but it is also a massively collective thing [which is] subject to whirling spirals of signification, fierce power contests, simplifying binaries, subtle stories, fickle audiences and counter-narratives.”²⁴ The unconscious ‘choosing’ of a narrative one over the other by a collective depends not only on who’s the most powerful narrator, that is, the one who’s narrative resonates most with the collective, but also on which story fills the gap of coherence and shattered identity which the trauma caused. “How [this interpretative grid] is applied very much depends on who is telling the story and how.” The one who controls the “symbolic production” determines the way facts are coded; whether facts are to be considered good, bad or even evil. This coding depends on

²¹ Brabeck and Ainslie, “The Narration of Collective Trauma,” 127.

²² Jeffrey C. Alexander and Shait M. Dromi, “Trauma Construction and Moral Restriction,” in *Narrating Trauma*, ed. Ron Eyerman, Alexander and Butler Breese, 110-112.

²³ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

this symbolic understanding of what happened.²⁵

²⁵ Alexander, *Trauma*, 36-7.

2.2 Remembering, narrating and grouping: a case for a Maltese cultural trauma?

The *sittinijiet* are still considered as a black damning stain on the Church by many and not just by those who ascribe to that collective (MLP supporters) who received her ire. But while the dominant narrative claims social consensus, within the ecclesial circles the issue is simply silent. Whether the fear of questioning the events out of guilt for being considered the one to blame, or fear of antagonising further what is an already a polarised view, or for any other reason, the Church on her part is sheepish in discussing that era. This speaks volumes of what seems to be an attempt at trying to forget a narrative which is not yet forgiven. It appears as if the Church is still carrying the *sittinijiet* as ball and chain. This impinges gravely on her mission to be a prophetic reader of signs of the times and a concrete proponent of the Gospel within the Maltese society.

What follows will analyse the key elements of cultural trauma and how this theory can be used to frame the *sittinijiet* and its effects till this very day. In view of this, it becomes important to understand how a cultural trauma emerges and why and how this is appropriated by subsequent generations, becoming ingrained in the dominant frame of mind not just of a collective which considers itself to be the heir of Mintoff's supporters during the *sittinijiet*, but indeed of the Maltese population.

2.2.1 Creating a narrative and its effects

Narratives and memory are necessary for a collective and its identity. These play a crucial role in a collective's decision making, and are means employed by a community to strengthen itself and its sense of identity. Emphasising symbols and ideals, narratives bring together the members of the collective. Framing²⁶ the past event (in our case the *sittinijiet*) which has been

²⁶ George Lakoff, *The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to Your Brain and its Politics*, (London: Penguin Books, 2008); George Lakoff, *The ALL NEW Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2014).

interpreted as traumatising, narrated as collective trauma (of a particular group) and hence becoming a tear in the social fabric (a split between political and religious belief) is made sense of. Central to this process are not historical facts but their interpretation.

A narrative is not simply a memory, or a story told and retold. Different meaning and weight is given to different memories which are 'remembered' on the level of feelings and emotions which the narrative passes on and root themselves below the level of consciousness.²⁷ This creates what Lakoff calls 'frames', in other words "mental structures that shape the way we see the world."²⁸ Our cognitive processes and meaning-giving depend on these frames and therefore collective narratives depend on a collective framing which is buttressed by the history, geography, culture and traditions (the frames) of those with an 'authoritative voice' who narrate them as well as those who consider themselves part of the collective itself. Once this framing is set deep enough, then one may control the rest. The 'authoritative voice' who controls these frames controls the meaning and the interpretation of present situations. Through this process of constructing and reconstructing, the community re-explores its past and explains its present, oriented towards a future with a 'meaning' that the carrier group decides. Vehicles through which the past is understood, narratives are lessons that teach and form the identity of a collective, and by filling the gap between the event and its representation "whose images and symbols derive from the broader social and cultural context,"²⁹ these become integral in a process shared by a collective.

But for events to become traumatic for the collective and emerge as a cultural trauma, the representation of a horrendous event has to be constructed. Depending on this process of "meaning giving,"³⁰ shifts occur in the meaning of what happened, who did it and what a collective should avoid to re-live. Alexander has studied how the representation of mass

²⁷ "In fact, about 98 percent of what our brains are doing is below the level of consciousness. As a result, we may not know all, or even most, of what in our brains determines our deepest moral, social, and political beliefs. And yet we act on the basis of those largely unconscious beliefs." George Lakoff *"ALL NEW Don't Think of an Elephant."*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Tota, "Public Memory and Cultural Trauma," 82.

³⁰ Alexander, *Trauma*, 37.

murder of Jews by the Nazis has shifted from being “war crime” to “Holocaust.” The mass-killing of Jews during World War II came to be seen by most as a representation, transcending time and space, of a trauma, emblematic of human suffering. A trauma-drama constructed bit by bit, through the media, publications, stage productions and films, until in the 1960s a dominant narrative had emerged where at the height of the Vietnam war, this American assault on innocent human beings became typified as a ‘Holocaust.’³¹

In his analysis he brings forward the argument that before this shift in meaning, the American press and sentiment was at first detached from identifying with the Jews as being the ones who are persecuted. Initially they were the ‘others’ the ‘defenceless’. Antisemitism had condoned or tolerated for centuries; “suddenly [it] became distinctively unpopular.”³² What had been described as “atrocious” – narrated as a war story – slowly became the “Holocaust.” Gradually, a localized trauma (against a people) started being framed as *genocide* and universalized. However, at first, the association and interpretation being given at the discovery of death camps was one of liberation. Captions and all were portraying prisoners as the liberated ones and the Nuremberg trial became a sort of post-war redemption.³³

After the War, American Jewry turned – with great energy and generosity – to liquidating the legacy of the Holocaust by caring for the survivors [who] were urged to put the ghastly past behind them, to build new lives in their adopted homes ... When a proposal for a Holocaust memorial in New York City came before representatives of the leading Jewish organisations in the late 1940s, they unanimously rejected the idea: it would, they said, give currency to the image of Jews as ‘helpless victims’, an idea they wished to repudiate.³⁴

The attributed meaning, frames the collective meaning. Structured along a chronological understanding of time which maintains routine and structures, the social life of a community is disrupted by horrendous events. These become a *kairos* “in which a sense of rupture with the past is inextricably bound up with a sense that a rift has occurred in memory.”³⁵ Narratives

³¹ See *ibid.*, 48-76.

³² *Ibid.*, 42.

³³ *Ibid.*, 46-7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁵ Aarelaid-Tart “Cultural Trauma and Life Stories,” 42.

become a sort of recuperation; memory³⁶ becomes the vessel which contains the past and makes it present. The event in the past is connected to the current situation.³⁷ The popular (which could become the official³⁸) memory of this past determines present and future engagements. Discussion on current events become determined by the narration of past ones and the transmitted memory functions as the meter of what is desired or detested.

In the same way as traumas “shatter assumptive worldviews” in individuals, collective traumas “transform the way survivors perceive the world and understand the relationship between their group and other groups.”³⁹ A traumatised collective will deal with its past and react to the present similarly to how a traumatised individual reacts.⁴⁰ Narratives function as a “working through” process essential both for the individual and the collective. The process starts with the framing provided by the carrier group. But members of the collective would be acting as ‘lay historians’ injecting meaning into their history “and provide a usable past.”⁴¹ The selection of these memories will be in support of the identity and group consciousness to which the collective abides,⁴² but also by reconstructing reality and memory. In fact, in this

³⁶ “Memories are an essential building block for narratives which according to Jeffrey K. Olick are ‘processes’ done rather than ‘things’ people have.” Victor Roudomentof, “Collective Memory and Cultural Politics: An Introduction,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 35, (Summer 2007): 8.

³⁷ Allan Young, “Bruno and the Holy Fool: Myth, Mimesis, and the Transmission of Traumatic Memories,” in *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Robert Lemelson. Mark Barad, Laurence J. Kirmayer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), 347.

³⁸ Eyerman et al. distinguished between ‘official’ and ‘popular (cultural) memory’. This distinction applies when officialdom and a group are in conflict with each other and so are memories they have. However, these intersect when that group gains sufficient power to become itself officialdom, obliterating (or tries to) past narratives and imposing its reading of history, through commemorations, monuments, festivities, memorials and so on. See Eyerman, Madigan and Ring, “Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the Vietnam War,” 22-25.

³⁹ Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 3.

⁴⁰ “The influence of a severe and humiliating calamity that directly affects all or most of a large group forges a link between the psychology of the individual and that of the group. In the wake of such an event, a mental representation of it, common to all members, begins to take shape.” Brabeck and Ainslie, “The Narration of Collective Trauma,” 136.

⁴¹ Brabeck and Ainslie, “The Narration of Collective Trauma,” 137-138.

⁴² “The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity.” Quoted in *ibid.*, 137.

attempt to find meaning in traumatic events this social psychological process helps in the creation and maintenance of self-continuity which connects self, others and the environment enhancing “the feeling that one’s existence matters. It is a process of identity construction that comprises the sense of self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging [and] efficacy.”⁴³

This is not simply a futile story-telling exercise. On the contrary these have an important function in the cohesion of the group, giving an interpretation not just of facts but also of the protagonists.⁴⁴ It creates myths which are cemented within the collectivity and which strongly determine who is within and outside of the collective, reinforcing the “us” and “them.”⁴⁵ An abstract construction of the collective identification mediated through these narratives creates a frame of reference which is constructed around particular events through commemoration, rituals and also through school text books.⁴⁶ Narratives, transmitted orally, through literature, arts and festivities, strengthens the idea of group and homogeneity which is fundamental in securing unity.

The ‘past’, whether glorious or traumatic, mediated through the collective narrative, functions as the background against which the group sees itself within the surrounding reality. Whether the ‘others’ are seen as threat or not, is based on how it tallies with the ‘us’ narrative. Whatever stirs ‘threatening’ emotions or feelings becomes the aggressor, whether perceived or real. What resembles the glorious past becomes a present opportunity; threats prompt a sense of evolutionary vigilance pre-empting dangers.⁴⁷ Intra or inter-group conflicts may lead to a “lack

⁴³ Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 2-3.

⁴⁴ As Halbwachs proposed, collective memory is not simply a passive transition of past into the present through traditions and ritual practices but as a ‘past’ “filtered through present needs, most particularly relating to group cohesion and social solidarity.” Eyerman, Madigan and Ring, “Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the Vietnam War,” 14.

⁴⁵ Collective memories form the national and collective identity more in a ‘mythical’ sense rather than a ‘historical sense’ becoming a constant process of ‘meaning-making’ and identity formation. See Tota “Public Memory and Cultural Trauma,” 82-3; Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 2.

⁴⁶ Eyerman, Madigan and Ring, “Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the Vietnam War,” 15-16.

⁴⁷ It has been shown that collective memories help a group surviving natural calamities as they are more aware of the risks and how to deal with them. For example, it has been shown that “the collective memory of natural disasters and the collective memory of traumas intentionally caused by humans have much in common – they serve as guides for future generations on how to identify threat and how

of historical closure” which sees in a former “enemy” as a constant threat, even if the “other” has changed.⁴⁸ It has been shown “that past collective victimization can influence group members’ beliefs and behaviours in a present-day conflict and in other intergroup situations,”⁴⁹ and that memory selection may serve not just as a meaning-making exercise but also to denigrate the other group.

2.2.2 Passing on the narrative

Studies suggest with a degree of certainty “that trauma resulting from direct experiences of collective violence can be transmitted.”⁵⁰ Auerhahn and Laub suggested that: “psychic trauma weaves through the memories of several generations,” and that “massive trauma has an amorphous presence ... [which] shapes the internal representation of reality of several generations, becoming an unconscious organizing principle passed on by parents and internalized by their children.”⁵¹

But what concerns this study is understanding why and how, on the level of narratives, memory and identity, a collective and cultural trauma is passed from one generation to the next. Inter-generational transmission of collective trauma propagates past memories which through narratives are recuperated and brought into the present. Political and cultural decisions are the key factors in “silencing” one narrative and the reinforcement of another which become “a source of cultural identity, a supplement, and for some people a replacement

to respond to it effectively.” Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 4.

⁴⁸ Studies have showed how Koreans still fear Japanese even though today Japan is considered a pacifist nation and how the Israeli Jews are still reluctant to consider the Holocaust chapter closed. *See* *ibid.*, 4-6.

⁴⁹ Vollhardt, “Collective victimization,” 142.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵¹ Shelly A. Wiechelt and Jan Gryczynski, “Cultural and Historical Trauma among Native Americans,” in *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research*, ed. Shoshana Ringel and Jerrold Brandell, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2012), 6, doi: 10.4135/9781452230597.n10.

for traditional sources of group cohesion.”⁵² For an event to retain its meaning it must be somehow transmitted, otherwise it would sit unconsciously with those who lived it. Here Lakoff’s concept of framing comes in handy too. Framing is not about making good slogans but about images which capture people’s imagination precisely because they are ready to accept them. Such becomes possible because there has been a long (often decades long) propaganda which cements the idea which a slogan (for example) is capable of capturing.⁵³

Collective framing strengthens group cohesion and identity. Retelling the story through which the idea of commonality is conveyed and which transmission reworks and condenses, becomes a continual “myth” in the making.⁵⁴ It is a myth which connects past and present and in which communities participate and re-actualise. Not always historically correct, the transmission of the memory and the re-working of the narrative and the meaning of the event becomes layered also with the perceptions of the one narrating. It becomes malleable for the circumstances in which it is being told. Memories, referencing to a concrete historical anecdote, are selected as “cultural tool kits” which “[emerge] in response to the need to create a usable past.”⁵⁵ Therefore, on a collective level, history becomes a representation of “historical facts, shared myths and beliefs” which shape the identity of the collective and in turn the identity of its adversary, which are inter-related and “may be a source of intergroup tension.”⁵⁶

⁵² Young, “Bruno and the Holy Fool,” 342; 351-2.

⁵³ Lakoff, *The ALL NEW Don’t Think of the Elephant*, Part 2.2.

⁵⁴ BenEzer understands *myth* not as “mere archaic relic but a potent force in everyday life, part of our collective unconscious [which is constantly being] reworked [into new ones in an attempt for communities to] make sense of untidy and traumatic memories and give meaning to their lives... therefore, “not as an untrue story but as a living memory, either of recent or long-past events, which continues to play a role in peoples’ lives and is a living force in the present.” Gadi BenEzer, “Trauma, Culture, and Myth: Narratives of the Ethiopian Jewish Exodus,” in *Understanding Trauma*, eds. Lemelson, Barad, Kirmayer, 396-8; also, Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, *The myths we live by*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 20.

Similarly, By *myth* Young understands: “a narrative that is historically problematic and is shared by a group of people who believe that it is credible, explains their collective identity, and illuminates their present condition.” Young, *Bruno and the Holy Fool*, 339.

⁵⁵ Aarelaid-Tart, “Cultural Trauma and Life Stories,” 50.

⁵⁶ Tihomir (Cipek 2017) Cipek, “The Spectre of Communism Is Haunting Croatia: The Croatian Right’s Image of the Enemy”, *Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. 1-2 (2017): 154; Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 8.

Re-enacting the narrative becomes fundamentally important especially when the existential continuity of the group comes into play, both when members of the collective feel threatened and when its carrier group needs to bolster defences for preservation or cohesion of the group. Seeking “self-continuity and symbolic immortality,” perceived social and historical continuity will push the collective to construe and pass on the mytho-historical past to the next generation, connecting past and present for the sake of future survival and preservation.⁵⁷ The narrative, maintained and propagated by the carrier group, is instilled in the first generation (when this is still surviving) who passes it on to the next. This leads the second and third generation ‘survivors’ to espouse their ancestors’ collective and adopt a heightened vigilance when faced with new (and old) threats. In this manner a conflation of past pain with current threats (perceived or real), radicalised political cognitions, increased support for militancy and decreased support for reconciliation, will make the past traumas emerge.⁵⁸

In view of the fact that the social process of cultural trauma creates a sense of collective victimisation, the transmission of this is not only important for the collective’s members but also (and especially so) for political leaders who wish to stir intense emotional responses in support of their claim. Social movements and organisations can become ‘trauma carrier groups’ and membership in these is found to increase the perception of victimhood. On a societal level, school and textbooks strengthen the understanding of a dominant narrative. Also important are songs, poems, commemorations, museums, memorials, political speeches and films. Together with conventional media and more so with social media which has the capability to spread fast and wide, a dominant narrative strengthens its position amidst a collective and pours into society. At a social (macro) level narratives are important in shaping one’s identity and meaning in a group and one’s outlook on the world and the relations therein.⁵⁹ At a meso level, the narratives of the closest group, the family, have a greater effect in shaping and influencing the awareness of victimisation, and “beliefs and behaviours in a

⁵⁷ Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 7.

⁵⁸ Canetti et al., “Collective Trauma From the Lab to the Real World,” 18.

⁵⁹ See below: “Identity and Group Consciousness leading to Factionalism.”

present-day conflict and in other intergroup situations.”⁶⁰ Even if these beliefs may be “entirely in the realm of fantasy,”⁶¹ others may be, wholly or partially, objective historical facts. But these “experiences ‘archived’ in oral history, in family histories, in a metaphoric language, and in social practices intermingle with the current” situations.⁶²

These “archives” deposited and passed on from one generation to another become what Vamik D. Volkan calls chosen traumas. Under ‘normal’ political or social conditions these may be revived during commemorations keeping the past and present distinct and separate. If “fully reactivated” by “stressful and anxiety-inducing circumstances, a time-collapse typically occurs.” Here the image of current enemies and conflicts is magnified “and an event that occurred centuries ago will be felt as if it happened yesterday.” Lying dormant for long periods of time, this still unresolved issue may be reactivated, especially when the large group, through its leaders, feels the need to reconfirm or enhance its identity.⁶³

2.2.3 Identity and group consciousness leading to factionalism

Kept together by common elements, a group or collectivity finds a “system of symbolic meanings shared between subjects, including values, beliefs, rules of language construction, behavioural patterns, traditions, rites and customs, and so on”⁶⁴ which “provides a structure and a context in which members can define themselves and make meaning out of the events in their own lives as well as in the collective.”⁶⁵ This structures their lives and organises their

⁶⁰ Vollhardt, “Collective victimization,” 140-2.

⁶¹ Ibid., 144.

⁶² Maria Six-Hohenbalken, “May I be a sacrifice for my grandchildren—transgenerational transmission and women’s narratives of the Yezidi ferman,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 42, no. 2 (2018): 20.

⁶³ Vamik D. Volkan, “Transgenerational Transmission and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity” *Group Analysis* 34, no. 1 (2001), 88-89.

⁶⁴ Aarelaid-Tart, “Cultural Trauma and Life Stories,” 42; see also Ciano Aydin, “How to Forget the Unforgettable? On Collective Trauma, Cultural Identity, and Mnemotechnologies,” *Identity* 17, no. 3 (2017): 126-127.

⁶⁵ Wiechelt and Gryczynski, “Cultural and Historical Trauma” in *Trauma*, ed. Ringel and Brandell, 4.

relationships, hierarchy or power pyramids.

Handed down from one generation to another, a collective identity is strengthened by isolation and threatening situations which have the effect of defending and compacting the group.⁶⁶ Within these 'behavioural rules' the identity of the group's members becomes dependent on how much they are consistent or not with what constitutes the ideals and behavioural processes of that collectivity. Therein, the individual assimilates and builds one's own identity and develops his or her sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is meaningful and what is not. Based on the collective sense of ethics and morals, personal identity oscillates between a dependence on the collective and a process of individuation which distinguishes the individual from the collective and allows the individual to acquire a meaningful place within a coherent narrative which the collectivity provides.⁶⁷

This may create two opposing pulls: the collective which tries to keep unity so as not to disintegrate and retain homogeneity; and the individual who tries to distinguish oneself from the dominant collective. At the extremes one may either succumb to the pressure of the collective and reject one's uniqueness or else reject the collective and be marginalised. But in reality "social and national identities are multiple and to some extent conflicting."⁶⁸ Depending on the openness of the dominant culture, differences arising from 'conflicting groups' are fought against and sought to be marginalised as much as possible.⁶⁹ Augmenting group consciousness, these differences become identifiers in a meaning-making battle that strengthen the identity and solidify the individuals' identity and the groups' cohesion, demarcating clearly the 'us' from the 'them', creating factionalism.

⁶⁶ The more closed a group becomes the more it will resist any form of change. By closing itself to any external influences, ideas and cultures, members of that collective will resist any mutation to their known worldview, sometimes even if these would be beneficial. See BenEzer, "Trauma, Culture, and Myth," in *Understanding Trauma*, 384-5.

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁶⁸ Anthony M. Abela, "Shaping a National Identity: Malta in the European Union," *International Journal of Sociology*, 35, no. 4 (2005): 12.

⁶⁹ Aydin, "How to Forget the Unforgettable?," 127-128.

2.2.4 A case for a Maltese cultural trauma

Collective narratives may shape the community positively by strengthening identity and values, containing chaos and can “mitigate desires for vengeance and retribution and create bridges of solidarity.” But they can also threaten the unity of the community, by polarizing and creating factions⁷⁰ for which Maltese society was a fertile ground.⁷¹ My contention is that the dynamics described above can be applied to the *sittinijiet* and their interpretation today as cultural trauma and that it is an important part of a much bigger puzzle which needs to be pieced together if as a society and a nation we want to begin a process which hopefully brings about reconciliation.

While from a psychological point of view it is the event together with the biopsychosocial context that makes trauma possible, from a socio-political (and therefore, “cultural trauma”) point of view it is the socially mediated attribution of a wounded collective identity that generates, in a group, the sense of being ‘victimised.’

‘Experiencing trauma’ can be understood as a sociological process that identifies a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences. Insofar as traumas are so experienced, and thus imagined and represented, the collective identity will shift.”⁷²

In this sense one could say that what happened during the *sittinijiet*, specifically the canonical sanctions, symbolises the ‘turning point’ which ruptured the prevailing perception of the Maltese collective, that religion and its practice was a *sine qua non* in one’s life. The event has been interpreted as a wound inflicted by the Church on the workers. Mintoff, as leader and the most prominent carrier group, construed the ecclesiastical authority (personified in Gonzi) as the antagonist of the people.⁷³ At one go he was minimising what the MLP leaders

⁷⁰ See Eyerman, Madigan and Ring, “Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the Vietnam War,” 11-31; Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 3-4; Brabeck and Ainslie, “The Narration of Collective Trauma,” 134-6; Canetti et al., “Collective Trauma From the Lab to the Real World,” 3-21.

⁷¹ See below: “The Maltese Fertile Ground.”

⁷² Alexander, *Trauma*, 26.

⁷³ Primarily the Church but together with the British Government, which as has been shown in Chapter 1, were jointly targeted out of Mintoff’s choice, so as to kill two birds with one stone. Church and British Government were portrayed as being co-responsible for the lack of liberties and that they

and followers would do, inducing in his followers a moral justification for their heated reactions and portraying his opponents as the enemy of the people.⁷⁴

Mintoff's narrative described the ecclesiastical authorities as vicious and heartless. Capitalising on the direct wounding experience many felt because of the moral sanctions, he induced a collective and cultural trauma (caused by *id-dnub il-mejjet*), moulding those who were captured by his discursive response and placing the blame on the ecclesiastical authorities. The antidote from British oppression and from the tyrannical ecclesial authorities not only pointed a remedy – himself – but it also helped a whole collective to coalesce even more and which found in this its 'birth trauma'⁷⁵ and which emerged in a cultural trauma.⁷⁶

Evidently using religious symbolism, in his publication *Il-Kalvarju tal-Haddiem* (the Worker's Calvary)⁷⁷ Mintoff frames the people's struggle with Christ's greatest physical struggle imposed on him by the political (the Romans – the invaders) and religious elite, whom Christ, the Saviour, confronted and criticised, the plot is clear. Mintoff is clear in his message, the politician-priests "*qassisin pulitikanti*" are doing their best to aid the British Empire and the PN

had each other's back in attacking the MLP. Together with them Mintoff would later on include the PN who by the 70s would become the only political opponent to Mintoff, and Mintoff would associate the *qassisin pulitikanti* with the PN.

⁷⁴ The interpretation given by Mintoff for the loss of the Integration referendum describes this: "Integration had not been achieved because the British had been stingy and 'because there were some one in Malta who did not want it and had been working against' them. However, when the Maltese protested by hurling a few stones, the MLP was immediately condemned for using violence by the same persons who then went on Mabel Strickland's terrace, to celebrate by drinking brandy and whisky with the British officers. Mintoff asked his listeners to imagine his and his colleagues' surprise when they learnt that these same people had told HMG that they preferred Malta 'to remain a colony' rather than to see 'a member of the Labour Party ... in power.' These people hob-nobbed with the British, drank with them, and 'walked with them with candles during Candlemas." Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 772.

⁷⁵ See Rui Gao, "Revolutionary Trauma and Representation of the War: The Case of China in Mao's Era," in *Narrating Trauma*, ed. Ron Eyerman, Alexander and Butler Breese, 55-57.

⁷⁶ Mintoff would claim that "the MLP ought to be left alone because they were more Catholics than others were. While such claims were accepted by the majority of MLP supporters, who were being moulded into becoming Mintoffians first then Labourites, they sounded less impressive to those not caught in Mintoff's spell. These noted that Mintoff's method was first to soundly criticize Archbishop and clergy and then to declare that he had nothing against either." Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 739, 757.

⁷⁷ Dom Mintoff, *Il-Kalvarju tal-Haddiem*, (Malta: n.d., 1964), 7-17.

against the workers in their struggle for dignity and social justice.⁷⁸ This will be the tone and rhetoric used by Mintoff in his speeches and will be recaptured in what was termed as the official story according to the MLP.⁷⁹ In the aftermath of the *sittinijiet*, more than 20 years later, the narrative retained the same language and condemnation, remembering and reinforcing the fact that those were times of terror by using terminology like: “fascist violence”; “jeopardising the struggle of the Maltese people for freedom”; “medieval tyranny”; “the Church’s harsh tyranny”; “Gozitans were stirred up by the priests and the nationalists [to stone] the Labourite crowd [and not to give them food and drink.]”; “Those known to be Labour were prohibited absolution in the confessional because of their political beliefs.”⁸⁰

The *sittinijiet* and how these have been processed and remembered in the collective memory of many, bring out the characteristics of a strong us-them dynamic which sees the other as threatening, hostile and an enemy. During the *sittinijiet*, two great narratives (see Chapter 1) were being proposed and collectives were being created along those lines. Eventually today the dominant narrative is that proposed by the MLP. In this, the role of the carrier group is that of injecting a particular reading of the facts which then the members will remember and reconstruct by re-telling their ‘own version’ of the story, passing it on to their descendants. When encountering persons (who supported Mintoff) who have lived through the *sittinijiet* or their descendants, one immediately gets a sense of this ‘remembering’ and storytelling. It becomes more evident when their descendants frame the *sittinijiet* with stories filled with grief and a sense of woundedness because their grandparents have been ostracised from sacraments (generally communion and confession) and Catholic organisations. It is a story full of strong

⁷⁸ Ibid., 29-35.

⁷⁹ Azzopardi will title Chapter 4 as: *Il-Kalvarju tal-Haddiem (1961)* and Chapter 7: *Kalvarju Iehor (1964-66)*. See Azzopardi, *Il-Qawmien tal-Haddiem Malti*.

⁸⁰ “vjolenza faxxista”; “ifixklu l-ġlieda tal-poplu Malti għall-ħelsien”, “tirannija medjoevali tal-Knisja”; “tirannija ħarxa tal-Knisja”; “l-Għawdxin kienu sfaw imxewxa bl-ikreh mill-qassisin u min-Nazzjonalisti [biex iħaġġru] lill-kotra ta’ Laburisti [u biex iħalluhom bil-ġuħ u bil-għatx]”; “Laburisti magħrufa kienu jcaħħduhom mill-assoluzzjoni fil-konfessionarji minħabba t-twemmin politiku tagħhom.” All these phrases are found in the first five paragraphs of the book! The intended framing is clear. Wishing that youth do not forget, the dedication of the book read: “Liż-Żgħażaġh Maltin tal-Lum biex minn din il-ġrajja jkunu jafu x’kellhom iġarrbu MISSIRIJIETHOM sabiex jiksbu l-jeddijiet u l-ħelsien ta’ dawn il-Gzejjer u sabiex b’hekk jagħrfu iktar jgħożżuhom u jħarsuhom.” Anton Cassar, *Meta l-Għawdxin Kienu Mxewxa*, (Malta: SKS 1982), 1.

negative emotions and feelings and resentment against those whom they consider as the aggressors, in particular Gonzi.⁸¹

This narrative, passed from one generation to the next within the tightly knit structure which is the Maltese family where relations are very strong and the stories of this inner most collective are intrinsically important in personal identity formation, transmitting also the same psychological effects of the *sittinijiet* in those who had directly experienced it.⁸² This is not the only reason why the *sittinijiet* have emerged as a cultural trauma. A determining factor for the emergence of a cultural and a collective trauma is the purposeful extension of the narrative.⁸³ It helps both the cultivation of a strong group identity and the strengthening of Mintoff's position.⁸⁴ A narrative which started from the beginning of the struggle and maintained long after it was 'officially' concluded, it provides the collective with a framework within which Church-politics relations are scrutinised. These narratives lead a society to polarize along axes which are constructed purposefully.

They also lead to see yourself as the victim and the other as the enemy. This invigorated the sense that those who speak against the MLP are not simply criticising the leaders themselves and the party's proposals but they are doing so to harm the collective that these represent. In a way this mirrors the ecclesio-centricity described in the Chapter 1 whereby the strength of the group (party or Church) is dependent also on the strength of its leader and determines the strength of the message. On the one hand we had the ecclesiastical authorities' accusations of anti-clericalism and 'modernism' *a la maltaise*, and on the other a collective which saw their

⁸¹ Some people I've met mimicked the act of spitting when seeing his name or hearing it, indicating not just grief and woundedness but great loath. Whether referred to in his personal capacity or embodying the whole Church, some would refer to *l-Arcisqof*, (the Archbishop) others would speak in general terms referring to *il-Knisja* (the Church).

⁸² "For an audience to be traumatized by an experience that they themselves do not directly share, symbolic extension and psychological identification are required." Alexander, *Trauma*, 33.

⁸³ "Cultural traumas are not things, but processes of meaning-making and attribution, a contentious contest in which various individuals and groups struggle to define a situation and to manage and control it." Eyerman, "Cultural Trauma," 7.

⁸⁴ "The formation and cultivation of a group identity is central to the exercise of political leadership, and the use of effective rhetoric and political discourse become vital for the success of a leader" Debattista, "Centred in self," 27.

opponents as traitors of the whole people and indeed of Malta almost akin to treason. The latter more than the former, still survives till this very day.⁸⁵ This was a constant within Mintoff's narrative during⁸⁶ and after the struggle, directing his attention not only to the Church that had eventually become silenced but against anyone who 'threatened' the party and hence the people. Mintoff's "*Malta l-ewwel u qabel kollox*" became not just a theme but a mentality, which resounds till today, which is addressed towards anyone who criticises the LP. This is also indicative of an amoral nationalism.⁸⁷ In Mintoff's mind as long as it reaps some benefits to Malta (even if short term financial benefits), it was acceptable. This mantra was carried down through the decades and may explain Mintoff's ambiguity with Communism. Today it condones acts, even corrupt ones, in the name of safeguarding the national prestige, racial sentiments masked by the veil of patriotism.

Another important factor in the identification of the collective as victims, is the underdog complex. The MLP erected monuments and celebrated the memory of those who are presented as pall bearers of all the victims, those who have been buried in the *mizbla*. During that time the narrative was maintained through speeches and writings in newspapers. The frame in which the *sittinijiet* was being set was that of victimhood, especially that the Church was seen as having retracted its positions while the MLP, in Mintoff's own words, "went on [their] knees before no one. We still believe in the same principles we declared before."⁸⁸ Indeed frames are not nice slogans but need a solid preparation for them to resonate in people's mind. The claim

⁸⁵ Daniel Micallef, PL President (Current) wrote on facebook (February 12, 2019) with reference to Roberta Metsola MEP "Tagħżlu liema Partit tagħżlu f'Mejju li ġej, ftakru li kien hemm min qatta ħinu fl-aħħar ħames snin jagħmel biss ħsara lil pajjiż." This is just one example of the constant rhetoric. See Appendix 11, and also Beppe Galea, "Kurt Farrugia ddejqu l-kelma 'tradituri' għall-MEPs Nazzjonalisti," Newsbook.com.mt, accessed May 25, 2019, <https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/11/filmat-kurt-farrugia-ddejqu-l-kelma-tradituri-għall-meps-nazzjonalisti/>

⁸⁶ "In the immediate aftermath of the political turmoil of 1958, the MLP had, partly in an effort to rally discouraged supporters, made several declarations to the effect that 'traitors' and 'collaborators' would be dealt with as soon as the party was returned to office. A number of individuals, mostly police officers, were also, from time to time, mentioned by name." Pirota, *Fortress Colony*, vol. 3, 739-41. (in particular n. 36.)

⁸⁷ See also: "Us-them factionalism" and "Amoral familism."

⁸⁸ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 237.

of being victims (but strong ones know as *suldati tal-azzar* – Steal soldiers) had been coming and building up slowly; being recaptured from time to time in recent years it never failed to create strong emotions.⁸⁹

“The cultural construction of trauma begins with a claim ... an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative of some horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstruction.”⁹⁰ Mintoff, through his rhetorical capabilities managed to be incisive, creating and strengthening a frame which endures till this day. His charisma, but also his rootless determination, reigned in the party media and message and made sure that when in government state media was completely controlled and in sync with his message⁹¹ which carried and maintained this narrative for decades even after the happenings.⁹² It proposed and described that era as a great wound against the MLP and its members and indeed the whole population of *ħaddiema*, the MLP as the only safe port for these victims or in Mintoff’s own worked *it-Tarka tal-ħaddiema* (the [protective] shield for workers), using slogans like *Il-Gvern tal-ħaddiema* (The Workers’ Government). Speaking against Mintoff or the Government was tantamount to speaking against the collective these represented – the workers and the *Maltin*.

Liberation, from oppressor (British Empire, Church) and poverty, as a frame, would be crowned on March 31 1979 – the day of Liberation: *Jum il-Helsien*.⁹³ The narrative of liberation of the *Helsien*, was a narrative that continued and was to continue till this very day. The organisation of celebrations is still very solemn and still very telling of the importance the MLP gave and gives to this rather than other days (Independence – September 21, 1964 – and Republic day – December 13, 1974). The rituals and celebrations with theatrical productions

⁸⁹ See Appendix 12 with PL Press Release on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the 1962 election.

⁹⁰ Ron Eyerman, “Jeffrey Alexander and the Cultural Turn in Social Theory,” *Thesis Eleven* 79, (November 2004): 28.

⁹¹ Broadcasting freedom was introduced in the 1990s and until the end of the 80s newspapers were censored, this was also invigorated by School Textbooks and the State TV.

⁹² Although it is not Mintoff now, but influential exponents who wrote and broadcast this narrative.

⁹³ When the British closed their Naval Base here in Malta, five years behind schedule and fifteen years after Malta became an Independent nation, that is, autonomous from foreign rule. This extension was granted by Mintoff himself.

(e.g. *Ġensna*⁹⁴), floats and so on and the importance it was, and is, given are indicative of a narrative that goes on.

A very strong collective had formed, and which included those who identified politically with the MLP and more so with Mintoff. The narrative they endorsed was that which the MLP proposed and stuck to it according to the hymn sheet.⁹⁵ All this is not to say that the MLP is the only organisation that created and maintained a narrative but that this narrative was conducive to the emergence and re-emergence of a cultural trauma. The final and objective analysis needs to centre on whether the narrative was one that fractures or consolidates Maltese society.

⁹⁴ This year the show was re-proposed to the public.

⁹⁵ Pirotta notes: "Blinkered MLP supporters, argued the Times of Malta, applauded their leader irrespective of what he said with the result that the same people who had enthusiastically endorsed integration were now clamouring for independence." Pirotta, *Fortress Colony*, vol 3, 738.

2.3 The Maltese fertile ground

One cannot claim that factionalism and division were created due to the politico-religious struggles, but one can say that the discursive process which led to cultural trauma and these divisions thrived within a social and ecclesial (even though the two could barely be distinguished) fertile ground and solidified it. It is a structural set-up which affirms factionalism and dis-unity and makes society dysfunctional.

Within the Maltese scenario, not only is the sense of collective identification⁹⁶ strong, but it results in acute polarisation and in *pika*.⁹⁷ Identity and sense of belonging of an individual become rooted within the groups which could be described as concentric circles: nuclear family, extended family, *partit*, village community, geographical area, nation, continent. The smaller the circle (the family), the closer and the stronger the impact it has in influencing one's identity and sense of belonging.⁹⁸

This could partly explain why factions were so hard-lined during the politico-religious struggle (and are so on any other issue) and helped cultural trauma to emerge strengthening a strong sense of collective, ingrained in an us-them factionalism and a belief in zero-sum game politics which was maintained solidly in place by patronage and enabled by amoral familism.

2.3.1 Us-them factionalism

The same factionalism noted by Boissevain in the 50s and 60s has been noted before in Farrugia's studies on confraternities,⁹⁹ and is still evidenced today. A prevalent *us-them*

⁹⁶ By *collective identification* I mean that the individual identifies more with a group in order to understand one's meaning and place in society as opposed to an *Individualistic* identification whereby the inherent identity of the person is ingrained in one's own worth and identity as being a human being, as opposed to the links to the group.

⁹⁷ Abela, "Shaping a National Identity," 25; see also Boissevain, *Saints and Firework*.

⁹⁸ See Jon P. Mitchell, "The nostalgic construction of community: Memory and social identity in Urban Malta," *Ethnos* 63, no. 1 (1998): 81-101.

⁹⁹ See Ed. Charles Farrugia, *Sicut Liliom: Devozzjoni u Ritwal Tul Is-sekli*, (Mqabba: Soċjetà Mużikali

mentality has led to a constant contraposition of ideas and groupings of various sorts. As evidenced in the previous chapter, a middle common ground was rarely (if ever) contemplated. When it comes to issues which are at heart (but not just) the tendency is to have a passionate engagement which quickly degenerates into *us-them* contra-positioning.

By way of example on the 'folklo-religious' level, especially where the feast factions are present, for many of those involved or simply take pride in siding with one faction or another, this is a predominant mentality.¹⁰⁰ *Festa* factionalism has grown steadily over the past decades, slowing at times and intensifying at others. In the 'religious' sphere this is the strongest instance of *us-them* mentality.¹⁰¹ On a political level, especially when significant elections are held, this is also evident. "Political debate" may easily turn sour and harsh if one's party is criticised. Many consider it as if it were a personal attack from the opposing faction feeding in, and at the same time strengthening, the *us-them* duopoly mentality.¹⁰² Because of this mindset (mixed with a whole array of emotions, beliefs, history, wounds and interests) people are either placed or place themselves in a box and they rarely move out of it. Many seem to associate this with a tribal/clan mentality, where group comes first. Mixed also with a greater sense of individualism more than one's personal interest, identity and the need for belonging within a group come into play and may be (are) more determining. Consequently, the individual gains strength when one's group is strengthened and vice-versa, ultimately coalescing factions. Unfortunately, being so structurally ingrained in the social mentality, it allows no space for a different kind of relationality, specifically that which sees the other not

Madonna Tal-Gilju, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Though not necessarily always so, I experience this personally and in discussing the topic with priests and persons involved in various ministries in parishes and lay organisations.

¹⁰¹ Boissevain describes diatribes which are remarkably still present mostly in those parishes where two *festas* are celebrated. Less evident but also present this *us-them* mentality exists where rivalry is with other neighbouring parishes. While for example in the Anglo Catholic world the dominant 'rivalry' is amongst the so-called Conservatives and Liberals, such is not as strong in Malta. See Boissevain, *A Village in Malta*, 65-6.

¹⁰² Since 1971 Malta has basically had two major political parties which have contended for government. There were various attempts by minor parties along the years, but none have managed to elect any candidate to parliament. One may contend that in 2017 the PD elected two members of Parliament but strictly speaking they contested under the PN ticket.

as an enemy but as a brother. Although a sense of individualism exists nowadays, for some it is unthinkable to be Maltese and not ascribe to a political party or belong to a *fešta* faction.¹⁰³

Boissevain describes this interaction as a form of loyalty and rivalry.¹⁰⁴ Failing “to take a firm position” in favour of one’s *partit* or even worse, leaving the group would seem (to the others) that one would be betraying the group¹⁰⁵ and to a certain extent (the larger) family.¹⁰⁶ Apparently counter to this strict duopoly is the growing number of people who either don’t ascribe to any political alliance or shift political sides, switching from one party to another (which remain two), moving out of the group or switching “loyalties” out of individuality or

¹⁰³ One commonly hears the phrase: “*Dak Labourist jew Nazzjonalist?*” (Is he a Labourite or a Nationalist?). Hailing from certain villages is tantamount to side with one *fešta* faction or another. If you say you don’t, the reply would be “*Ma jistax ikun / Mela mintix minn hemm*” (It is not possible / Then you are not a native of the village).

¹⁰⁴ Rivalry is translated in *Pika* by which Boissevain means “relations of competition, ill-feeling, hostility”, which is animated by *partiti* which both on a parish (*fešta* factions) and national (political allegiance) are the cause of disrupting the harmony. *Ibid.*, 81.

Cremona holds that: “This state of affairs gives rise to rivalry or ‘pika’, with each faction claiming to be the oldest, the biggest, the strongest – in a word, the best ... The *fešta* becomes an ostentatious means to express the superiority of one faction and its domination over the other. Rivalry, prevalent in Maltese social dynamics, constitutes a basic element in the shaping of the *fešta* and the production of the festivity’s dramatic effects. It is often the pivot for action within the *fešta* celebration.” Vicki Ann Cremona, “When the Saints Come Marching Out: The Cultural Playing of a Maltese *Fešta*,” *Themes in Theatre* 8, (2014): 186-7.

¹⁰⁵ During the 1996-8 political instability Mintoff was called *tradtur* (traitor) by the same people who until a few years before had called him *salvatur* (saviour). This could have been also due to the animosity between Dr Alfred Sant (then MLP leader) and Mintoff (then an MP). One may fall out of grace quickly as demonstrated by an interesting fact recounted to me by a priest who served in Bormla (a Labour stronghold and Mintoff’s hometown) for many years. It is a long-standing tradition (described by Ganado and from personal experience) that pictures of political leaders (and Archbishops) together with saints are placed in prominent places in houses. It indicates immediately one’s groupings to whoever enters the household. In many houses in Bormla Mintoff’s photo was placed next to that of the statue of the Immaculate Conception. During the Mintoff-Sant debacle Mintoff’s photos went off. Later these would be replaced with Archbishop Cremona’s. Nonetheless during Mintoff’s funeral (celebrated at St. John’s co-Cathedral) when the coffin was brought into Bormla’s parish church the uproar was so great that the crowd was uncontrollable with people standing up on chairs and benches. Later someone told this same priest: “Finally we had our revenge over the Church, Mintoff is back in Church.” Cf. Elezzjoni Malta, *Jghajtu Mintoff Mintoff fil-Knisja ta’ Bormla – 2012*, online video, 0:59, August 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xhwoqfx2n58>

¹⁰⁶ If such detachment is willed by the person then such would have little or any importance for one’s self identification but seems strange to the rest of the group/family for whom betraying the group is betraying of self. See Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 33-35; Boissevain, *A Village in Malta*, 77, 81 *et seq.*

self-interest.¹⁰⁷ Although there is a portion of the population who have always voted for the same party and have unconditional allegiance to their party, a growing portion of the population have moved away from their traditional 'family-political background'¹⁰⁸ and a growing number of persons consider themselves as floating voters i.e. they move (generally – not always) from one (big) party to the other, sometimes out of sincere convictions, others because of self-interest.

Yet the *us-them* mentality is still greatly ingrained and a constant siege-mentality pervades, perhaps increased by the vast scale of uncertainty which pervades our lives.¹⁰⁹ A growing sense of hard-line politics, endemic to the *us-them* mentality, fuelled by fear “of the other” increases the loyalty-rivalry dichotomy, where hate is spread and where the “other” is conceived not just as different but as threatening,¹¹⁰ strengthens the *us-them* duopoly and grows exponentially on social media.

All this resonates particularly with the politico-religious struggles. Factionalism manifested in an 'us-them' mentality together with a equally strong religious identification in many were part and parcel throughout. The politico-religious struggle made some to choose between religious and political belief and others to try and find a way of living with both. Mintoff the Church supporters became two identifiable “groups.” From the Church’s point of view loyalty to Mintoff was implicitly tantamount to a rivalry to her. From Mintoff’s perspective, who distinguished between the Church and the ecclesiastical authorities (rightly so) emphasised that his clash was with the latter. Nonetheless the conflation of Church and ecclesiastical authority (Archbishop equals Church and vice versa) was and still is present, in people’s mind due also to the fact that the Church herself was seeing it that way.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ It happens more (often) in the political sphere than in the *festa* factions.

¹⁰⁸ I.e. voting as one’s parents and grandparents have done.

¹⁰⁹ See Diego Fares and Austen Ivereigh, “Come comunicare in una Società Polarizzata,” *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4047, (2/16 febbraio 2019): 222.

¹¹⁰ See Rai, *Che tempo che fa – Andrea Camilleri – 28/10/2018*, online video, 16:59, October 28, 2018, <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2018/10/Andrea-Camilleri---28102018-de8eace9-844c-426c-a4c2-4f625780f5c0.html> (in particular from minute 9:00 onwards).

¹¹¹ Many today speak in the sense of “Il-Knisja m’għandix tindaħal” (The Church should not get involved) others are more direct “L-Arċisqof għandu jżomm postu” (The Archbishop should keep his

Gradually *il-Laburisti* and *il-Knisja* became arch-enemies.¹¹² In the context of a constant siege-mentality and animosity one is not simply loyal to the group but sees in the other an opponent and a threat. This invigorates even more when the members of a group feel oppressed and unfairly treated,¹¹³ as happened in our case. The widespread sense of *us-them* together with “a profound sense of inevitability too – a feeling that ‘this is the way we Maltese do things; it will never be stamped out’”¹¹⁴ allows little space for debate and dialogue (evidently lacking) and a high sense of mistrust (evidently present).

2.3.2 Zero-sum game politics

Belief in a Zero-sum game is a social axiom¹¹⁵ which permeates the smaller and larger group one identifies with and can help understand why Maltese social dynamics are deeply rooted in conflict. It is:

a general belief system about the antagonistic nature of social relations, shared by people in a society or culture and based on the implicit assumption that a finite amount of goods exist in the world, in which one person’s winning makes others the losers, and vice versa [...] a relatively permanent and general conviction that social relations are like a zero-sum game. People who share this conviction believe that success, especially economic success, is possible only at the expense of other people’s failures [...] a situation, [where] self- and

place), many a times interchangeably.

¹¹² Often you hear people say “*Il-Knisja toghbod u l-Labour*” (The Church hates the Labour Party) or in the same vein “*Il-Knisja għamlitilna l-ħsara*” (The Church injured us).

¹¹³ Lawrence Bobo and Vincent L. Hutchings, “Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer's Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context,” *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 6 (Dec., 1996): 951.

¹¹⁴ Jon P. Mitchell, “An Island in between: Malta, Identity and Anthropology,” *South European Society and Politics* 3, no. 1 (1998): 144.

¹¹⁵ Różycka-Tran *et al* define social axioms “as ‘generalized expectancies,’ which are highly abstract and related to social behavior across a variety of contexts, targets, and time periods. [These] do indeed possess a structure of general rather than specific or situationally constrained beliefs: People endorse belief statements of unrestricted character more readily than those confined to specific classes of relationships ... [and are the] result of personal and culturally shared experiences [which] are transferred through socialization without being questioned” Joanna Różycka-Tran, Paweł Boski and Bogdan Wojciszke, “Belief in a Zero-Sum Game as a Social Axiom: A 37-Nation Study,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 46, no. 4 (2015): 526.

other-interests become incompatible.¹¹⁶

The root causes of zero-sum games, both within societies and at an individual level, are what Różycka-Tran *et al* describe as collectivism and scarce resources, whereby relations are based on a win-lose dynamic generally over limited resources.¹¹⁷

The us-them mentality or “collectivism”¹¹⁸ pushes individuals to strengthen the group and eliminate threats to it. This creates an atmosphere where different groupings regard each other as a competitive threat to their position, leading to what Bobo and Hutchings call *racial alienation*. This sense of alienation is culturally shared and “emerge[s] from historical experience and the current social, political, and economic” [situations and must be viewed against the background of why] “members of one group feel threatened by members of another group, individuals' feelings about the treatment, conditions, and opportunities that have historically faced members of their own group.”¹¹⁹ Cultures with a zero-sum game attitude “perceive the social world as an antagonistic arena of between-group conflicts.”¹²⁰

This has various ramifications in Maltese social relations in general, and in particular, as Boissevain notes, and as can be still observed today, relations within the religious sphere “resemble a war game” which is not just fought between committees of rival factions but spreads to the streets.¹²¹ What becomes a learned pattern of personal survival behaviour seeps into social dynamics whereby one makes sure that one’s faction grows in prestige and privilege at the same time that the other doesn’t. Seeing the other side gaining is considered detrimental to one’s side and vice versa, making sure one’s side grows is simultaneously tantamount to demeaning the others, who in turn feel they are being denied something

¹¹⁶ See *Ibid.* 526-8.

¹¹⁷ Although this 37-Nation study has not yet been performed in Malta, both these elements are evidenced in Malta. For centuries, Malta has had (still does have) limited natural resources especially lack of water. *Ibid.*, 541.

¹¹⁸ “[W]here groups rather than individuals are actors of win-lose social relations. These groups can be based on ethnic, religious, seniority, or social class criteria, each of which would be sufficient to create in-group favoritism in social competition.” *Ibid.*, 540.

¹¹⁹ Bobo and Hutchings, “Perceptions of Racial Group Competition,” 956.

¹²⁰ Różycka-Tran, Boski and Wojciszke, “Belief in a Zero-Sum Game,” 541.

¹²¹ Boissevain, *A Village in Malta*, 84-6.

because the other side is gaining. While it is an attempt at achieving more, at the same time one wants to make sure that the other doesn't. If it does, then one would bargain to achieve something in exchange to be at par. This involves all the manoeuvring possible, which in a parish scenario, results in putting parish priests under pressure to be arbitrarily in the middle to minimise damage to their pastoral work.¹²²

Something analogous could be noticed within the political scenario. As noted above, the *us-them* dynamic emerges as a political zero-sum game which, grossly speaking, divides the nation in two. In view of the politico-religious struggles, as Boissevain describes it, within the village environment the factions of those in favour of the Church and those in favour of the MLP found in the Parish priest and the local MLP Committee respectively, the leaders which they could look up to.¹²³ While it is understandable that each *festa* faction has its own leaders, whereas before the parish priest was seen as “leader” and spokesperson of the whole village/parish community, with the politico-religious struggle this was not any longer possible. When religion is so vital and central to practically everyone, a zero-sum game, which involves the parish priest in a tug of war becomes damaging on many levels.

Although today the parish priest is not considered as ‘Leader of the village’, the tug of war of a political zero-sum game is still present and highly visible at national level politics. Apparent dialogue is rarely evident and a tit-for-tat attitude between the major political exponents is more visible.¹²⁴ Maintaining this contraposition strong becomes beneficial for the interest of both parties, strengthening their core where a gain for one party is definitely a loss for the other and vice-versa. This, however, is detrimental to Politics in view of the common good because it imbues social dynamics with factionalism. It is so evident that to give the opposite impression, journalists or show presenters, every now and then ask politicians to mention a good thing about the opponent. This childish question simply indicates the high level of animosity. It perpetuates a zero-sum mentality which leads to an understanding of politics

¹²² Ibid., 84-6.

¹²³ Ibid., 86-8.

¹²⁴ I use ‘apparent’ and ‘evident’ because agreement is reached on most of the Legislations passed through the House of Representatives. This however, rarely makes the news.

(and possibly of all other relations) as a game where someone else's gains are necessarily proportional to my losses.

Within this scenario, it becomes difficult for the Church to be prophetic, for speaking in favour or against one policy, proposal and so on, gives the impression that the balance is tipped in favour of one side and against the other. In my opinion this belief and attitude equates politics with partisanship. Hence many in popular parlance tend to equate 'Politics' with 'partisanship' rendering the debate Church and Politics troublesome. The public sphere becomes a space where even angels fear to tread and where many keep "independent" and "a-political"¹²⁵ and expected the Church to do likewise.

2.3.3 Patronage

Różycka-Tran *et al* showed that a belief in a society based on a zero-sum game leads to what they called in-group favouritism.¹²⁶ Political engagement becomes a means of gaining one's own personal interest – where everyone fights for his own gain (and that of his family and group, obviously) – and not in favour of the common good. Such can be achieved and maintained through *Patronage* which in turn becomes a competition for 'resources.'

It is common within southern Mediterranean environments, that one seeks patrons and the benefits in their 'reciprocal gifts,' be it religious, political or otherwise (ultimately from the ones who are in actual power) to achieve what one is either truly or perceives to be entitled to.¹²⁷ A strong link in the form of patronage existed between the upper classes, acting as patrons, in favour of religion.¹²⁸ Today although on a different level this link still exists

¹²⁵ The terms must be understood within the dualistic understanding of Maltese politics.

¹²⁶ Różycka-Tran, Boski and Wojciszke, "Belief in a Zero-Sum Game," 540.

¹²⁷ See Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*, (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1974); Clare Longrigg, *Boss of Bosses: How Bernardo Provenzano Saved the Mafia*, (London: John Murray, 2008), 85-99, 144-175.

¹²⁸ Paul Sant Cassia, "Tradition, Tourism and Memory in Malta," *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 5, no. 2 (1999): 250.

between patrons in the political and religious level. To a certain extent, these patrons “help” each other in maintaining their positions and privilege. Those who can afford (or need) to act as patrons (businessmen, professionals, politicians and so on), help in making sure that the Saint gets the *fešta* he/she deserves,¹²⁹ expecting in return, that the Saint “helps” them in keeping their status. Within this reality prestige, power and politics (both local and national) are intertwined with popular piety in a way as to make the distinction between civil/social life and religion hazy.¹³⁰ Koster notes that parties in government from the very beginning “resorted to patronage to increase their popularity” and that many people “could be easily mobilised by prizes.”¹³¹

Patronage can be traced to a medieval-feudal mode of thinking where Saints are the granters of miracles and the Lords of the land are the granters of needs. Moreover “[in] a Catholic society there is a strong ideological basis for a system of patronage, for there is great similarity between the function of saints and mortal patrons.” Kenny’s studies show patronage is like “a pyramid structure incorporating both the natural and the spiritual worlds.”¹³²

In the contemporary Maltese frame of mind, a sort of superstitious/esoteric pseudo-religiosity is evident, and the veneration of the Virgin Mary, saints and the *Redentur* (and/or their sacred images) is still palpable, and linked strongly with emotions more than to deep faith.¹³³ Within

¹²⁹ It is common that, for example, local businessman or influential members of the community help substantially the coffers of their hometown *fešta* (internal and external celebrations) and sometimes are placed within the organising committee in a way as to secure their patronage. Politicians as well tend to be forthcoming (sometimes reluctantly) towards helping out *fešta* celebrations. In the cases where two rival *festi* are organised they tend (not necessarily always possible due to their family background) to be supportive of both. This will guarantee that they are on the good books of the *fešta* enthusiasts.

¹³⁰ Through state money, Ministers are known to help works in Churches in their electoral district. Recently the Prime Minister offered a large sum of money for the restoration project of the devotional statue of the *Redentur*, Band Clubs are profusely helped and the rebuilding of an ornamental ark destroyed in an arson, will practically be financed by the Government.

¹³¹ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 88

¹³² See Michael Kenny, “Patterns of Patronage in Spain,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 33 (January 1960) in Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 120-1.

¹³³ It must be said that many a-times these intertwine and not easily distinguishable. Moreover, studies on the devotion towards Our Lady of Sorrows in Malta have shown the prevalence of strong emotions. See Ian Diacono, “Emotions and Religiosity: A Psychological Investigation of Participants’ Experience in the Procession of ‘Our Lady of Sorrows,’” (B.Psy. (Hons.) diss. University of Malta, 2019).

a village (especially where *fešta* attachment is considerable¹³⁴) “the statue (of the patron saint or any other saint) is representative of the community (or part of it); its appearance must dazzle and amaze to show the greatness and wealth of the community itself.”¹³⁵ It becomes, in Durkheimian terms, the totem of the village¹³⁶ receiving veneration and petitions, symbolically denoting and affirming the community’s (or part of it) ‘distinctiveness’ and it is still “anchored within the community’s social expression.”¹³⁷

“[The] theatrical qualities of the festivity also serve to reinforce the community [and hence the collective identity], and to highlight its capacity to attract the attention, admiration and, up to a certain extent, the envy of persons outside it.”¹³⁸ Generally speaking, these emotions, are whimsical and strong¹³⁹ but ephemeral and not necessarily correlated to a prolonged spiritual conversion. Nonetheless statues, paintings and other memorabilia linked to a particular image and/or statue to which the person or family has devotion, are still found in the households of many and are, as has been noted above, a statement of appertaining. This sense of belonging within a particular community extends not only to the inhabitants of the village or town, and not even just to Malta:

The *fešta* is at once part of the cognitive and emotional make-up of the members of a community. Every member knows his/her patron saint, their life history and their outstanding qualities. The emotional experience of the *fešta* serves to bind the community together. The latter does not only comprise the persons living in the locality, but also those from the village or town district who have moved to other areas of the Maltese islands, as well as emigrants, originally from the area, who usually plan their rare holidays in Malta around the time of the *fešta*, bringing back their children and grandchildren so that they too can participate in the celebrations, and therefore acquire a sense of belonging within a

¹³⁴ This is generally so in what can be termed as traditional villages and specifically where the person has been rooted in village life for generations, even though not necessarily still living in one’s hometown. See ed. Andrew Azzopardi, *Young People and the Fešta in Malta*, (Imqabba, Malta: Society of St. Mary and King George V Band Club, 2015).

¹³⁵ Cremona, “When the Saint comes marching out,” 194.

¹³⁶ Jon Mitchell, “Foreword: Young People and the Feasts in Malta,” in *Young people and the ‘Fešta’ in Malta*, ed. Andrew Azzopardi, xiv.

¹³⁷ Cremona, “When the Saint comes marching out,” 182.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 193-7.

particular community."¹⁴⁰

The political context mirrors this exactly, where the Leader or the *Kap* is the totem, miracles are substituted by *pjačiri*¹⁴¹ and the Sunday rituals and election fever mimic Sunday Masses and the colourful marches.¹⁴² Here too, patronage is not only a side effect to an endemic *us-them* mentality and the belief of a *Zero-sum* game, but an integral part of a mode of thinking and behaviour which prevails in the Maltese social interactions. Because of its widespread ramification, it is believed by many that there is no other way to get what is either due or wished for. In turn this creates a vicious cycle whereby patronage becomes key in securing one's interests. Both on the receiving and giving ends, on the one hand one asks for a *pjačir* and gives support; on the other one gives *pjačiri* (implicitly) asking for support. This system must be distinguished from corruption, which although not necessarily corrupt, comes very close.¹⁴³

And if the patron saint is the totem of the village then the leader becomes the saviour of the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 186.

¹⁴¹ Within the secular context patronage for political, economic or other (e.g. business transactions, permits, jobs and so on) interests are sought after in the form of *pjačiri*. Strictly speaking the word generally translates to 'pleasures' but in context it refers to 'favours' of any kind which one asks of politicians.

¹⁴² As noted by Debattista: "a number of political traditions are reminiscent of the indigenous popular interpretation of Catholicism. These practices include the weekly Sunday meetings in party clubs (reminiscent of Sunday mass), the annual celebrations of Independence Day and Freedom Day (reminiscent of the annual village feast), the practice of home visits (reminiscent of the annual Eastertide house blessing), the use of commemorative plaques and monuments, the secular rituals and the stirring rhetoric used during mass meetings (reminiscent of the annual panegyric) and the use of rousing party anthems." Debattista, "Centred in self," 31.

¹⁴³ This is different from corruption where in all the cases what is asked is for is illegal and detrimental to the common good whereby the corrupting and the corruptible receive direct benefit from the transaction. On the other hand, with patronage a patron could be helping out the patronee to achieve what is one's right and doesn't get direct benefit. Moreover, in patronage, there is a reciprocal transaction of loyalty and esteem where what is achieved is an indirect benefit like votes at the ballot. On the other hand corruption is based on egoistic gain. The problem with patronage is when an unjust system is allowed to persist which requires the "influential" to act. This kind of system flourishes where it is not "what you know" that matters but "who you know", where meritocracy is substituted with connections.

nation,¹⁴⁴ the chief representative of a cause or ideal, giving birth to the cult of personality¹⁴⁵ where political leaders become demi-gods. This deifies influential persons elevating their *persona* to a status which to the adulators is beyond reproach. Painting, biographies, pictures and the rest (even engaging school children in these efforts) are carefully crafted and choreographed to give a sense of security, strength and admiration. In contemporary society social media and state-owned media outlets are engaged.¹⁴⁶ Generally the most successful attempts result in a staggering popularity rating. These cults are meticulously built and cultivated whereby “visual and textual media typically [emphasise] sobriety, intelligence, competence, vigorous physical and psychological health and, above all, manliness,”¹⁴⁷ and where Charisma of Leaders is in part manufactured. A fertile ground for personality cults is a situation of instability where leaders are made to embody messiah traits. But that is not enough to stand on its own. Personality cults are successful when democratic tools and rule of law are not functioning well and also, as Cassidy and Johnson note, where nostalgia could be exploited.¹⁴⁸ The flip side of personality cults is that it creates a system of dependency which hinges on patronage.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ “The first instance of adulation of a Maltese politician, Savona, was called the Redeemer, a term later applied to both Strickland and Mintoff.” Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 66.

¹⁴⁵ A term coined by Nikita Khrushchev who in a 1956 speech known as the *Secret Speech* “singled out Stalin’s official biography and the *Short Course* as the typical manifestations of the deification of the leader. His attack was accurate: through discrediting the central component of the Stalin-myth, which portrayed the Soviet dictator as the physical embodiment of the history of the communist movement, the new party secretary severely damaged the constitution of the cult. Besides questioning the credibility of the biographical narrative, Khrushchev attempted, through diminishing the role ascribed to Stalin in the Great Patriotic War, to deal a blow to the war myth that functioned as the major pillar of the post-war Stalin cult.” Balázs Apor, “The ‘Secret Speech’ and its Effect on the ‘Cult of Personality’ in Hungary,” *Critique* 35, no. 2, (2007): 230-1.

¹⁴⁶ Julie A. Cassidy and Emily D. Johnson, “Putin, Putiniana and the Question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88, no. 4 (October 2010): 681-3.

¹⁴⁷ Typical examples of this are Mussolini’s bare chest labouring and (more recently) Putin’s topless fishing. On the local context one may indicate Mintoff’s winter swims, his agile climbing of steps, and various other picturing and descriptions. *Ibid.*, 686.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 685, 688-9.

¹⁴⁹ Boissevain noted this when he wrote: “During the three year that the [MLP] formed the government, the District Committees were also points at which district-wide complaints, patronage and public works were discussed” and became “instruments of government” representing it “in the eyes of the people” almost as if they were civil servants. Similar structures and methods have been mentioned

In the end the political and economic programmes become an electoral battle for votes and faith and religion a bargaining of sacraments and pew warming exercises. On a national level due to the duopoly of the political system and the small size of the population, a few hundreds or thousands could tilt the pendulum from one side to another effectively granting power to the one who is mostly capable to grant the wishes or to promise them. On a smaller level, candidates know that a few hundred votes could mean that he or she gets a chair in parliament. Patronage feeds zero-sum game politics in turn strengthening loyalty-rivalry. Generally, it is believed that belonging to the network of those holding the power that comes from holding state offices, grants special rights. Phrases like “*Issa aħna fil-gvern*” (Now we are in government) “*Issa d-daqqa tagħna*” (Now it’s our turn),¹⁵⁰ indicate not just that one sees the government as ‘ours’ and ‘theirs.’ The expectation is that since they are part of the ‘in-group’ of those in power they should get what they ‘deserve’, in turn meaning that ‘when the government belonged to the others’ 1. the others got what they wanted and 2. we were discriminated against. This strengthens the *collectivity* around political parties and in turn the belief in a zero-sum game. Making politics a race to get one’s party elected because only that way one can get what one wants. It, therefore, strengthens the idea that if you are criticising one’s party you are therefore (implicitly) decreasing one’s chances in grabbing whatever there is to grab. This, however, is not just a question of administrative power –at stake there is a sense of pride and a sense of belonging to the winning team, which like the *festa*, becomes an integral part of one’s identity, which strengthens one’s sense of belonging to one’s roots.¹⁵¹

In summary, these factors can be considered as fertile ground which made the events of the *sittinijiet* not just possible but also become pertinent in understanding the dynamics that were (and still are) in place which allow and strengthen, as they are actuated, similar antagonism today common not just to politics and religion but tend to be the basis of relations in general.

by Koster (*supra*) and can be still witnessed today. See Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks*, 25-6.

¹⁵⁰ Parallel to this one finds phrases, “*Din il-gimgha tagħna, nagħmlu li rridu!*” (This is our (festa) week we do what we like!”)

¹⁵¹ Boissevain notes that a sense of unity was created in the MLP supporters due to the “attacks of their enemies,” with the local clubs becoming a sort of “refuge for MLP supporters who are now cut off from the many village activities by the stigma which the Church has attached to them.” See *Ibid.*, 25

There may be other factors that could be evidenced, but these are the most salient, since they intertwine, reflect, instigate and create a whole matrix of intricate conscious and subconscious calculations in selecting memories and in forming the necessary narrative conducive to cultural trauma.

2.3.4 Amoral familism

Enabling all this is ultimately an amorality, which entangles, twists and skews concepts of family, society and perhaps even religion and personal faith. Back in 1958 Edward Banfield defined amoral familism as: trying to “Maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise.”¹⁵² This mode of thinking denotes that one prioritises the selfish interests of one’s family at the exclusion of the common good, where these interests are often conflicting. Contrary to this, therefore, “a society is not amorally individualistic (or familistic) if there is somewhere in it a significant element of public spiritedness or even of “enlightened” self-interest.”¹⁵³

As noted by Boissevain, the nuclear family (mother, father, unmarried children) constituted the ideal typology of Maltese family.¹⁵⁴ It was considered “the most important institution” in people’s lives.¹⁵⁵ Indeed family ties still have pride of place in the relational setup within Maltese society. Considered to be the main building block of society, various literary forms depict an idyllic (but not necessarily factual) reality.¹⁵⁶ Indeed narration, depicts and explains; informs and forms at the same time. Thus Maltese society nurtured “[a] social fabric, [especially where the extended family lives close by, which] benefits from economies of scale

¹⁵² Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, (Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1958), 85.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 12. See Appendix 13 for 17 statements defining *Amoral familism*.

¹⁵⁴ Already back then this kind of unit was not homogenous but still considered to be the ideal kind.

¹⁵⁵ Boissevain, *A Village in Malta*, 13 *et seq.*

¹⁵⁶ See Adrian Grima, “Fashioning” the Maltese Family,” Civil Society Project – Phase 2, EDRC, University of Malta and Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence, 2006.

and contribute to the formation of a bonded inter-generational solidarity."¹⁵⁷ This has provided a support structure which sustains the individual nuclear families on various levels. While a support structure is necessary, this does not make the family or indeed one's inner group or organisation, an end, but rather a means of social wellbeing.

Unfortunately, when the *us-them* mentality kicks in the nuclear or extended family takes precedence over the common good of society.¹⁵⁸ For the sake of the family (the *us*) as opposed to the non-family (the *them*) everything becomes excused for what is purported to be the higher good.¹⁵⁹ It is within this frame of mind that "the Maltese show high levels of social solidarity [but] intolerance toward people of different origins."¹⁶⁰ What is good in itself (the family or social support structures) becomes the supreme good and a means through which unethical or immoral behaviour becomes condoned. Basic and important units in our social fabric become vehicles through which the common good within society is eroded.

Indeed, ambivalent because while we like to think of ourselves as a "*poplu ġeneruż*," these traces indicate a lack of civic sense, prevailing in amorally familist societies with family (self)centred petty factionalism and devoid religious practices, verging many a times on devotionism.¹⁶¹ These become more a social practice based on emotions¹⁶² than an orthopraxy which leads to a virtuous life. In practice this leads to the thriving of religious practices where formative efforts are dwindling, creating a dissonance which hinders the prophetic role of the Church in the public sphere.

¹⁵⁷ Emanuel P. Delia, *Catholic Social Teaching, Economic Thought and Four Hundred Thousand Maltese*, (Malta: APS Bank, 2010), 201.

¹⁵⁸ A common phrase that is often heard is "Il-familja l-ewwel"; "Mhux għall-familja" (Family first; It's for the good of the family). While struggles to maintain strong family ties and do one's utmost for one's family are all laudable and morally encouraging, when these are the "reason" to camouflage wrong doings, then the moral rightness stands no more.

¹⁵⁹ For a description of this dynamic of family and non-family – *ta' ġewwa u ta' barra*, see Mitchell, "The Nostalgic Construction of Community," 81-101.

¹⁶⁰ Abela "Shaping a National Identity," 19; See also Jon P. Michell, *Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁶¹ By which I mean devotions which are fickle and lack a spiritual depth.

¹⁶² See Ian Diacono, "Emotions and Religiosity," 17-18.

2.4 Summary

As has been stressed throughout, cultural traumas emerge not from the event *per se* but because of the narrative which interprets the event. In order to show how this is the case one may analyse instances where, although the event was perceived as horrendous and possibly had traumatic effects on individuals and a collective, a cultural trauma did not emerge.¹⁶³ What is crucial is not the horrendous event but its interpretation. In the local context one can think of various horrendous events which have shaken considerable parts of Maltese society and which, because of their brutality and violence, shattered the lives of many, but which have not emerged in cultural traumas. The politic-religious struggles led to a consolidation of a collective which feels aggrieved by the Church. Rather than the event *per se*, what invigorated this was the interpretation which the carrier group propounded, pointing towards victimhood rather than towards reconciliation and forgiveness. Both sides reasoned in us-them terms and believed (implicitly) in a zero-sum game. In essence what emerges from this Chapter is a structural sin which takes the form of factionalism – a dis-unity with society which is reflected or rather which deep down reflects a dis-unity in the Church between religious practices and orthopraxy.

¹⁶³ One may refer to the first interpretation of the War Crimes committed against Jews and the cases of Jasper, Texas and post-Nazi Germany. Also interesting is how the same Vietnam war caused a cultural trauma in the US but not in Communist Vietnam.

Chapter 3

Church as community: agent, space and presence for healing and reconciliation

3.1 Forming community

While the *sittinijiet* and their repercussions cannot be considered as the sole causes of the current ecclesial situation in Malta, it is undoubtedly an unresolved chapter which has not been given enough attention by the Church. An unhealed turbulent past has left the wounds to fester. This undoubtedly had an influence on the perception of the Church's presence in the public sphere, which she needs to heal and rehabilitate. Although pluralist and cosmopolitan, Malta is still a semi-secular democracy¹ which is partly results from the porous² boundary that exists between the Church and society. Within all this the Church cannot pretend to be immune from the social reality or from the

¹ See above: "Introduction."

² I am applying the concept of 'porous' from Faggioli, but within the Maltese context which is not exactly the context Faggioli describes, when he holds that: "The classical distinction between the *ad intra* and *ad extra* – a key idea for the ecclesiology of Vatican II – is now much less apt to describe the Church and its mission today. The boundaries between the *ad intra* and *ad extra* have become more porous: we live in a much more diverse religious landscape coexisting with different religious traditions, different cultural versions of the same religious tradition, different versions of atheism and secular worldviews, in societies in which individuals have overlapping, mutually nonexclusive identities and religious worldviews." Massimo Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship: Political Cultures of the Church in the Twenty-First Century*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 124.

structural sins which intertwine her with society. Distinct but entangled, the ecclesial and the social reality mirror each other, at times conflating spiritual and temporal power.

By first understanding herself, the Church can then identify how she can be a prophetic presence within the public sphere and therefore become a catalyst for a better development of people and nation. Ultimately, society should not be seen as a structure of values and relations which the Church opposes, for it is within society that God works mysteriously throughout history.³ Compelled by the Gospel, the Church is required to constantly understand anew her role as a community, which embodies the Holy People of God, within a society and a public sphere, which considers Christianity as an option amongst many.⁴ According to a Survey conducted by MISCO International, the great majority (92.3%) of those living in Malta (particularly the Maltese Nationals) are baptised and identify as Catholics, yet of these only 39.6% attend mass every Sunday⁵ (a percentage on the wane) and of which 26% are not sure or would not be baptised if they had the option.⁶ In a society where the role of the Church on the social, cultural, artistic levels and so on, is still significant and recognised by many, it becomes even more pertinent to understand how the Church and/or the community⁷ relates therein.

Undoubtedly, the Church in Malta today struggles greatly (especially through the voice of her Pastor) to offer a contribution in the public sphere specifically in the political arena. It is within this realisation that the ecclesial community can counter the structural sins of clericalism and dis-unity. Within her fold, these are often manifested as: a concern with prestige, ecclesio-centricity, a top-down attitude, a lack of co-responsibility of the laity and factionalism.

³ Yves Congar, *Chiesa e Mondo: Nella Prospettiva del Vaticano II*, (Napoli: L.E.R., 1969), 111 *et seq.*

⁴ Julian Carron, *Disarming Beauty: Essays on Faith, Truth and Freedom*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2017), 54.

⁵ Those who attend once (6.9%) or 2–3 times (10.5%) a month or every week total 56%. The reasons why people did not attend mass indicate a lukewarm attitude towards their faith or its practice. See MISCO International, “Research on Faith” (2018), Q2, Q5 and Q8.

⁶ While 22.5% are not sure, 3.5% wouldn’t be baptised if they had the option.

⁷ Superficially, we could have a working definition of community as being those who are regulars in faith practice. But is that enough in itself to constitute a community? These and so many other questions need a careful analysis which this study cannot offer, primarily because it seeks to focus on the question of healing and reconciliation.

A **concern with prestige**, pivotal to understand clericalism and a clerical culture,⁸ is re-emerging in some of the clergy who are too concerned with titles for themselves, and indirectly for the parish (or church) they are assigned to or of their origin. Such attitude is also noticeable with a sizeable portion of the laity. Linked to this phenomenon is an overzealous concern for the visible structure of the Church or of its traditions, a concern which implies a self-referential **ecclesio-centricity**.⁹ In defending the prestige of the structure, ultimately one defends one's own prestige. Such may even demonstrate itself in maintaining redundant old structures which emphasised the prestige of the clergy and where sacred glamour becomes central to 'pastoral concerns.' This may emanate from a nostalgia for the pre-Vatican II prestigious 'glory days' of the Church where the identity of the priest was clearer, more respected, and well defined. Compared to the uncertainty experienced today across society, caused by new and entangled situations, venturing into new pastures and frames of mind could be met with hesitation. Fear of losing what is known comes at the expense of doing and becoming what is necessary.¹⁰

Another outcome of clericalism, is a **top-down attitude of control of conscience**. Possibly less perceptible than the previous attitudes yet not completely eradicated. One often encounters situations where ministry is simply an informing of consciences. By simply stressing doctrine, ethical or moral issues it becomes "hard to make room for the consciences," which are not formed but replaced. (AL, 37) Catechesis and doctrine are construed as pieces of information to be learnt and where straightforward instructions are followed or rejected.

Clerical prestige and clericalism limit, the **co-responsibility of the laity** which is not

⁸ "[A] clerical culture, [contains] a sense of privilege, entitlement, separateness and status. [where] 'clericalism' [is] the downside of clerical culture, which fosters narcissistic entitlement, emotional immaturity, an authoritarian style of ministerial leadership, a rigid hierarchical worldview and identification of holiness and grace in the church with the clerical state ... The core values of clerical culture have been identified as privilege, entitlement, separateness, and status, and in clericalism, these values are considered inconsistent with priestly ministry." Len Sperry, "Understanding Psychology's Contribution to Priestly Formation: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Seminary Journal* 16, no.1 (2010): 8, 19.

⁹ See Francis, *Homily during Holy Mass Concluding the Summit on the Prevention of Abuse*, Sala Regia, Vatican, February 23, 2019.

¹⁰ See Stephen J. Rosetti, *Why Priests are Happy: A Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2011), 177-194.

something granted out of *bona gratia* but a consequence of baptism and confirmation. Even if nowadays, at the diocesan level the laity forms part of more decisional structures than before¹¹ on the parish level, the situation is still far from being acceptable. This hinders the laity from achieving their proper dignified position within the Church.¹² Such is a *sine qua non* in the overturning of “excessive clericalism which keeps [the laity] away from decision making.” (EG, 102)

Factionalism is evident in some parts of the Church in Malta. The social attitudes which emerged in Chapter 2 are also glaringly evident in ecclesial dynamics, both within certain parishes (due, for example, to issues of *festas*, or competition between self-centred groups and so on) and between groups of laity, movements, orders and so on. Although these might be doing sterling work, they seldom collaborate together or might not feel a sense of belonging in the diocese. In this sense, not only is the Church in Malta indistinguishable from Maltese culture, but fails to be prophetic through witnessing an alternative social dynamic.

Indeed, if Church structures are undressed of all unnecessary prestige, (see LG, 8) and clergy, religious and laity untie themselves of unnecessary and sinful burdens, then the ecclesial body would be able to purify the presence of the Church in Maltese society, becoming resplendent in her words and actions not in her robes. These many a times hide the glory of God by displaying that of the one wearing them. Without attempting any cheap pauperism, this is not a question of disregarding the great heritage left by our forefathers, or of squandering the beauty donning our churches. It is essentially a question of going to the essence of being Church. “Consider the lilies of the field, [and] how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.” (Mt 6, 28-29)

The Church is called to be prophetic and witness the Good News especially through her

¹¹ Yet we still have a clerical Church, strongly determined by the clergy.

¹² “[B]aptism is the sacrament of our unity in Christ, and in a world which is ever more fractured by violence and conflict, our unity is more imperative than ever. I believe that it is intrinsic to our baptismal identity to long for and strive for the restoration of the full unity of the Body of Christ.” Timothy Radcliffe, *Take the Plunge: Living Baptism and Confirmation*, (Bloomsbury, London, 2012), 5.

mode of relationality *ad intra* and *ad extra*.¹³ Christ's transformative presence, calls the Church to be leaven, light and salt, and not mimic, though constantly tempted to, the power dynamics of the world. When this happens, her structural dynamics (*ad intra*) and presence (*ad extra*) become counter-witnesses to the Good News, and her testimony is obscured. Although the ecclesial community is becoming more and more a *pusillus grex*, this should not induce a behaviour of superiority and elitism, a militant struggle of insiders against outsiders.¹⁴ Rather, the Church, is a community without boundaries which becomes a space where through a centrifugal and centripetal movement of discipleship, she lives her missionary vocation even in the public sphere. Particularly in view of this study this raises an important question: what function does the ecclesial community have within larger society?

3.1.1 Church as *koinonía*: an ecclesiology of *kenosis*

Before delving into that analysis, it is necessary to understand the type of community we are speaking of. Grounded in our contemporary reality, such necessitates "a dynamic understanding of tradition [without becoming] an exercise in futurology or in traditionalism [or] an obsession with 'presentism.'"¹⁵ The idea of community I would like to present is that which embraces an ecclesiology of *kenosis* and which reflects the Trinitarian *koinonía*. This will become a possible key of understanding for a renewed ecclesial presence in the public sphere.

The Church is generated by the Trinity (*ecclesia ex Trinitate*); the source, form and end of the life of the Church.¹⁶ Hence the Church as communion¹⁷ is called to proclaim and

¹³ See Enzo Bianchi, *Per un'etica condivisa*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), 44-51, 70-76.

¹⁴ Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 133.

¹⁵ Presentism: "The illusion of being able to deal with issues in the Catholic Church based on a vision that is short-sighted toward both the future and the past." Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 123.

¹⁶ Enzo Bianchi, *La Parrochia*, (Magnano, Qiqajon, 2004), 40.

¹⁷ See *Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta*, Dokument tas-Sinodu Djoċesan: Viżjoni ta' Knisja Kumunjoni – Poplu b'Kariżmi u Ministeri Diversi, (Floriana: Media Centre, 2003).

witness the Trinitarian revealed-mystery even through her modes of being, where medium and message are not dissonant. Being the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church as *koinonía* is called to share in Christ's redemptive mission; analogous to Christ's *kenosis* her ministry and communitarian *modus*, needs to be modelled on the Trinitarian communion. Being modelled on fraternity in the image of the triune God, an *ecclesia* necessarily walks together as *syn-odós* open to the different ecclesial and social realities.¹⁸ Essentially kerygmatic and missionary, the Church's priority is not to propose doctrine or norms but to become Christ-like and in so doing become a medium through which the message is made visible both through her mode of being and her structures. In being the Mystical Body of Christ, she is called to become more like her Master who emptied himself of all his glory. The Church's mission is not to rule nations but to make disciples of them whereby a servant approach is appropriated (see Mt 28, 19-20; Jn 13); spiritual authority is not exercised to coerce but as self-gift. Mission and authority become a "washing of the feet" that elevates the "slaves" to friends (Jn 15:15) revealing a *kenosis* of life and the self-gift typical of the Trinitarian dynamic.

This ecclesiology of *kenosis*, is animated by the Spirit, the true agent of a *metanoia* of the heart.¹⁹ Expressing true *koinonía*, made one through the Eucharist (*ecclesia de eucharistia*)²⁰ and animated by the Spirit that works in her, the Church does not merely force "cultural transmission, [it must become] a living collective testimony."²¹ The Church in heeding to the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one", (Jn 17, 21) becomes the 'body' that witnesses to God's 'intended sociality'²² "showing society what it is meant to be—unbroken and undivided."²³ The Church must continuously undergo reform sustained

¹⁸ See Bianchi, *La Parrochia*, 44-48.

¹⁹ Rush, "Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II," 800.

²⁰ Bianchi, *La Parrochia*, 41.

²¹ Juan Carlos Scannone, "Pope Francis and the Theology of the People," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (2016): 132.

²² This 'sociality' is informed also by the way the ecclesial body lives its faith, which is personal (not private), and hence the 'I' is always linked to the 'you.' See Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, trans. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 112-116.

²³ Brendan Leahy, "Christ Existing as Community: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Notion of Church," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 73, (2008): 39-40.

by the Pneumatic experience and only when Christ's self-emptying is imitated in the life of the Church, can she become an agent and a space for healing and reconciliation in society. This also forms the basis on which the Church, witnessing to friendship and solidarity in community, becomes an antidote which heals, and a space where grace can be revealed as reconciling in society.

The Church cannot forget that God shed his glory and wore humanity to fulfil our salvation, that Christ entered our human condition, became one of us, so that we become like him. The Church which as her foundational moment has Pentecost, is incarnate, awaiting her resurrection, the *Parousia*.²⁴ If God's Incarnation, the essence of our redemption,²⁵ and Resurrection are the foundational mystery of the Christian faith, then these should be foundational for the Church's understanding of herself. The Christian faith is a personal relation to a "hidden-revealed, [an] inaccessible mystery which reveals itself."²⁶ Therefore, we cannot understand the Church "as a species of ecclesiological monophysitism"²⁷ focused exclusively on her holy nature, seeking to repress her mutable human, sometimes confusing, nature.

This has often led to the conflation of social and political power with spiritual authority, especially wherever an 'established Church'²⁸ existed. Through Constantinianism the ecclesiastical hierarchy deemed herself to be above temporal lords. Hence political structures were considered to be 'at the service' of the Church and religion.²⁹ This

²⁴ See *Ibid.*, 33, 56

²⁵ See Fernando Ocariz Braña, José Antonio Riestra, Lucas F. Mateo Seco, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ: A Christology and Soteriology Textbook*, trans. Michael Adams and James Gavigan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), 200-204.

²⁶ Clément, *Il Potere Crocifisso*, 34.

²⁷ Oakley, "Obedience and the Church's Teaching Authority," 68.

²⁸ "A particular church, which is from a legal and constitutional standpoint the national church that receives special privileges (a special juridical status and financial support, among others) from the state." Faggioli, "Catholicism and Citizenship", 68.

²⁹ Conversely and conveniently religious hegemony may be used by political authority to bond together a society.

dimmed the distinction inaugurated by Christ in front of Pilate³⁰ where he asserted that his Kingdom and authority were not of this world – grew dimmer.

Alas, for many centuries the Church understood her spiritual authority as the root of her political superiority, which had a trickle-down effect from the institutional to the personal, determining her relations within society; the pope as above the emperor, the bishop above the lord and the clergy above the laity. Ironically however, to maintain this spiritual role the Church had to make recourse to the ‘lower’ temporal power. Seeking prestige and privileges, ecclesiastical roles acquired more civil significance.³¹ Covering their political and earthly dominion with a sacred mantle this was rooted institutionally and personally in the structural sin of clericalism.

Although the Church is a Holy People her structures are immune from sin. Constantly tempting her is a Constantinian *modus operandi* and *vivendi*³² which elevates the Church above the world rather than placing her in the world, side by side with humanity. It sought to reinforce the political Papacy and strengthen the Church’s temporal power. Reverted but not eradicated by Vatican II, the Constantinian *modus* is still considered by some as an ideal for the life of the Church. Sometimes it emerges forcefully, becoming a ‘catholic’ version of culture wars, inexorably sowing seeds of dis-unity.³³ Although not a hegemony the Church should not seek to recreate Christendom but an encounter with Christ.³⁴

In being ‘an event of conversion,’ the focal point of the Council was the *renovatio* of *ad intra* and *ad extra* ecclesial relations. Through *Lumen gentium* the Church understood

³⁰ See above: “Pulpit above throne”

³¹ Fabrice Hadjadj, *The Resurrection: Experience Life in the Risen Christ*, trans. Michael J. Miller, (Paris: Magnificat, 2016), 79-81.

³² “A theological-political model of relationship between political and religious power in terms of alliance that is both religious and political.” Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 68.

³³ Significantly, these were source of great division within the Church, for example, with *Humanae Vitae* (1968) and *Amoris Laetitia* (2016). See Eric Hodgson, “Catholic Culture Wars,” *La Croix International*, 29 January 2019, [Accessed May 11, 2019] <https://international.la-croix.com/news/catholic-culture-wars/9338>; Massimo Faggioli, “Asymmetric Culture War in the Church of Francis,” *Commonweal*, 26 January 2016, [Accessed May 11, 2019] <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/asymmetric-culture-war-church-francis>

³⁴ Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 128-130.

herself as the People of God in communion; through *Gaudium et spes* she becomes universally aware of her missionary role within societies and in the world.³⁵ The change brought about by Vatican II was not an abrupt change of tradition, dogma, doctrine and so on,³⁶ but a slow process of profound understanding of the Church's role and her foundational scope (see Mk 16,20) in a world not yet baptised and in constant flux. (GME, 6.2) The primary concern of the council was not to discuss "ecclesiastical doctrine" (GME, 6.4) but that doctrine is examined widely and more profoundly, and that the Christian truth be explained according to the needs of our times. More than changing Dogma, the Council sought to change the mental and ideological frameworks and the methods and modes of being. John XXIII's inaugural speech indicated a new orientation for the Council and the Church; a pilgrim Church incarnated amongst humanity even if a *pusillus grex*. He emphasised that the Church is called to bring to all the light of Christ not by the use of weapons of rigor but by applying the medicine of mercy. (GME, 7.2) The challenge today is even more radical. The Church is required to become a field hospital where the wounds of the heart, and in our case memory, can receive healing.

The Council challenged a dynamic which saw the Church struggling for power against a pluralistic and cosmopolitan society by emphasising the Kingdom of God in worldly terms. Refuting this, it re-proposed the centrality of *koinonia* for the Church as a pilgrim People of God baptised in the name of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Converting towards becoming a more authentic Mystical Body of Christ, it is not just the minister who follows Christ's kenotic self-emptying but indeed the Church as a baptised People who emulates this relationality, revealed to us in and through Christ.

In following this understanding, the Church in Malta cannot simply attempt a strategic softening of her appearance, or work out a marketing plan to become more attractive. It is not a cosmetic transformation (which would be nothing more than a mirage) but a

³⁵ Rush, "Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II," 800.

³⁶ This is clear in John XXIII's speech, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, at the opening of the Council on October 11, 1962. While emphasising the importance of all the previous councils and describing them as "resplendent lights", (2.1) he described the *Magisterium* as extraordinary and "to be considered like a sacred text" (2.7) of the Church, a "very fertile treasure" proposed to all of good will. See GME.

holistic transformation reflected even in her visible presence which is required. Otherwise a dissonance would emerge, masking rather than revealing the Church as “faithful to God's plan [which responds] to the world's deepest yearnings.” (NMI, 43) It was central to the Council to reorient the Church from an inward looking ecclesio-centric, to a kerygmatic Christo-centric, *ecclesia*. Reorienting her gaze towards the Risen Lord³⁷ and tearing down walls and building bridges within our people, the Church in Malta needs to become a healing presence and not a contraposing force within society. Christo-centricity however cannot simply be a mono-directional relation between the baptised and Christ; it needs to be actualised more internally “as a realm of mutual relationships modelled on the life of the Trinity.”³⁸

Becoming nothing in the eyes of man divested of any presumption, but retaining everything in the eyes of God to mirror Christ's humbling Incarnation, the members of this communion adopt a personal attitude and an ecclesiology which “leads to a bottom up approach opposed to [**prestige**], glory and perfection. It starts from the humanity [and the **humility**] of Christ and indeed his sacrificial death.”³⁹ The Son who emptied himself of all divine glory in his Incarnation (see Phil 2, 7) rejected the temptation of earthly power and glory in the desert and withdrew to the mountains when the people attempted to make him king (see Jn 6, 15). On the contrary, what significantly emerges from the first chapter was a top-down attitude of control of conscience, and an ecclesio-centric ecclesiology based on the prestige of Bishops and clergy, enabled by clerics, permitted by the laity and maintained by the British.⁴⁰ It was a key structural dynamic at the basis of the politico-religious struggles. Such was characterised by an understanding that the *tria munera Christi* was solely fulfilled through ministerial priesthood – *in persona Christi* – primarily in the bishop – the ultimate *alter Christus*.⁴¹

³⁷ Leahy, *Christ Existing as Community*, 33, 47, 55, 58.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁹ George F. McLean, “Introduction,” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, 4.

⁴⁰ It was advantageous for the British to have a strong controlling ecclesiastical authority.

⁴¹ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 31-32.

In the following parts it will be argued that the *munus* of kingship can be understood as one which heals clericalism. The priestly *munus* can be understood as one which heals and reconciles against dis-unity and factionalism. The prophetic *munus* as one which proposes a presence countering amoral behaviour and a zero-sum game attitude in favour of the common good of a truly democratic society. Although not an exhaustive analysis, it re-thinks this classical paradigm in view of the Church's essence and presence in the Maltese public sphere today. Humility and service rather than prestige and privilege, actualises the Kingdom of God. This can become truly prophetic in the public sphere where all the baptised participating in the one priesthood of Christ – priest, prophet and king – constitute the Church as *alter Christus*.

3.2 Kingship as service: Church as the communion of the laity conformed as *alter Christus*

Christ's kingship is essentially the pastoral approach of Christ as suffering servant as preannounced in the Old Testament. His kingship is messianic but not as envisaged by the Jews, political and earthbound. Christ affirms his Kingdom in front of Pilate as one which is not based on earthly power but exists in virtue of Him being law giver, judge and Redeemer. He inaugurates the Kingdom, which is now but not yet, and will only be fulfilled at the eschaton, through his mission, death and resurrection. He is king but his crown is made of thorns not riches, his throne is the cross not privilege, his people are the poor, the sick, the blind and the crippled, and his title is that of The Good Shepherd.⁴²

The Church, in participating in Christ's Kingship, does not establish herself above society by seeking privileges and power even when legitimately obtained; she places her trust in the Lord not in "privileges offered by civil authority." (GS, 76) The logic of Christ, that of a servant, of someone who emptied himself of all power and through his obedience exalted by God (see Phil 2, 6-11), is exemplified in the washing of the feet (see Jn 13). Christians today too, must hear the admonition: "do as I have done to you." (v. 15) A constant effort by the Church in Malta, is necessary to effectively and visibly shed the vestiges of a 'perfect and imperial institution' and instead robe herself in the humble garments of the Servant Master, becoming the Mystical Body of the one who was crucified naked. If the Church in Malta today is to be truly counter to that of the *sittinijiet*, but most importantly a seed, sign and instrument of the Gospel within society, she must journey along the route of humble service both in her internal and external dynamics. By embracing an ecclesiology of *kenosis*, empty of prestige and privilege, the Church makes space for the Spirit which sanctifies and makes the Church a Holy People of God. When structures and attitudes are ecclesio-centric and in function of maintaining clerical prestige, the Church becomes a closed, self-serving institution which stifles charisms and the Spirit.

⁴² See Ocariz, Seco and Riestra, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 141-146.

Open and outward looking, the community of the faithful, participates in “the one dignity flowing from Baptism, [and sharing the] responsibility for the Church’s mission.” (CL, 15) She cannot maintain a strong internal monarchical pyramid.⁴³ This hinders the co-responsibility of the laity, and their participation in Christ’s *munera* preventing them from becoming an integral part of his Mystical Body, and hence *alter Christus*. Following the Council, a great effort has been made to understand the role of Bishops’ Collegiality *cum et sub Petrus* under the impetus of Paul VI and developed as synodality with Francis’ approach, “which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”⁴⁴ At the local level a more robust process of communal participation of all the members of the Church together with the Bishop, is equally, if not more, necessary. All the baptised ought to participate, but not as mere spectators of a process but as active subjects. A greater co-responsibility of the laity at all levels while reflecting the real composition of the Church made of the ordained, religious and laity, men and women could help to counter the ideas of clerical prestige and top-down attitudes, prevalent during the *sittinijiet*. This not only opens new pastures for the Church, but will facilitate healing and reconciliation. Moreover, in recognising and strengthening the vocation of all it will strengthen the ecclesial body’s prophetic dynamism within society at large.⁴⁵

Crucial for this to happen, ministers must continue the journey from a top-down attitude which informs consciences to forming the community of the baptised who emerge as protagonists in the life of the *ecclesia*. It requires an approach and an awareness which deems the human conscience as sacred ground over which no one can trample, and towards which those entrusted by the Church with guidance and teaching must

⁴³ Eric Hodgens, “Catholic governance – a challenge for improvement,” *La Croix International*, April 8, 2019, [Accessed April 9, 2019] <https://international.la-croix.com/news/catholic-governance-a-challenge-for-improvement/9846>.

⁴⁴ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, (The Holy See, 2018); See also Francis, *Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015; Massimo Faggioli, “From Collegiality to Synodality:” Pope Francis’s Post-Vatican II Reform, *Commonweal*, November 23 2018, [Accessed May 13, 2019] <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/collegiality-synodality>

⁴⁵ “Christianity will be strong if all the baptised people of God are strengthened, their vocation recognised, and their creativity released. In the Catholic Church, three of the great patrons of Europe – St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi and St Catherine of Siena – renewed the Church in times of crisis. None of them were ordained priests.” Radcliffe, *Take the Plunge*, 2-3.

approach with caution and respect, for it is primarily “the most secret core and sanctuary” where the personal God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is encountered, heard and experienced. (see Ex 3, 5-6, see also GS, 16; AL, 222.)

This is particularly important for this current study because the *sittinijiet*, while turbulent because of the violent clashes, have a remaining effect also because of the discursive process that ensued, the strength of the narrative which was carried forward by carrier groups and the attitude of the Church which was one of control of consciences which led to an abuse of the freedom and grace that baptism endows the faithful with. To some degree or another all three are still present today. A kenotic community which enables co-responsibility in the life of the Church by becoming subjects and not mere objects of *ecclesial* communion and mission, is a healing and reconciling antidote.

It also requires a dialogical, open to the new and open to learn relation among all the members of the Church: clergy, religious and laity. Such keeps feet strongly grounded in the *humus* of humanity and “better reflect[s] that wonderful multifaceted reality that Christ’s Church is meant to be.” (CV, 207) She then becomes a “bridge that connects God and man, opening [our] hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.” (MV, 2) In her relations with society, culture and within the public sphere, an open and learning community engages within a wider society with open eyes, heart and mind – capable of perceiving the signs of the times, *cor ad cor loquitur*, sensitive to God’s will and untangled from preconfigured mental boxes. Ultimately, in accepting that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be limited, the Church places her hope not in her wide ramification, in power and prestige but in the seeds of truth anywhere the Spirit sows (see Mt 13, 1-23; Mk 4, 1-20; Lk 8, 4-15), hopeful that even the small mustard seed will contribute great things to God’s Kingdom (see Mt 13, 31-32; Mk 4, 30-32; Lk 13, 18-19).

Undeniably, engagement with the secular reality is the specific role of the laity. The Church after the Council has put great emphasis on the *munus* of Kingship *ad extra*, i.e. on the responsibility of the laity to be co-responsible in evangelising the secular world and their “secular character.” (LG, 31; CL, 15) Less reflection, however, has been put on the co-responsibility of the baptised to participate in the Church’s kingly *munus* within

the communion of the Church (*ad intra*).⁴⁶ In view of this the Church has to be a space where the ministries and charisms of the laity emerge more vigorously in all the structures of the community, “ordered as they are to the building up of the Church, to the well-being of humanity and to the needs of the world.” (CL, 24) “Adult in all other aspects of their lives and secular responsibilities, many Catholics still conceive of themselves as dependent children in their relationship to Christ and the church.”⁴⁷ The ecclesial communion fulfils her identity as People of God when the lay participate with all their different charisms and through the various ministries (EG, 130-131) within the structures of the Church, be it at diocesan or parish levels to “broaden resources in consultation and the principle of collaboration – and in certain instances also in decision-making.” (CL, 25) On the one hand it is the whole ecclesial communion that must acquire a greater awareness of the importance of collaboration, not just on the parochial level but also on the interparochial, diocesan and inter-diocesan dimensions. (AA, 10) On the other greater space should be genuinely given to empowering the whole community to participate, according to their God-gifted charisms, at all spheres of Church life.

“[The laity’s] activity within Church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the Pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness”... Examining and solving pastoral problems ‘by general discussion’ ought to find its adequate and structured development through a more convinced, extensive and decided appreciation.” (CL, 25) The parish community, which still receives preferential treatment, (CL, 27; EG 28) cannot simply be a mirage of *koinonia*, simply endorsing feel-good emotions in a sea of loneliness which our society has become.⁴⁸ Through the

⁴⁶ See Andrea Zaffarese, “Co-Responsibility in Maltese Parish Communities in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*,” (S.Th.D. diss. University of Malta, 2016).

⁴⁷ Michael Sweeney, “Beyond Personal Piety: The Laity’s Role in the Church’s Mission,” *Commonweal*, 28 February 2019, [Accessed May 13, 2019] <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/beyond-personal-piety>

⁴⁸ *Times of Malta*, The Epidemic of Loneliness, May 9, 2019, [Accessed May 13, 2019], <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20190510/editorial/the-epidemic-of-loneliness.709544>

centrality of the Eucharist, the parish community becomes an oasis for conversion where faith is expressed and nurtured with a missionary outlook.

When however, parish life is reduced to a service station⁴⁹ for sacraments and certificates which little resembles a truly liturgical community, no wonder that there is no sense of *koinonía*. Intrinsically Trinitarian, it is communion which makes the Church one body made up of a diversity of parishes, movements and so on with different functions, charisms and gifts bonded together by the Spirit. The sacraments pour on all the baptised their particular vocation and mission within this communion which in turn is realised through participating “in the life and mission of the Church.” (CL, 20) And hence, a vitally important question that the Church in Malta must ask herself is whether all the baptised are formed to make moral choices and empowered enough to become agents of reconciliation, more aware of their baptismal role within their particular ecclesial reality and the wider ecclesial communion which is the local and the universal Church. (CL, 25) Baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, a communion of faithful which embraces the relational dynamics of the Trinity in which “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12, 9), can then become a missionary presence in the country’s public life and institutions which bears the fruit of the Gospel. It is not about questioning the need of a structural organisation which governs the Church’s earthly existence, or the need of clergy. More fundamental, is asking whether this government as expressed locally reflects the Trinitarian communion which⁵⁰:

[s]peaks of a double, lifegiving participation: the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ, and the communication of that life of charity to the entire body of the Faithful, in this world and in the next, union with Christ and in Christ, and union among Christians, in the Church.⁵¹

⁴⁹ By the term ‘the Church as a service station’, reference is made to the mentality that one goes to church just to receive spiritual services such as sacraments but never engage in the community. For the individual, all parishes are the same, since he or she does not have any sense of belonging towards any one of them, but sees only in the parish a local outlet in which one can acquire spiritual services. See Zaffarese, *Co-responsibility in Maltese Parish Communities*, 2, 35-36.

⁵⁰ It is also helpful to understand more fully the identity of the Priest in the secular reality of today, which although in part is addressed (at least indirectly in this study), it is not its main focus. This is required because the structural sin of clericalism hinges on this. See also, Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 37-38.

⁵¹ Paul VI, *Wednesday General Audience talk*, June 8, 1966.

Structures and ministers are there to serve and not to be served. Allowing the Spirit to take the lead, one would need to unlearn misconceptions which hamper an ecclesiology of *kenosis*, where the co-responsibility of the laity in the Church's decision making and ministry, especially in parishes, cannot simply be an exercise on paper or a rubber-stamping mechanism or just an extraordinary form of ministry almost as a substitute to the priest.⁵²

More lay men and women in parish leadership and obviously throughout the various movements and structures of the Church are a necessity not because of the dwindling number of priests but in their own right, as true participants in Christ's regal function. Unless a greater effort is made to facilitate and promote the role of the laity (not in servitude to prestige and ecclesio-centricity but, in being active protagonists of the mission of the Church), a structure of power and control covered with a sacred mantle is perpetuated, likely leading to 'holy' abuse.

While the ministerial priesthood has to continuously be configured to Christ, servant head and shepherd of the Church, who emptied himself of all glory, (see PDV, 25) it is the whole body of Christ, that must be en route on a conversion journey to emerge more as the one Mystical Body of Christ. Configuration is not simply information and knowledge. It is a constant *metanoia* of hearts, which inevitably sends forth (see Rom 10, 14-15) and dresses the baptised and indeed the whole visible Church, with Christ's characteristics. The logic of Jesus is the power of the cross which makes space for "the otherness of the other to the point of submitting oneself to death, to offer him resurrection."⁵³ It is not a power which controls and subdues but the power of the gift of self, out of love, paradoxically giving life out of death.⁵⁴ The attitude of service is indeed an attitude of the Church whose mission is that of proclaiming the healing and reconciling presence of the Word made Flesh.

⁵² "The laypersons are not our peons, or our employees. They don't have to parrot back whatever we say." Pope Francis, *Meeting with the bishops of Chile during apostolic trip to Chile*, January 16, 2018.

⁵³ Clément, *Il Potere Crocifisso*, 35.

⁵⁴ See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Life out of death: Meditations on the Paschal Mystery*, trans. Martina Stöckl (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 47-59.

3.3 Priesthood as sanctifying: Church as agent, space and presence for healing and reconciliation

Although Christ never confers the title of Priest on himself, his priesthood is rooted in the Old Testament where the flight from Egypt and the return from Babylon are cornerstones of the Jewish reconciliatory experience with God. The cross fulfils Christ's mission and sacrificial offering where the One offering the sacrifice becomes the altar and sacrifice Himself. Expressed most vividly in the Letter to the Hebrews, this inaugurated the New Covenant. A priestly kingship and a royal priesthood, that of Christ is a messianic and redemptive fulfilment of the Eternal priesthood of Melchizedek and the Servant of Yahweh. Christ, through his oblation, becomes the mediator between God and humanity. He reconciles humanity by offering himself as a paschal victim superior to any other sacrifice; offered once and for all at Calvary and "renewed (not repeated) in the Eucharist."⁵⁵

"His revealing-healing mission [paves] the way for us to salvation and healing,"⁵⁶ restoring our relationship with God and therefore opens paths for better relations with the 'other.' In the New Testament, it is Paul who emphasises reconciliation, particularly in this restorative sense.⁵⁷ "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." (2 Cor 5, 19) Healing and reconciliation are not entrusted to particular individuals but must be seen as a communal effort. The Church, in being a Eucharistic communion, participates in the redemptive and restorative priesthood of Christ, and in participating in the Economy of salvation,⁵⁸ the Church becomes a wounded and healing community. She becomes a sacrament of reconciliation; a redeeming agent, space and presence which restores. Likewise, configured to the Servant-Messiah, the Christian community

⁵⁵ See Ocariz, Seco and Riestra, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 164-175.

⁵⁶ Bernard Häring, *Healing and Revealing: Wounded Healers Sharing Christ's Mission*, (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1984), 27.

⁵⁷ See Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 51-56.

⁵⁸ See Ibid. 22-24.

becomes “a healing community [but] not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision.”⁵⁹ This is integral to the community’s mission to become ‘a visible, efficacious sign’ to “care for healthy and healing human relationships at all levels [including] care for the wholeness and health of persons and of public life.”⁶⁰

3.3.1 Healing and reconciling the *sittinijiet*

Healing and reconciliation must emerge from a community which embraces *kenosis*, starting by humbly recognising her past and her present situation. This however is not a question of forgetting and restarting afresh.⁶¹ Along the way, many people have been hurt and the collective memory of many is still geared in seeing the Church as an aggressive protagonist in Maltese society; this intensifies the cultural trauma. Hence the Church cannot avoid the *sittinijiet* primarily because it is a past which looms in the minds of many,⁶² but also because this turbulent period has not received the deserved attention from Church structures. It therefore keeps dragging like a ball and chain and emerges when triggered, hampering her sanctifying function. Exercised through a servant authority which becomes a transformative prophetic presence, healing and reconciliation are not achieved through a series of pragmatic actions.

Amnesty International worker Daan Bronkhorst identifies⁶³ three phases of transition between trauma and reconciliation: first, the Genesis phase – where shifts of power

⁵⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, (New York: Image Doubleday, 2010), 100.

⁶⁰ Häring, *Healing and Revealing*, 33.

⁶¹ It is not a revisionist version of history exculpating the Church from past wrongdoings. See Luigi Accattoli, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness: The Mea Culpa's of John Paul II*, trans. Jordan Aumann (Boston, Pauline Books, 1998), xiii.

⁶² This emerges from the numerous comments on social media and discussions where the Church, especially through the Bishops, contributes to public life – be it strictly moral, political or otherwise.

⁶³ Daan Bronkhorst, *Truth and Reconciliation: Obstacles and Opportunities for Human Rights*, (Amsterdam: Amnesty International, 1995), 31-32.

relations are under way amid internal instability, where calls for reconciliation are very difficult to make; second, the Transformative phase – the actual beginning of a transition marked by a significant turning point where the possibility of reconciliation emerges; third, the Readjustment phase – marked by the beginning of the reconstruction of society.⁶⁴

In Malta's case, since the signing of the 'peace agreement' between the ecclesiastical authorities and the MLP leadership, social, political and ecclesial circumstances have changed drastically but we cannot say that reconciliation has been achieved. Very briefly I will delve into four periods since the agreement simply to survey, and in view of, any reconciliation prospects and possibilities.

The first was the time when Gonzi was still Archbishop (1969-1976). A phase already dealt with in the first Chapter where the animosity was still cooling down but there weren't the right protagonists to start a proper healing and reconciliation process. Gonzi and indeed the Church as an institution appeared defeated and Gonzi exercised great caution on his part.⁶⁵

The Second phase was Archbishop Mercieca's tenure (1976 – 1987). This phase and the previous, overlap a lot. Unfortunately, this was a period marred by physical and other forms of violence against the hierarchy and laity (not necessarily because specifically

⁶⁴ Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1998), 7-9.

⁶⁵ Gonzi was now being criticised by the clergy that he was closing an eye on whatever the Mintoff administration was legislating. What wasn't evident, however, was that Mintoff was threatening Gonzi, for example (during 1975) with "sacking all priests, monks and nuns in Government services" if a recommendation that "public registrars should be debarred from attending nuptial mass and should be kept out of the sacristy afterwards." Gonzi was indeed in between Scylla and Charybdis – between avoiding a third politico-religious clash and the clergy who couldn't fathom the fact that Mintoff would do as he pleases (basically introducing the famous *six points*) and Gonzi would just "register irritation with the Government, but never in public." Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 231-234.

Within this atmosphere the Archpriests refused to read a pastoral letter issued by Gonzi, regarding attacks on almost all the PN clubs. Gonzi at first had called it an "irreligious and amoral behaviour" but this didn't go down well with the government, as it was much beyond what Gonzi's calm tone had become. Somehow or other, surprisingly Gonzi issued a pastoral letter asking for clemency for those who committed violence, the parish priests refused to read it. Gonzi is said to have exclaimed "if you don't obey me anymore, what can I do." The following week he resigned. This has been confirmed to me by witnesses. *Ibid.*, 238-240.

tal-Knisja) especially after 1981. Issues concerning Church property, Church schools and so on, sparked again the animosity between the ecclesiastical authorities and Mintoff, now Prime Minister to be later succeeded by Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici.⁶⁶ Recalling the final part of Chapter 2, it seems that during this period the victims turned aggressors and the aggressors, victims. As is remarked above⁶⁷ the peace agreement was a truce more than anything else, and a rushed one at that (even if it had been coming for a number of years). No attempts towards reconciliation emerge during this phase, which anyway would not have been but premature.⁶⁸ The agreement still had an effect, for it became part of the collective narrative, sealing a boiling but unresolved issue. Mercieca was not the boisterous character Gonzi was. And although he didn't confront Mintoff and later Mifsud Bonnici the same way as his predecessor did, the atmosphere was not ideal to start a healing and reconciliation process. This was even more so because of the constitutional/political turmoil following the 1981 elections dragging the nation in a spiral of violence and great confrontation even against the Church.⁶⁹

The Third phase was that which followed the 1987 elections and includes Archbishop Cremona's⁷⁰ tenure (1987-2014). These elections brought a change in Government and with the election of Dr Eddie Fenech Adami⁷¹ as Prime Minister, official relations between the Church and the State could be eased. This is the longest and most crucial period for the solidification of the current situation. Although the situation stabilised, the political and cultural problematics⁷² outlined in the second chapter remained obviously present. Between 1988 and 1993 five Agreements were signed between the

⁶⁶ Prime Minister of Malta (1984 – 1987) and Leader of the MLP (1984 – 1992).

⁶⁷ See above: "Prohibitions Removed and Deal Struck"

⁶⁸ See Jeremy M. Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Past*, (London: T&T Clark International, 2011), 246.

⁶⁹ One such example, the Church Schools Issue and the rampage on the Archbishop's Curia in 1984 by MLP supporters. Following this rampage on the curia, Mercieca was worried that the incident was a result of the 'rule of the mob', but nonetheless wanted and made sure that the Church's media reports the incident factually and that the wording would be along the lines of forgiveness. There was no outcry of victimhood and calling to arms. See Charles Buttigieg, Ġużeppi Mercieca: Raġħaj għal Kull Stagun, (Valletta: Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2014), 355-356.

⁷⁰ Archbishop of Malta (2007-2014)

⁷¹ Prime Minister of Malta (1987 – 1996; 1996 – 2004) and Leader of the PN (1977 – 2004).

⁷² See above.

Republic of Malta and the Holy See on issues⁷³ which during the previous phase were the cause of troublesome times. During this period, exercising great caution, there seemed to have been a reluctance on all levels of the Church, to initiate a proper reconciliation process. At face value the situation had calmed down considerably especially during Dr Alfred Sant's MLP leadership.⁷⁴ Within this scenario the narrative of the *sittinijiet* spearheaded by Mintoff, continued (especially) through party media but most importantly by passing from one generation to another; no counter narrative was ever proposed by the Church.⁷⁵ The buzz word, in the political arena, was "*Rikonciljazzjoni*" but was it ever attempted by the political and/or ecclesiastical protagonists? On the Church's part, was it simply a quietening of the situation so as not to ruffle feathers?

The Fourth (and current) phase is Archbishop Scicluna's⁷⁶ tenure (2015 –). Although 15 years have passed since the conclusion of the Diocesan Synod (1999-2004) the silence of the Church on the issue is still deafening. During previous years criticism towards the Church during the Divorce Referendum⁷⁷ and later on other issues like the introduction of IVF and Civil Unions, was mostly that her teachings are retrograde, but the issue of the *sittinijiet* was not so much at the fore. Mgr. Scicluna, who has a more pronounced attitude than his predecessors on current affairs, is accused of having meddled in politics particularly by Tweets posted or shared and a comment during a homily. These⁷⁸ have ruffled the feathers of some and seem to have reignited the past fire of animosity from

⁷³ The issues dealt with in these Agreements were: Tertiary and Public education, the temporal goods of the Church and Marriage issues. See "Agreements of the Holy See," The Holy See, [Accessed May 25, 2019] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/index_concordati-accordi_en.htm

⁷⁴ Prime Minister of Malta (1996 – 1998) and Leader of the MLP (1992 – 2008).

⁷⁵ On the contrary the MLP, now rebranded as PL recaptured/continued Mintoff's same narrative. Dr Joseph Muscat on the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the 1962 election called for the new "*suldati tal-azzar*" in favour of the movement for civil liberties. See Appendix 12.

⁷⁶ Auxiliary Bishop (2012 – 2015); Archbishop of Malta (2015 – present).

⁷⁷ During Mgr. Cremona's tenure in 2010.

⁷⁸ One of the tweets was regarding a government political advert and the comment was with regards a new lighting system for Castille's façade addressed during a homily to new graduates amongst whom there were Architects. See also Appendix 14 for one of the tweets and the replies.

coals which were kept going.⁷⁹ The wounds have been kept alive and never has there been a concrete attempt at healing with the result that personal attacks against the Archbishop are more evident, for he is portrayed as behaving like Gonzi during the *sittinijiet*.⁸⁰

People posting comments online attack him personally and in many of their attacks, words like “*mizbla*”, “*interdet*” and “*dnub il-mejjet*” are resurfacing more vigorously. Not to mention that many of these comments are replete with hate and the calling of names (which pro-government bloggers have started). These are indicative and could substantiate the emergence of cultural trauma and that the perception of victimhood felt by many, described in Chapter 2, is still present. It appears to burst out whenever the Archbishop comments or Tweets on local issues, especially if what is commented upon involves government policy. It seems that this situation reverts back to the Genesis phase identified by Bronkhorst. This is felt by many, especially priests with whom people speak directly and with much passion against the Archbishop but is also evident on social media and in general. While this situation has caused many within Church structures to become hyper cautious in the public sphere, ever since he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop, Scicluna has repeatedly affirmed that he will not be silenced.⁸¹ Should he?

Nowadays the general sentiment still reflects the Church-MLP statement of 1969 in that a “distinction [is] made between the political community and the Church. The very nature of the Church demands she does not interfere in politics.”⁸² This is what seems to have stuck in some people’s minds and which during conversation translates into: “*Il-Knisja m’ghandiex tindahal fil-politika*” (The Church should not meddle in politics.)

⁷⁹ See above: “A Case for a Maltese Cultural Trauma?”

⁸⁰ Possibly also because of the social media which hypes reactions, but in truth, rarely was Cremona attached as re-igniting the *sittinijiet* – not even during the Divorce referendum, where the accusations were flown against the Church but not the Archbishop personally.

⁸¹ See Matthew Vella, “Silence is not an option: Mgr Charles Scicluna,” *Maltatoday*, 11 November 2013 [Accessed April 25, 2019], <https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/interview/31362/silence-is-not-an-option-mgr-charles-sci-cluna>

⁸² Part of the 4 April 1969 Church – MLP joint statement.

Although 'politika' in the original statement presumably implied 'partisan politics,' in reality harsh reactions are evoked whenever Church 'authorities' criticise political positions proposed by the PL. This, however, didn't happen when in the past the Church decried poverty or other social issues during a Nationalist administration.⁸³ Ingrained in the mentality of most and expressed directly or indirectly, it is indicative of a strong link which connects that era with today. All this is invigorated by comments on social media which spread fast like wild fire perpetuating cultural trauma, a sense of victimhood, collectivism, and an us-them mentality, together with a partial recollection of many. Pro-labour supporters are spurred to feel aggrieved by what they consider to be an attack on their party but not on the other, claiming that the Church is vociferous only when there is the Labour Party in government and hence tilting the balance against them. This seems to reinforce the claim that the Church is against the Labour Party, its members and its Leader.⁸⁴

For many the Church should be relegated to the strictly religious realm, interpreted solely as the administering the sacraments, of liturgical practices, processions and doing charitable acts. This reduces liturgy and sacraments to rituals and Church to a social or anthropological reality. But Christianity is an event – a *kairos* – and not a doctrine, or even worse, an ideology; a lived experience and not a list of ethics, values or even worse, rituals.⁸⁵ By her very nature she is missionary, outlooking and kerygmatic. Only then can Christ's redeeming and healing agency, space and presence in the daily life of society

⁸³ For most, almost a continuous period (except for 22 months during 1996 and 1998) between 1987 and 2013, it was the PN that led the government.

⁸⁴ A sample of the varied Facebook comments can be seen in reaction to these three articles published by Newsbook.com on May 13 2019 within a few hours from each other. The reason these particular three examples are being highlighted is not because they constitute the strongest evidence to this point but because they have been published on the same day and show precisely this dynamic. I am aware of no study on this – but these dynamics are palpable to many.

<https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/13/talba-ghal-inkjesta-fscicluna-cardona-umizzi-dwar-il-vgh/>;

<https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/13/film-panama-papers-mhux-jien-li-nghid-min-ghandu-jinkwieta-muscat/>;

<https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/13/probabli-nerga-ninvestiga-abbuzi-sswali-mill-kleru-l-arcisqof-scicluna/>

⁸⁵ See Carron, *Disarming Beauty*, 60-64.

becomes a field hospital which applies the medicine of mercy.

Repressing the wound has not healed it; rather, it has festered and past pain is relived anew.⁸⁶ This is not to say that a third politico-religious escalation will resurface; some of the key features which composed the previous two are positively missing, namely, the progressive weakening of an 'attitude of control' of the Church over people (who no longer accept such control) and a changed attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities. The Church in Malta cannot (though some quarters try to) become an aggressive force waging a cultural war with society,⁸⁷ but a catalyst of a long and tortuous process of positive engagements towards healing and reconciliation. Such a process of healing and reconciliation is not simply a series of initiatives, cosmetic or pragmatic changes in ideas or structures, good as they might be. These need a conversion which leads to a **change in the status quo** which becomes "an action, *praxis* and movement"⁸⁸ towards a **genuine ecclesial repentance which heals and restores** but which, most importantly, initiate a **virtuous cycle** which transforms the Church and society.

3.3.2 Reconciliation: changing the status quo

We cannot speak of 'the' strategy of reconciliation. Apart from being a process which requires a learning experience, one cannot adopt one strategy and apply it to different socio-political situations. This does not mean that reconciliation is an abstract ideal. It is a concrete movement from a wounded past towards a better present and future.⁸⁹ Reconciliation cannot be superficial, especially when wounds and hurts are deep and widespread. It requires going to the source of woundedness:

⁸⁶ Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 22.

⁸⁷ Increasingly antagonistic, invigorated by social media, are situations whereby priests and lay persons engage in debates not necessarily of strict political nature. This ends up conflating the Church's past with an ideological antagonism fought on moral/ethical issues where a rigorist black-and-white attitude, reinforces factionalism possibly adding more layers to past problems and the engagement of culture wars fought locally.

⁸⁸ John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*, (London: SCM Press, 2002), 21.

⁸⁹ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 7-9, 105.

reconciliation cannot be less profound than the division itself. The longing for reconciliation and reconciliation itself will be complete and effective only to the extent that they reach – in order to heal it – that original wound which is the root of all other wounds: namely sin. (RP, 3)

Such a process, however, cannot become a pathway to the gallows but one of healing and a catalyst for a more just society. Basing himself on the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* of South Africa, De Gruncky and others⁹⁰ identifies four important aspects essential to a process of reconciliation. These could be a starting point for our local situation.

1. Creating space for interfacing – whether a kitchen table or a political round table or even an altar or sanctuary, a space which allows those alienated to speak and are hopefully willing to listen each other is necessary. The ‘other’, initially seen as a barrier, needs to become a conversation partner to be known and recognised as a fellow human being and not as a threat. This attitude requires an internal willingness towards an emphatic dialogue and encounter.

2. Telling the truth – a process that assumes the deceptiveness of lies leads to further mistrust. Yet truth is not easily listened to. One must differentiate between different kinds of truth: objective, factual or forensic truth; personal or narrative truth; dialogical truth; healing and restorative truth.⁹¹ Partiality, lack of a holistic vision and the particularity of perspectives, obfuscates reality and memory and truth become something different according to the particular situation in which one stands. Nonetheless an effort towards unearthing the fullness of truth en route through purification of historical memory towards *metanoia* for the sake of reconciliation of adversaries, is essential. Truth cannot be sought necessarily for legal prosecution and

⁹⁰ See De Gruncky, *Reconciliation*, 147-180; see also Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (eds.), *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenges to the Churches*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997); Schreither, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 111-126; Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, Gerard F. Powers (eds.), *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Praxis*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010). Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An ethic of Political Reconciliation*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 171-206.

⁹¹ These were identified in the final Report of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* of South Africa.

definitely not for revenge.⁹²

3. Listening to the sound of fury – vengeance or retribution is a very natural inclination and at times victims can become perpetrators, but this is a destructive fury. Paradoxically, pursuit of justice may lead to destructive vengeance but reconciliation without justice perpetuates evil. Listening to the rage of victims is part of the process of preventing further outbreaks of anger and retaliation, where forgiveness becomes a key moment in the process of reconciliation.

4. Forgiveness as wisdom and power – the difficult leap towards forgiveness is not immediate. Forgiveness may easily become a demand and a tool in the hands of the dominant to deny or justify wrongdoing. True forgiveness, like true repentance, is a painful process and does not rule out anger or just punishment. It “thrives in the tension between justice-as-punishment and justice-as-restoration”⁹³ but it rules out vengeance and malice which perpetuate a cycle of violence. Christ’s imperative to forgive seventy times seven cannot evaporate the notion of offence. This would lead us to a situation where there “is no real injury to be healed by mercy.”⁹⁴ Forgiveness becomes a ‘two-way process’ where victim and perpetrator are “able to share a common idiom of humanity, a sense of human relationship between them.”⁹⁵

Philphott further shows that reconciliation and justice are intimately linked.⁹⁶ He argues for shifting from a legalistic to a restorative understanding of justice.⁹⁷ A legalistic understanding implies that an “**equalizing** of the balance in **retributive justice (as in revenge)** is a balance of violence” where “[the] emotional make-up of individuals

⁹² Accatoli, *When a Pope asks Forgiveness*, xxi.

⁹³ Donald W. Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 32, in De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 172.

⁹⁴ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 272, quoted in De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 172.

⁹⁵ Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *Legacies of Violence: An In-depth Analysis of Two Case Studies Based on Interviews with Perpetrators of a “necklace” Murder and with Eugene De Kock*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1999), 244, in De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 176.

⁹⁶ Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace*, 48-53, 64-73.

⁹⁷ One may also say a shift from “an eye for an eye” to merciful justice.

prompts them to desire the suffering of perpetrators as a form of justice.”⁹⁸ But restorative justice builds through reconciling and “includes within it concepts of mercy and forgiveness, and carries forth the teleological potential for healing.”⁹⁹ Becoming more “akin to a covenant relationship, [reconciliation] is not a negotiated compromise, [but] a process in which there is a mutual attempt to heal and overcome enmities, build trust and relationships, and develop a shared commitment to the common good.”¹⁰⁰

According to Liechty and Clegg:

a true understanding of reconciliation [is] built on the interlocking dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth and justice, understood in part as religiously-rooted virtues, but also as basic dynamics (even when unnamed and unrecognised) of human interactions, including public life and therefore politics.¹⁰¹

But can a religious community offer anything to reconciliation? In all of this, the Church is no ordinary human community. Philpott, elaborating on the role of religion in reconciliation processes, argues favourably not only because religious bodies may offer logistical and psychological support. Furthermore, religious language¹⁰² helps victims and perpetrators in expressing their emotional transformation. Critics to this, like John Rawls, consider religion to be divisive and disrespectful and undermine reasonability, for the claims of religion are irresolvable and irreconcilable. These characteristics either stifle political communication or provoke division. But Philpott claims that religious traditions offer a ground, a method for the ethic of reconciliation that requires an ethic of engagement which is open and dialogical, respecting the separation of religion and

⁹⁸ Vern Neufeld Redekop, “Teachings of Blessing as an Element of Reconciliation: Intra and Inter-Religious Hermeneutical Challenges and Opportunities in the Face of Violent Deep-Rooted Conflict.” 129-146 in (ed.) Mathieu E. Courville, *The Next Step in Studying Religion: A Graduate’s Guide*, (London: Continuum, 2007,) 22-23.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 15.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001), 44 in De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 20.

¹⁰² But one must be attentive that religious language or symbolism is not instrumentalized. See Iacopo Scaramazzi, “Parolin: dialoghiamo con tutti, perché non con Salvini?,” *Vatican Insider*, May 29, 2019, accessed May 29, 2019, <https://www.lastampa.it/2019/05/29/vaticaninsider/il-cardinale-parolin-dialoghiamo-con-tutti-perch-non-con-salvini-KXFx1uQv9WDBHGbKhZLuCJ/pagina.html>

state and freedom.¹⁰³

The Church is entrusted with being a sacrament of reconciliation must offer something more and specific to a process of healing. For Schreiter, the Church has three resources which she can offer: First, a message and a spirituality of reconciliation; centred on Christ's redemptive mission the Christian message offers different paths towards individual reconciliation especially through the sacraments. Further theological reflection is still necessary on this level when it comes to the social dimension of reconciliation. Nonetheless, Christ's message and life are sources which the Church can offer. Second, through the power of rituals, which are not necessarily restricted to liturgical or sacramental moments, the Church can become a space of reconciliation. Third, it is the capacity to create communities of reconciliation, especially by being herself reconciled.¹⁰⁴

A legitimate concern in our local context, however, is that the Church, especially the ecclesiastical authority, is a party herself to the situation which needs reconciliation, and is blamed to have wounded its own members. Primarily, these are wounds internal to the Mystical Body of Christ; secondly, these are mirrored and exacerbated in society. In a way the ecclesial body has self-inflicted wounds. Reconciliation *ad extra* cannot be contemplated unless it is recognized that reconciliation is simultaneously necessary *ad intra*. How can the Church become a healer when she is blamed for wounding another and even her own children? It is precisely because of this that she must initiate a process which recognises these internal wounds and embarks on a journey of healing. Although it is the ecclesiastical authorities (past and present) that are blamed for the situation, it is not the present hierarchy alone that is responsible to endeavour towards restoration, but the whole ecclesial body, in becoming a wounded healer, that will make healing and restoration possible through a proper ecclesial repentance.

¹⁰³ See Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97-118

¹⁰⁴ See Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 127-130.

3.3.3 Repentance: a genuine ecclesial response which heals and restores wholeness

The Good News is that Christ, restoring the human-divine relation, opened for us a path towards human wholeness which is continually shattered by sin. Whatever the process, the aims and the trajectory that reconciliation takes, it must seek to achieve wholeness of the individuals, groups or society, whether originally construed as a victim or as a perpetrator. Essentially the work of God, reconciliation on the personal level will become a dynamic force in the process of social reconciliation, restoring moral order.¹⁰⁵

Sinful structures appear more vividly in Churches when an aura of moral superiority and purity – whether expected or induced – magnify the failures. This paradox should not however lead the ecclesial body to consider itself beyond reproach. In recognising the sinfulness of her members, the ecclesiastical structure cannot name herself as an agent of sin even if these were committed with the best of intentions. Ecclesial repentance, as the communion of saints, is a continuum of past, present and future, which while it wrestles with a past, “it does so only by presupposing a deeper continuity.”¹⁰⁶ It is out of this that ecclesial repentance of past sins makes sense. Hence ecclesial repentance requires a deep recognition of the concrete historical particularity, a reflection and a reshaping of the ecclesial identity, which calls for a break with past elements, grounded not in ecclesio-centricity, but in the Triune God.¹⁰⁷

In light of this it is pertinent to analyse the response by the Maltese ecclesiastical authorities in the light of Bergen’s definition of Ecclesial Repentance, which states that:

Ecclesial repentance is a public act. By naming what has been a ‘counter-witness and scandal’ to the Gospel, a church repents before a watching world and pledges to address this past. When a church repents, it gives an official account of its own history, identifies sin within that history, assumes responsibility, seeks to repair and heal, and make a public promise not to repeat the offence. When acts of repentance include an apology or a request for forgiveness, there is an explicitly dialogical moment in which the church awaits a response from those affected by its actions. Even if repentance is directed primarily to God, church leadership may work at

¹⁰⁵ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 111-2

¹⁰⁶ Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ See *Ibid.*, 2-5.

making this act meaningful at a local level through education, programmes or reconciliation, or dialogue.¹⁰⁸

Unfortunately, what follows will be very brief, not due to limits of time or space, but alas because there is little to speak of. It is not that the words spoken were ill intended or that the attempts at reconciliation and forgiveness by the Maltese ecclesiastical authorities were not genuine;¹⁰⁹ but regrettably these efforts were not enough. The first concrete steps towards ecclesial repentance and reconciliation happened in 1988. The first: a Pastoral Letter on the occasion of Ash Wednesday issued jointly by the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr. Mercieca, and by the Bishop of Gozo, Mgr. Cauchi.¹¹⁰ Addressing the national divisions and those aggrieved because of their ‘political opinions,’ the Bishops, ‘taking the first step’ towards reconciliation, forgave and asked forgiveness and at the same time asked the Christian Community, enlightened by the spirit of the Gospel, to offer forgiveness and ask forgiveness of God and neighbour.¹¹¹ A second attempt by Mercieca was on the feast of Christ the King of that same year when he repeated the message of offering forgiveness without expecting that the other asks to be forgiven or to expect that one humiliates oneself.¹¹²

In his memoirs Mercieca recalls however, that in the 90s he realised that these divisions were still present and that wounds were still bleeding.¹¹³ John Paul II, during his first visit to Malta,¹¹⁴ aware of all this, solemnly appealed “to put an end to everything that prevents the healing of wounds which have been left open too long.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰⁹ For a more details on above these attempts see Charles Buttigieg, *Ilkoll Ahwa fi Kristu: Ġużeppi Mercieca – Memorji*, (Malta: Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2014), 233-242.

¹¹⁰ Bishop of Gozo (1972 – 2005).

¹¹¹ “Aħna l-Isqfijiet inħossu għalhekk il-bżonn li nkunu aħna l-ewwel li nagħmlu dan il-pass li naħfru u nitolbu maħfra lil min iħoss li nqasnieh. Fl-istess ħin nistiednu u nħeggu l-komunità Nisranija kollha, sabiex flimken magħna u fl-ispirtu tal-Evangelju ta’ Kristu, noffru l-maħfra tagħna lil haddieħor u anke nitolbuha lil Allaa u lill-proxxmu tagħna.”

¹¹² “Aħna lkoll, kemm bħala individwi, familji, għaqdiet, partiti, Knisja u poplu, nitolbu maħfra lil xulxin għan-nuqqasijiet li darba jew oħra stajna għamilna wieħed lill-ieħor. Għax min mhux ħati quddiem Alla? ... Naħfru u nerggħu nħobbu lil xulxin bħal aħwa, mingħajr ma nistennew li min inħossu li naqasna jitlobna maħfra, jiskuża jew b’mod ieħor jumilja ruħu.”

¹¹³ Buttigieg, *Ilkoll ahwa fi Kristu*, 237-8.

¹¹⁴ 25 – 27 May 1990

In the name of Jesus Christ, I plead with you to make a new beginning of forgiveness and respect for one another ... may you be sustained in the difficult work of restoring mutual respect and dialogue on every level of your national and social life. A major task for all of Malta's Christians is to lay aside grudges and overcome division, whether it be in your families, your place of work, or in political life.¹¹⁵

Nine years later (1999) in an interview on local television and through the Lenten Pastoral Letter of that same year, Mercieca asked those who feel aggrieved to be courageous and humble to forgive, out of love: "if we are hurt, let us forgive, forget and accept with love the one who hurt us ... let us seek healing ... Let us start afresh. Let us pray for God's help to be capable of forgiving and asking forgiveness."¹¹⁶ It is true that the ecclesiastical authorities have asked forgiveness twice (some consider those formal apologies to be enough) but these are feeble memories very few have and there has not been a proper process of repentance necessary for healing and restoration. As has been noted, the emphasis was more on encouraging forgiveness rather than actively seeking new paths towards reconciliation.

As a direct prolongation of the *sittinijiet*, the ecclesiastical authorities shied away from pronouncing any statements which could be considered partisan.¹¹⁷ Such reluctance is also evident in the Diocesan Synod documents published in 2004. The references to the issue were very scant¹¹⁸ and to a certain extent dismissive.¹¹⁹ The Church in Malta, is called to be a redemptive and healing agent, however either because she was timid, fearful of further internal divisions, or out of guilt for her involvement,¹²⁰ failed to initiate

¹¹⁵ John Paul II, *Homily at the Granaries*, Floriana, Malta, 27 May 1990

¹¹⁶ "Jekk ahna nhossuna mweggghin, ejjew nahfru, ninsew u nilqghu bi mhabba lil min wegghagna ... ejjew infittxu l-fejqan ... Ejjew nifthu pagna gdida. Ejjew nitolbu l-ghajnuna ta' Alla biex inkunu kapaċi nahfru u nitolbu maħfra." in Buttigieg, *Ilkoll ahwa fi Kristu*, 241.

¹¹⁷ An example of this was the difficulty with which the Church faced Malta's EU accession. While the Pro-accession camp wanted a more vigorous stance in favour of accession in line with pronouncements by the Holy See and John Paul II in favour of the EU, the Pro-partnership camp would have pounced on the Church had they clearly noticed a clear sign in favour of accession.

¹¹⁸ Asking forgiveness in *Vizjoni ta' Knisja Komunjoni: Poplu b'karizmi u ministeri diversi*, 3.

¹¹⁹ "Ma jkunx pastoralment siewi f'dan iż-żmien li l-Knisja toqgħod tidhol fl-irqaqat ta' x'sar sewwasew fl-imghoddi, anke f'kuntest ta' stqarrija ta' htijiet. Din diġà saret f'termini ġeneralment xierqa" *Kultura Soċjetà Knisja: L-esperjenza ta' l-Arjopagu*, 24. Precisely the contrary is required if we want to unchain the Church from her tormented past.

¹²⁰ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 129. For similar failures see Baum and Wells eds., *The Reconciliation of Peoples*.

a proper process of reconciliation which starts with a meaningful ecclesial repentance and which identifies and names sins 'counter-witnesses and scandals' to the Gospel, pledges to address this past, and apart from assuming responsibility as an ecclesial body, seeks to reconcile and heal.

Forgiveness comes not from premature declaration of reconciliation or the imposition of terms, but in prayerful dialogue without bypassing justice, even when the institutional Church is the penitent. It is not enough for an apology to be a statement, but it must be lived out in reality. Hence why the Elders of the Canadian First Nations did not accept apologies from Church leaders but received and acknowledged them as still unfinished and in progress.¹²¹ An apology is not enough for reconciliation: questions of justice, reparations and reform must not only be proposed and implied but pursued and implemented. It requires "asking others to tell us the truth we can't see for ourselves," and hearing in that testimony both judgement and mercy.¹²²

Forgiveness is not forgetting¹²³ but a restorative act of healing, and a remembering rightly, as Volf suggests. This involves three actors: firstly, the wronged person and the way it impacts the person's life after the abuse has happened, who tries to make sense of what happened; secondly, wider society from which the wrongdoing emerged, together with the human interactions that colour the future landscapes of relationality within that society; thirdly, it also concerns the wrongdoer who we, as Christians, are called to love. Even if condemnation takes place, it must be reconciling through forgiving. One must separate the act from the deed and believe that somehow, Christ's redemptive mission, while condemning wrongdoing, atoned also the most evil of wrongdoers. Forgiveness, however, does not rectify wrongs, but revises judgement and remembers the past differently.¹²⁴ For Volf, remembering rightly may lead to personal and social healing, only when four elements are present: a positive oriented interpretative work with memory; a truthful and just public acknowledgment; a

¹²¹ Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 244-7.

¹²² Rowan Williams, Sermon to Commemorate the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 27 March 2007. in *ibid.*, 254.

¹²³ See Schreier, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 66-68

¹²⁴ Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 273

compassionate and emphatic solidarity; and when memory is a protective shield of victims not a violent sword against aggressors.¹²⁵ All this entails a purification of memory¹²⁶ which becomes a reality within repentance and confession of faults.

Purification is the “eliminating ... of all forms of resentment and violence left by the inheritance of the past,” and stands on three principles: conscience, understood as moral judgement and moral imperative; historicity: an evaluation of dynamics, motivations, acts and so on; and a paradigm change to the models of thought and actions.¹²⁷ It is not a one-of event but an on-going restoration of relationship; a wholeness received ultimately from God and from those who were wronged, the culmination of which is witnessed in Christ’s death and resurrection. In such a dynamic one becomes vulnerable and sheds control and security, for it is the other who restores and grants absolution. The Church, in being a mediator of God’s absolution of sins cannot absolve herself unilaterally, but must seek ways that are indicative of the signs of being forgiven and embody reconciliation and transformation. Wholeness comes from kenotic love and not from face-saving, self-serving and self-preserving power. This is the great temptation Christ faced on the cross, when provoked to ‘save himself’ but refused to fall for. (see Mk 15, 29-32; Mt 27, 39-44; Lk 23, 35-39) In this sense restorative justice, generally used in the development of a practical alternative to trial, sentencing and imprisonment, may apply to issues of national proportions.¹²⁸

The Church needs to “engage with those persons hurt” in a process to restore relations and become a new creation (see 2 Cor 5) reconciled and restored – repairing broken relations, with God and others, healing woundedness including that in the political

¹²⁵ Volf, *The End of Memory*, 3-35.

¹²⁶ The consciousness of ecclesial repentance within the Catholic Church received a great impetus during the pontificate of John Paul II, but the way for it had been prepared over the previous three Pontificates. Previous steps by Roncalli, Montini and even Luciani were crucial for the Mea Culpa by the Polish Pope. See: Accattoli, *When a Pope asks Forgiveness*, 15-44, 97-8.

¹²⁷ International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*, (The Holy See, 1999).

¹²⁸ Three claims in favour of restorative justice can be identified. First, it attempts to repair the rupture between aggressor and aggressed; secondly, it offers a response to the offences; thirdly, it seeks the active participation of aggressors, victims and community through dialogue, narrative and negotiations. See Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace*, 66-67.

order.¹²⁹ She must engage in new dynamics which not only prevent, but also counter what led to the *status quo*. The porous reality of the Church not only means that the Church is entangled in, and affected by, the dynamics of society of whose deficiencies no one is entirely free, but it must also be seen as an opportunity to be a healing and restorative agent for the woundedness of society – where the same wounds, paradoxically, become opportunities and instruments of reconciliation.¹³⁰ After the resurrection Christ's wounds are healed (see John 20, 24-29) but remain visible and tangible scars (v. 27), as signs of love, that become gateways to a renewal of faith, grace and mercy (vv. 28-9).

3.3.4 Regeneration: healing through a mimesis of blessing

The primary task of a restorative process is to propose and actively work towards healing and reconciliation. While on this journey, the Church's presence in the public sphere¹³¹ can be healed and reconciled moving beyond a cultural trauma. Seen as an aggressive force, the Church cannot begin a healing process unless she is undergoing a regenerative healing process herself and a purification of memory, (see Jam 2, 14-16)¹³² which makes all things new. (see Is 43, 19; Rev 21, 5)

This requires that the ecclesial community whole heartedly journeys along the narrow road of conversion towards the eschatological reconciliation. Only then will it be able to recognise its own sins, demonstrate true repentance leading to the promotion of

¹²⁹ Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 245, 260-1, 274. See Rowan Williams, *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel*, rev. ed. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 45; Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace*, 141-150; Daniel Philpott, *Reconciliation: A Catholic Ethic for Peacebuilding in the Political Order*, in Schreiter, Appleby, Powers (eds.), *Peacebuilding*, 92-124.

¹³⁰ See Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 73-76.

¹³¹ All of this requires both proposing and co-operating in the good that is around us; that the Church not only talks but acts. The tricky part is to understand how to propose a moral and spiritual authority without the temporal power and prestige which made it easy for the Church to act and preach until the recent past.

¹³² This, as I suggest, should be in embracing an ecclesiology of kenosis where her ministry and communitarian *modus*, is modelled on the Trinitarian communion.

reconciliation and a regeneration which transforms society.¹³³ Through the healing power of Christ, the Church can become a more effective agent, space and presence of reconciliation by becoming more a 'wounded healer'.¹³⁴ This transformative presence requires the Church to adopt a virtuous cycle which blesses – what Vern Neufeld Redekop calls a *Mimesis of Blessing*.

The structural and mental dynamics which need healing and reconciliation are deeply cultural and ecclesial. It would be futile and cosmetic for the Church to change but then close herself in and live a parallel life within society. The Church is missionary and exists within society. By allowing Christ's light pass through her the Church becomes an agent of change, within society and its dynamics, inspired by the Gospel. While seeking to come to terms with her internal relational dynamics and with the wounds which she has caused to her daughters and sons, she must counter those attitudes within her, and society, which are contrary to the Gospel.

Because of her missionary commission to bring the Good News to the people of our time, here and now, the Church cannot get stuck between a sinful structure which forces the Church to recede into oblivion while maintaining an imposing folkloristic façade as if it is enough to explain the role of the Church in society. Prudently but courageously the Church needs to propose and enact a culture which counters these sinful structures. At the same time she patiently breaks the walls that divide and surround her, and even more patiently builds bridges while enacting a transformative *metanoia*. This initiates the process through which she becomes agent, space and presence for healing and reconciliation and enables her to receive and offer the medicine for hurts caused and received.

[the church] must try to infuse a Christian spirit into people's mental outlook and daily behaviour, into the laws and structures of the civil community. Changes must be made; present conditions must be improved. And the transformations must be permeated with the spirit of the Gospel. (PP, 81)¹³⁵

¹³³ Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 256, 283.

¹³⁴ See Häring, *Healing and Revealing*, 83-4, Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 87-102.

¹³⁵ See also Paul VI, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam Actuositatem*, November 18, 1965.

Structures entangled in violent retaliations that take the form of a zero-sum game, enhancing collectivism and acquisitiveness, create a whirlpool of mistrust and antagonism. A structure of generosity, commonality and abundance, i.e. a structure of blessing, counters these characteristics which alas exist in the Maltese ecclesial and public square.¹³⁶ Moving out of the Girardian mimetic rivalry,¹³⁷ which enact *mimetic structures of violence*, and into *mimetic structures of blessing*¹³⁸ the “other” would not be someone to curse, fight, oppress or win over, but someone to bless, seek the well-being of, encounter, dialogue with and empower.

The violence which erupted within our society during the 20th C. has caused a mimetic structure of violence where power struggles become structurally inbuilt and each side mirrors the other. The Church in seeking reconciliation moves out of this struggle to a new life-oriented plain which is “oriented towards a mutual well-being of Self and other.”¹³⁹

But, in so far as mimetic structures of blessing are to provide a context and base for empowerment, it suggests both the receptivity to receive from others as well as the action oriented dimension of working to provide to others what they might need.¹⁴⁰

Leading by example, the way she embodies authority, through her structures and the individual leaders at the various levels, both clergy and lay, the Church cannot be self and group-serving but at the service of the common good. Only then can the Church be a witness of the Good News and become a trustworthy and socially transformative agent.¹⁴¹ The priestly *munus*, as a function which sanctifies, can be understood as one which heals and reconciles (see 1 Cor 1, 10-17) and encourages against the fear of moving out of one’s comfort zones, both in the ecclesial as well as in the wider social dynamics.

¹³⁶ See Neufeld Redekop, “Teachings of Blessing as an Element of Reconciliation,” 11.

¹³⁷ Clement, *Il Potere Crocifisso*, 29-30.

¹³⁸ These phrases have been coined by Vern Neufeld Redekop drawing conceptually on the work of René Girard.

¹³⁹ Neufeld Redekop, “Teachings of Blessing as an Element of Reconciliation”, 13.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴¹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Theological Ethics, the Churches, and Global Politics,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 35, No. 3 (2007): 380.

3.4 Prophecy as transforming presence: witnessing through encounter

Christ is Prophet not because God spoke through him but because as Son he is the perfect revealer of God, the one who knows the Father and is one with him (see Mk 11, 27; Jn 10, 30; Heb 1, 1-2). Foretold as a great prophet he is the Messiah, the anointed one who brings the Good News to the afflicted. He is the immanent Word and perfect image of the Father, in whom revelation and salvation are interchangeable and through his Resurrection his saving word and the fulfilment of revelation is actualised.¹⁴²

Christ as prophet can be a paradigm through which to understand the Church's transformative presence within the public sphere, which locally, is rapidly becoming more pluralist and cosmopolitan. A mimesis of blessing through the empowerment of the laity to own their ecclesial mission in the world, the Church's transformative presence can be an impetus for healing and reconciling within society; the servant community is called to 'rethink' herself and hence her presence in the midst of the local context. It is within such a heterogeneous reality that she is called to proclaim the Gospel and enable an encounter with Christ and respond to the needs therein.

Not democratic¹⁴³ in the lay sense of the term, the Church is called to foster democratic values¹⁴⁴ as an integral part of her effort in formation of consciences of all the baptised so that such will overflow within society. The difficulties the Church experiences today vis à vis her involvement in the public sphere are not simply the *sittinijiet*. But these events while sowing dis-unity and mistrust, have left a widespread trail of hurts, myths

¹⁴² See Ocariz, Seco and Riestra, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 146-149.

¹⁴³ Although within the Roman Catholic Church, hierarchical leaders of the Church Structure as are the Pope, Bishops, Parish priests (differently from Religious Orders) are not chosen through elections, this should not exclude a greater sense of communal discernment which favours dialogue, encounter and a breathing space for the Spirit. This would transform the ecclesial community; less hierarchical and more *pneumato-cratic*.

¹⁴⁴ Mario Toso holds that "true democracy presupposes liberty, equality, social justice and integral development for all." Mario Toso, *Prezentazione per il lettore italiano*, 7-14, in Jorge Mario Bergolio, *Noi Come Cittadini Noi Come Popolo: Verso un Bicentenario In Giustizia e Solidarietà 2010-2016*, trans. Bruno Pistocchi (Milano: Jaca Books 2013); see also Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, 35-46.

and memories that resulted from that turbulent period. Moreover, these have strengthened the deeply engrained the ecclesial and social-dynamics,¹⁴⁵ and curtail the efforts of the Church in being God's prophetic instrument in the public sphere. While adopting an ecclesiology of *kenosis*, expressed in servant leadership, the Church cannot close herself within the safety of Churches behind closed doors¹⁴⁶ expecting a transformative healing process just to happen. Outlooking and missionary the Church cannot simply point judgemental fingers at society; she is constituted of Christian communities, not 'Christian' pressure groups which propose 'faith' without kindness and respect becoming an intransigent and arrogant contraposition to a society deemed sick and without values.¹⁴⁷ Her missionary dynamism must stretch to the peripheries where the medicine of mercy is mostly needed, away from an institutional ecclesio-centrism.¹⁴⁸

Undeniably the Church in Malta has been, and still is, a pioneer in various endeavours of *diakonia*. Together with the Maltese Government and other private organisations, she collaborates on various projects which are of a social nature, such as *Dar tal-Providenza*, Caritas, St Jeanne Antide Foundation and so on. Moreover, local politicians in their personal or official role (even through government funds) are glad to offer financial aid for structural projects concerning the Church (rebuilding church parishes, restoration, decorative elements and so on). The same is done with Band Clubs, sport associations and other NGOs.¹⁴⁹ But within this 'collaborative' environment one notices that the Church struggles to converse openly within the public sphere. Her effort to foster a healthy political environment and a politics of the common good do not always go down well.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ *Supra*. Chapter 2

¹⁴⁶ "Those who erect walls end up prisoners within them." Pope Francis, La sexta interview.

¹⁴⁷ See Bianchi, *Per un'etica condivisa*, 3-6.

¹⁴⁸ See Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 138; see also *Evangelii Gaudium*, 119-121, 177-185.

¹⁴⁹ Yet the Cana Movement has had its funds reduced recently to less than half of what it used to receive from the Government and lately these funds have been re-allocated. St. Jean Antide foundation received less money (€40,000) than that allocated by the Government to rebuild a decorative street ark (up to €50,000).

¹⁵⁰ In some instances, where Government Ministers help in particular the associations of their

Yet sometimes her voice is absent, not strong enough or plainly ignored.¹⁵¹ A cause for this may be a deeply rooted idea that religious rituals and *praxis* are distinct.¹⁵² A dichotomy exists in the lives of many between *diakonia* and social ethics, love of neighbour and the common good; even to a certain point between Christ and Church.¹⁵³ This separation cannot hold: how can one help someone without asking what are the social causes which are leading to the situation? How can one truly love one's neighbour and shy away from seeking the common good through political involvement?¹⁵⁴

Politics must be understood on two levels: at the base level – a lived experience which brings persons together as citizens within a common (in the widest sense) reality in society; here the main subjects of interest are the people. Another level of politics is that understood as the governing of the *polis*. Even if the second has more decisional strength and is more powerful, it must be subordinated to the first and kept in a constant asymmetrical circularity. And therefore, when *caritas* interacts with politics, we need to see two levels: as an expression of values; and as expressed in interaction with institutional politics, intended as dialogue not as confrontation, for both are modalities to care for persons. It is from this that politics and love, and hence also Church and Politics, intertwine and find at their origin the same subject – humanity.¹⁵⁵

Many a times, when the Church enters into the technical aspects of laws, policies, economics and so on (which is the specific role of politicians), or when she outcasts a political ideology, divisions are caused. The Church, through her ecclesiastical

constituency which may be linked to Patronage.

¹⁵¹ Many suggest or imply that this would be moral or partisan intromission and that the Church should focus solely “on religion” and not “on politics/ethics.”

¹⁵² A faith journey and religiosity are not the same but may be thought to be interchangeable. Indeed, religiosity in the form of religious practices, is not necessarily linked with faith and possibly not even with journey of conversion, especially when religious practice, (like Christian Rite of Initiation) become a social practice. In a sense a disjointed experience between the Religious Sense and Faith – where Christ is missing. See Carron, *Disarming Beauty*, 77-86.

¹⁵³ See *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁵⁴ “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist.” Quote attributed to Dom Hélder Camara (1909-1999).

¹⁵⁵ See Eros Monti, *Carità Come Politica: Responsabili verso gli ultimi negli attuali scenari*, (Milano: Caritas Ambrosiana, 2005), 4-7; Paul VI, *Address to the United Nations Organisation*, October 4, 1954.

representatives,¹⁵⁶ enters into politics on a prophetic level inspiring good politics not controlling it. By avoiding the different ideological-theological alignments characteristic of the 'long 19th century'¹⁵⁷ and the political-theological alignments of the 20th C till John XXIII,¹⁵⁸ which characterised her presence in the public sphere, her contribution needs to be expressed on a more foundational level, that which promotes the dignity of persons and communal living. This, although not so powerful, is more proper to her role.¹⁵⁹ One must however be careful not to make blanket statements which indicate that the Church speaks only on values and not on technical issues. The Church offers a valid contribution to society, for example, in legislative and/or policy formation, on topics like the protection against the abuse of minors, care of persons with disability, care of persons suffering from addictions and so on.

This does not mean that the disciples of the Lord remain silent in proclaiming Him, otherwise the stones would shout out (see Lk 19, 38-40). The Church needs to continuously remind herself and the political community that the essence of politics and the *polis* is not money and power but the person in a community. "The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised." (EG, 218) It is the democratic game which has to determine the laws of the *polis*; meddling in this process the Church would decry a theocratic state by words but tempted to establish it through various means.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Not necessarily Bishops, but also clergy and members of the laity who are entrusted with particular roles within the Church.

¹⁵⁷ See Massimo Faggioli, "The Catholic Church and nationalism: The shadow of the 'long 19th century'", *La Croix International*, May 7, 2019, [Accessed May 15, 2019], <https://international.la-croix.com/news/the-catholic-church-and-nationalism-the-shadow-of-the-long-19th-century/10045>

¹⁵⁸ Particularly in respect of Communist leaders, John XXIII and then Paul VI adopted a less confrontational attitude than their predecessors. With John Paul II, the Church became more offensive in confronting communism with her encouragement of a movement inspired by solidarity. See Wiegand, *The Final Revolution*.

¹⁵⁹ See Bianchi, *Per un'etica condivisa*, 15-16.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

3.4.1 Proposing the Gospel through the Social Teaching of the Church

Participating in the life of the *polis* does not mean that the Church forms part of the mechanism of the state; unentangled from it the Church subsists freely as a prophetic and courageous Church, to proclaim and transmit the word of the Gospel.¹⁶¹ Spirituality and theology cannot be confused with politics.¹⁶² This doesn't mean that "there [isn't] a political dimension to both, just as there is a political dimension to the Gospel"¹⁶³ and indeed a great number of the Prophetic writings in the Old Testament. The Church in Malta needs to reclaim "[her] right and duty to be political as it is necessary for a prophetic Church."¹⁶⁴ This, however, needs the fruit of a prudential judgement which takes into consideration the particular reality of our nation.

It must be done beyond the political-ideological alignment,¹⁶⁵ avoiding (especially in a divided and competitive public sphere) political and/or culture wars with any particular ideology, political movement or group. The Church is neither left nor right, neither capitalist nor communist, neither liberal nor conservative (or any other polarised duopoly); the Church transcends these. Enriched by an encounter with God her proposal is incarnate; and through the lens of the Good News, she reads the signs of the times in the reality around her.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 6, 13-15.

¹⁶² The role of the Church is not to politically theologise the state, unifying State and Kingdom of God, confusing spiritual and temporal matters, but to offer the state a theology – the Gospel. See Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 115-118.

¹⁶³ Marie Dennis, Renny Golden and Scott Wright, *Oscar Romero: Reflections on His Life and Writings*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 43.

¹⁶⁴ Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 89.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 143-144.

The Gospel does not propose an ideal political system but the Kingdom of God.¹⁶⁶ This however should not distance¹⁶⁷ true democracy from the Gospel. Both are intrinsically humanistic for both bring about the fulfilment of every person in whom their common cause is found. The common cause should not fuse the roles of ecclesial institutions and those of the governing body of the *polis*, merging altar and throne, recreating the theocratic ideal or a nostalgia of a confessional state.¹⁶⁸ Rather it should facilitate a rediscovery of the essence of true democracy whereby “the Christian inspiration and the democratic inspiration recognise each other and become reconciled.”¹⁶⁹ Essential in this regards are the four cardinal principles of the Catholic Social Teaching (the principle of foundational dignity of the human person, common good, subsidiarity and solidarity) in which democracy find its fulfilment. (see EG, 222-237)

In view of what emerged in Chapter 2, these four principles can become an antidote, which the ecclesial community proposes.¹⁷⁰ Our nation requires: a respectful openness towards the **dignity of the person** and not closed social boundary which makes the other an enemy; a greater sense of **communion and subsidiarity**¹⁷¹ which puts the person at the centre of the efforts of the *polis*, not as self-sufficient and autonomous, but as dependent and in communion; a search for the **common good**, which is foundation of

¹⁶⁶ While she is not identical to the Kingdom nor can she be disarticulated from it, she awaits the eschatological moment for its actualisation. (See LG, 48) The Church “recognise[s] that the kingdom is already present in the person of Jesus and is slowly being established within man and the world through a mysterious connection with him.”(RM, 16; LG, 48-51) There exists an “utter urgency of rethinking the entire nature of the Church and its public presence in quite different, indeed kenotic, terms,” see McLean, *Introduction*, 3.

¹⁶⁷ The complete separation of the Church from politics is a sort of Platonism which believed in the infinite distance between God and the world. See Ratzinger, *Liberare la Libertà*, 40.

¹⁶⁸ “Not only does the democratic state of mind stem from the inspiration of the Gospel, but it cannot exist without it.” Here Maritain is not advocating the fusing of religious and temporal powers, but the unity of the true essence of democracy and the Gospel. See Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, 36.; see also Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 85-86.

¹⁶⁹ Still the Church, as an ecclesial body, contributes to *polis*; she is not parallel to it – in a way she functions in it but should not depend on it. Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, 16.

¹⁷⁰ By which I mean that it is not one antidote for one problem.

¹⁷¹ “This is the realm of civil society, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings, which are the first relationships to arise and which come about thanks to ‘the creative subjectivity of the citizen’”. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 185.

true peace¹⁷² not egoistic seeking self or group interests; a greater and more genuine and universal **solidarity**,¹⁷³ seeing the other as *proximus* not as enemy.¹⁷⁴

Although this may be understood in general terms, and as referring to the ecclesial body through its various offices,¹⁷⁵ it is all the lay, in being citizens, who have the role to participate in the government of the *polis*, especially those called to the vocation of politics.¹⁷⁶ Every baptised is called to contribute to the common good, towards constructing a people-nation built on “values and principles, a history, customs, language, faith, shared causes and dreams.”¹⁷⁷ This however is not done through a *political messianism* which identifies Church with one particular politico-social formula, but through the Gospel.¹⁷⁸

Christians [called to the vocation of politics] invited to take up political activity should try to make their choices consistent with the Gospel and, in the framework of a legitimate plurality, to give both personal collective witness to the seriousness of their faith by effective and disinterested service of men. (OA, 46)

¹⁷² “The common good indicates ‘the [indivisible] sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily.’” *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 164; see also EG, 217-221.

¹⁷³ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 161.

¹⁷⁴ Monti, *Carità come Politica*, 23; see also Enzo Bianchi, *L'altro siamo noi*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2010), 9-15; see also Enzo Bianchi and Massimo Cacciari, *Ama il Prossimo Tuo*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).

¹⁷⁵ The Maltese Church precludes lay people from continuing their ministry within the Church while participating actively in politics. They would have to choose one or the other. Surely due to the polarization and antagonist divisions that we associate politics with, this renders ministry difficult for some. One hopes that a healing process would someday ameliorate the situation.

¹⁷⁶ Francis emphasizes this repeatedly: “Politics, according to the Social Doctrine of the Church, is one of the highest forms of charity, because it serves the common good. I cannot wash my hands, eh? We all have to give something!” Jessica Ravitz, “The Pope: Not Just for Catholics Anymore,” CNN, September 15, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/13/us/popefrancis-non-catholic-flick/index.html> in Alynna J. Lyon, Christine A. Gustafson and Paul Christopher Manuel (eds.), *Pope Francis as a Global Actor: Where Politics and Theology Meet*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 11.

¹⁷⁷ Bergoglio, *Noi Come Cittadini Noi Come Popolo*, 47.

¹⁷⁸ See Borghesi, *Critica della Teologia Politica*, 138-144.

3.4.2 The Church's transformative presence within the public sphere¹⁷⁹

Participation within the public sphere is not easy or even straight forward; great care and awareness of social development¹⁸⁰ therein are necessary. Within our local scenario there is the urgent need to encourage and empower baptised to embark on a serious formative faith journey even on issues concerning the governing of the *polis*, and not simply on moral or ethical issues which need confronting. This cannot foster the forming of battalions ready for Holy war to defend righteousness. In light of this it must be noted that:

even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge. (EG, 102)

Locally, this need is determined by the inexorable death of *Politics of the Common Good* and the growth of populist movements, masked within quasi-nationalistic slogans or statements. These hinder efforts for social justice¹⁸¹ and harshen polarisations, racism, pessimism and fear. Threats to the Maltese democracy, these are framed in nationalistic concepts which may be summed up in the Maltese phrase *Malta l-ewwel u qabel kollox*, or *Il-Maltin l-ewwel* (First and foremost, Malta, or The Maltese come first.) Although the meaning has evolved, these are common frames¹⁸² which are re-emerging. Within these frames many frown about any criticism towards the Maltese institutions locally and internationally as treacherous and instilling negativity. At the same time, in dictatorial fashion, those who voice such criticism become 'Traitors of the People.' In the same

¹⁷⁹ Bianchi, *Per un'etica condivisa*, 19-43.

¹⁸⁰ One may highlight individualism, understood not as relational person-hood but as a self-referential indifference and apathy even towards faith. This grows further within a society which lacks a common (or simply a multitude of equal) horizon(s). Also important is the fact that the Church is becoming smaller in number and less influential, tougher with the increase of a growing plethora of ideologies and the complexity of new ethical boundaries.

¹⁸¹ Mario Toso, *Presentazione per il lettore italiano*, 8.

¹⁸² See George Lakoff above

fashion unity is encouraged but allowing little diversity; a unity understood simply as non-critical. All of this riles true democracy and insidiously grows within the fertile ground of patronage and amoral familism where many “make hay while the sun shines.” Belief in a zero-sum game and factionalism foment a defence of the indefensible. Faced with this urgency, the laity is called to breathe life back into “good and noble politics”¹⁸³ and true democracy and avoid the sin of pessimism and fear. They must remember that where faith in man – human optimism – dies, faith in God and in his omnipotence – Christian hope – is born.¹⁸⁴

Within this context such a situation the Church cannot give in to fear, pessimism and confusion, or to a black-and-white intransigent rigor. Neither should the Church hide away or fall for the lure of money which comes her way for projects (which could be a silencing tacit). The Church needs to dialogue and encounter. Christians are called to bring to the *polis* a “witnessing to the new life that springs from the encounter with Christ [whose] faith can show all its benefit to humanity, [making] life more human, more intense and more worth living.”¹⁸⁵ Recalling Benedict XVI’s words: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” (DCE, 1) It is not proselytism devoid of mercy¹⁸⁶ which attracts people to Jesus, but witness. “The problem is not when [the Church] is few in number, but when [she] becomes insignificant, salt that has lost the flavour of the Gospel – this is the problem – or lamps that no longer shed light (Mt 5:13-15).”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Pope Francis, *Video Message, Meeting of Catholic Politicians Serving the Latin American Peoples*, December 1 2017.

¹⁸⁴ Carlo Carretto, *Il Deserto nella Città*, (Milano: San Paolo, 2003), 130.

¹⁸⁵ Carron, *Disarming Beauty*, 70.

¹⁸⁶ Massimo Borghesi indicates that for Francis this “indicates zeal lacking mercy, animated more by the will to power than by a desire to communicate Christ” quoted in *What Did Pope Francis Mean By His Remarks About ‘Proselytism?’*, April 1, 2019, [Accessed April 2, 2019] <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/proselytism>

¹⁸⁷ Francis, *Meeting with Priests, Religious, Consecrated Persons and the Ecumenical Council of Churches, Rabat, Morocco*, 31 March 2019; See also Carretto, *Il Deserto nella Città*, 130; Benedict XVI, *Homily during Holy Mass for the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Aparecida, Brazil*, 13 May 2007

Many a times within ecclesiastical as well as within social circles, the other (whether an individual or a group) is perceived as enemy and opposition, which needs to be attacked for fear of losing the little power one has over material things, space or structures. A social relationality inspired by the Gospel engages in dialogue which begins with encounter¹⁸⁸ and progresses towards the person's complete development. This is not to be understood as a superficial political freedom (voting every few years) but through social and economic advancements that enable the emancipation and permit the full development of every citizen. (see PP, 6) The role of the Church is "to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit [giving] witness to the truth; to save, not to judge; to serve, not to be served." (GS, 3; PP, 13)

The emphasis needs to be put not on "countering" but on "encountering," otherwise a sense of superiority and self-righteousness would prevail. Instead of proposing the merciful face of Christ, the baptised would be proposing a static, closed, rigid and hyper-dogmatist religiosity. Within a society slipping speedily towards a confrontational¹⁸⁹ attitude, the baptised cannot aggressively foment confrontation and polarization through an aggressive black-and-white language. Not only because polarization and fragmentation are integral to the structural sin which the Church in Malta is called to heal, but also because heeding to Christ's example, the baptised, are called always to point at the Trinitarian attributes of self-giving love and openness to the other. Without an openness to encounter, integrating healthily the uncertainty which we experience even because of our incarnate reality, we become rigid and static, unable to perceive the Spirit of God¹⁹⁰ which blows where it chooses. Through baptismal anointment, the Church needs to be born anew of water and spirit and untangle herself from her rigid hyper institutionalised structures.¹⁹¹ She must allow the Spirit "to move

¹⁸⁸ "[Dialogue] must be readily conducted with all men of good will both inside and outside the Church. The Church can regard no one as excluded from its motherly embrace, no one as outside the scope of its motherly care. It has no enemies except those who wish to make themselves such." Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August 1964, 93-94. See also, Carron, *Disarming Beauty*, 48-50, 71.

¹⁸⁹ Fares and Iverigh, *Come Comunicare in una Società Polarizzata*, 222-235.

¹⁹⁰ See Jean Vanier, *Signs of the Times: Seven paths of hope for a troubled world*, trans. Ann Shearer, (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd 2013), 73 et seq.

¹⁹¹ "Of course, Jesus entrusts this work to human beings: to the apostles, to the Church.

[her] away from [her] own categories into the mysterious life in the Spirit that Jesus" offers;¹⁹² away from her dependencies and into uncharted waters led by the Spirit. (see Jn 3,6-8)

Crucial in all this is not simply the message she proclaims but also the medium through which she witnesses the good news, and that is herself. "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."¹⁹³ If that was true in the 70s how more so is this today! How can medium and message contradict each other? The message will simply be ignored. "It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world" (EN, 42; RM, 42-43) not by stubbornly closing oneself in ones' own ideas and beliefs but rather by being in social dialogue proposing a culture of encounter towards peace.¹⁹⁴ This was essential to Christ's mission who sought to save and heal even those who wanted to entrap him (like the Pharisees) seeking to convert their lives towards God.¹⁹⁵

Hence the presence of the laity in politics truly becomes the transformative presence of the Mystical body of Christ, a presence which enables dialogue and encounter to flourish. It is God's attitude first and foremost, who from the very beginning of his one-to-one meeting with Abraham, Moses, the Prophets and ultimately in the most supreme way Christ's Incarnation, encountered humanity. Only then can we approach, as trustworthy agents who heal the woundedness of a pluralist and multi-cultural society, proposing the saving and healing presence of Christ.¹⁹⁶ Otherwise, apart from

Nevertheless, in and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent and principal agent for the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world." RM, 21

¹⁹² Francis J. Moloney and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series vol. 4). (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1998), 93-94

¹⁹³ Pope Paul VI, *Address to the Members of the Consilium de Laicis* (2 October 1974), and quoted in EN, 42

¹⁹⁴ Emphasised frequently by Pope Francis. See EG, 114 *et seq*, 238-241; See also Diego Fares, *The Heart of Pope Francis: How a New Culture of Encounter is Changing the Church and the World*, trans. Robert H. Hopcke, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2015).

¹⁹⁵ Jorge Mario Bergoglio, *Open Mind, Faithful Hearts: Reflections on Following Jesus*, (New York: Cross Road Publishing Company, 2013), 3-7.

¹⁹⁶ See Häring, *Healing and Revealing*.

countering a false democracy, one would also be countering the true Christian witness.¹⁹⁷ The Church's transformative presence within a secular state founded on constructive dialogue, a spirit of values of freedom, equity and fraternity¹⁹⁸ should be an encounter with a disarming beauty.

¹⁹⁷ "Without the evangelical and the spiritual potential of a living Christianity, political judgement and political experience are ill protected against the illusions of selfishness and fear." Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, 39.

¹⁹⁸ Bianchi, *Per un'etica condivisa*, 10.

3.5 Summary

The two structural sins endemic to the Maltese scenario are wounds in the local ecclesial body which it is called to heal by becoming a community in the image and likeness of the Trinitarian community and adopting an ecclesiology of *kenosis*. In this chapter the tripartite functions of the *munera Christi*, have been used as a model through which this can be initiated.

Christ's Kingship of servant leadership opens up to the co-responsibility of clergy and laity in being missioned to the world; Christ's priesthood infuses the ecclesial body with a healing and reconciling authority becoming space and agent for such to happen; and through Christ's mode of prophetic *munus* the Church's presence in a democratic society becomes a transformative witness of the Gospel based on encounter through dialogue and not on collectivist divisions.

It, therefore, becomes evident that the much-needed healing and reconciliation on the politico-religious plane requires that the ecclesial community rethinks some of modes of her current functioning on a wider perspective. This, however, cannot be the result simply of a pragmatic pastoral plan; an ecclesial discernment, a prayerful process guided by the Spirit, is required.

Conclusion

Merciful discernment: healing and reconciling woundedness

The slow but gradual separation of Church and State, pulpit and throne, didn't make Malta a secular state; religion is intertwined with Maltese social life and religious experiences are still profound ones for many. This, however, is only one of the reasons why the politico-religious struggles are still an indelible mark in the Maltese narrative. Its lasting effects and its deeply rooted influence can also be attributed to the discursive process that started during these struggles but which inexorably perdured after. The fertile ground of Maltese social dynamics provided a foundation which propagated its effects, creating a cultural trauma within a collective which still ascribes to a narrative which describes the Church as aggressive. Wounds are still evident and many still feel aggrieved.

Within all this, two structural sins intertwine Church and politics profoundly but in a distorted manner, for sometimes the two seem to mirror each other's worst. The Church, in being prophetic, recognises this and proposes a new mode of social relationality by conforming her internal dynamics with Trinitarian communion. By adopting an ecclesiology coherent with *kenosis* the Church could 1. Journey on the path of healing and reconciliation and 2. Become a servant, healing and dynamic transformative force within society.

Compelled by her missionary zeal, the Church is constantly called to reform, motivated

by the light of an Evangelical reading of the signs of times.¹ This is not simply change according to circumstances but essentially a renewal of the Mystical Body, purified of sins caused by the fallenness of its members. Such requires a discernment which is deeply rooted in the Father's mercy. Such renewal bears fruit when it finds its "strength born of God's word, the Eucharist, and the daily presence of Christ and the power of his Spirit in our lives." (CV, 35)

Mercy is not an abstract idea. It is first and foremost the love of God which must influence individual and communitarian *praxis*.² A spirit-filled, merciful discernment is an antidote against stagnation, a process which renews and moves forward boldly. This does not consist simply in identifying a set of tasks or a road map towards obtaining specified goals. It must refer to the interior impulse within the community "which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity." (EG, 261)

The journey between the source of the woundedness and a *praxis* which counters and seeks to heal and reconcile is not straightforward. Charting the way forward cannot be done through strategic planning; it requires a process led by the Spirit of God which opens the eyes, minds and hearts of the community to the will of God. A process of ecclesial and communal discernment³ is necessary to seek "that which the Spirit of God is suggesting to the Church and the way that the Spirit is indicating"⁴ seeking the knowledge of God's will. It is from a renewed *ecclesia*, born anew of and by the Spirit that healing and reconciliation can become possible and a tangible reality. This is not

¹ "A church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples [which] has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy." (EG, 24)

² "It can only be relational [and] changes all subjects involved; it is not subject to doctrinal definition; is practical and experimental; it is always transcendent, in the sense that every act of mercy has to do with the divine. [M]ercy would change the church's *praxis* beginning to heal also the wounds I mentioned earlier, beginning with a corrective to the understanding of Christian practices and to the evaluation of them only in terms of correct application of a correct theory." Cf. Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship*, 147-8.

³ Possibly one which involves both Maltese Dioceses, see also Appendix 15 for possible steps in Communal Discernment.

⁴ Emmanuel Agius and Joseph Galea Curmi, "Family Ministry: The Interface between Church Doctrine and Pastoral Care," *Melita Theologica* 65, no. 1 (2015): 18.

simply a repentance, a re-issuing of pardon and a request of forgiveness: it is a process.

First of all, it must be a process (mostly internal) whereby the Church acknowledges, listens and accepts. It must acknowledge that there is a need of healing. It must listen to the woundedness through an encounter based on dialogue which seeks the truth and the purification of memory. Then this woundedness is accepted and acknowledged as a reality which requires healing. Efforts towards reconciling those estranged and healing of memory need to be concretised, even through profound liturgical expression of penitence and forgiveness. This expression may become a source for the rebuilding of communion. A conversion of attitude which leads to a renewed *praxis* (and hence also structure) becomes the basis of a coherent ecclesial life, where necessary pruning and unlearning become a *sine qua non*. The essence of being *ecclesia* is community life conformed to the Mystical body of Christ where the Liturgy, in all its forms, becomes the expression of the whole Body as pilgriming People of God and a merciful presence.

Secondly, a restorative process (internal but also missionary) is needed which becomes genuine repentance and conversion. As a community (even beyond the ecclesial community) the causes of the common burden of history must be recognised, indeed as common. It is from this that a genuine repentance must emerge. But if this process towards healing and reconciliation is not the result of conversion, this would lead to more mistrust and further antagonism, causing more anguish. A restorative process requires that a conversion, in attitude and *praxis*, becomes not only visible but authentic. Removing obstacles which impede healing and reconciliation cannot be superficial. Further studies into the sociological, cultural and political Maltese reality would help the Church in discerning how to map this process.

Beyond reconciliation and the healing of memory, for the Church to develop into a prophetic community of faith actively engaged with the signs of the times, necessitates fresh approaches to the formation of children, adolescents and adults, whereby Gospel values become blessings, entry points and points of encounter with true democracy. Here a greater impetus towards more ecclesial co-responsibility, maturity in faith, a better understanding and appreciation of the particular identity of one's vocation and that of others becomes fundamental, including the vocation for political participation. It

calls for the formation of lay people for virtuous leadership in the major spheres of contemporary life, especially corporate, political, professional and community spheres.

Moreover, in a context of amoral familism and patronage, an enlarged vision of the individual and family's role in Church and society is required, so that the family becomes the seedbed of a faith that does justice and promotes civic responsibility. This must be mirrored in parish and diocesan life through structures and practices which allow for differences, charisms and gifts to flourish in life-giving and healing and redeeming experiences (even for society at large) and not grounds for further division. Such must necessarily redefine the priorities and accordingly the distribution of all resources.

Ultimately, it is hoped that we as a Holy People of God, with God's grace and believing in the enlightenment of the Spirit, "discern and reform [towards a] patient conversion through a renewed humble and joyful dependence on God's mercy."⁵

⁵ Austen Ivereigh, "To Discern and Reform: The 'Francis Option' for Evangelizing a World in Flux," *The Way* 57, no. 4 (October 2018): 12-13.

Bibliography

Universal Church Documents, Papal Documents and Papal Speeches¹

Benedict XVI. Encyclical: *Deus Caritas Est*, [December 25, 2005]

—. Homily: Holy Mass for the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Aparecida, Brazil, [May 13, 2007]

Francis. Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium*, [November 24, 2013]

—. Bull of Indiction: *Misericordiae vultus*, [April 11, 2015]

—. Address: Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, [October 17, 2015]

—. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Amoris Laetitia*, [March 19, 2016]

—. Video Message: Meeting of Catholic Politicians Serving the Latin American Peoples, [December 1, 2017]

—. Address: *Meeting with the Bishops of Chile during Apostolic trip to Chile*, [January 16, 2018]

—. Letter: *Letter to the People of God*, [August 20, 2018]

—. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Christus Vivit*, [April 2, 2019]

¹ Unless otherwise stated all documents in this category have been accessed from the website of the Holy See (www2.vatican.va).

- . Homily: *Holy Mass Concluding the Summit on the Prevention of Abuse*, [February 23, 2019]
 - . Address: Meeting with Priests, Religious, Consecrated Persons and the Ecumenical Council of Churches, Rabat, Morocco, [March 31, 2019]
- International Theological Commission. *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*, [December, 1999]
- . Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, [March, 2018]
- John Paul II. Apostolic Exhortation: *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, [December 2, 1984]
- . Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Christifideles Laici*, [December 30, 1988]
 - . Homily: Holy Mass at the Granaries, Floriana Malta, [May 27, 1990]
 - . Encyclical: *Redemptoris Missio*, [December 7, 1990]
 - . Apostolic Exhortation: *Pastore Dabo Vobis*, [March 15, 1992]
 - . Apostolic Letter: *Novo Millenio Ineunte*, [January 6, 2001]
- John XXIII. Declaration: *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, [October 11, 1965]
- Paul VI. Encyclical: *Ecclesiam Suam*, [6 August 1964]
- . Address: Address to the United Nations Organisation, [October 4, 1964]
 - . Decree: *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, [November 18, 1965].
 - . Declaration: *Dignitatis Humanae*, [December 7, 1965]
 - . Audience: Wednesday General Audience talk [June 8, 1966]
 - . Encyclical: *Populorum Progressio*, [March 26, 1967]
 - . Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, [December 8, 1975]
 - . Apostolic Letter: *Octogesima Adveniens*, [May 14, 1971]
 - . Address: Address to the Members of the *Consilium de Laicis* [October 2, 1974],
- Pius IX. Dogmatic Constitution: *De Ecclesia* [July 18, 1870]
- accessed from: <https://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V1.HTM#6>.

- Pius X. Encyclical Letter: *Pascendi dominici gregis* [September 8, 1907]
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, [June 29, 2004]
- Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution: *Lumen Gentium*, [November 21, 1964]
- . Pastoral Constitution: *Gaudium et spes*, [December 7, 1965]
- Secretariat of State. "Agreements of the Holy See." The Holy See. Accessed April 25, 2019.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/index_concordati-accordi_en.htm

Local Church Documents

- Archdiocese of Malta. Document of the Diocesan Assembly Working Groups Presentations, [2018]
- . Document of the Diocesan Synod: *Kultura, Soċjetà, Knisja: L-Esperjenza ta' L-Arjopagu*, [2003]
- . Document of the Diocesan Synod: *Vizjoni ta' Knisja Komunjoni: Poplu b'Karizmi u Ministeri Diversi*, [2003]
- . Research: *Research on Faith*, [2018]
- Gonzi, Michael. Circular: Ċirkulari 227 – Istruzzjoni lill-Konfessuri, [February 28 1961]
- . Circular: Ċirkulari tal-Arcisqof (229a), Kundanna tal-Gazzetti tal-MLP, [May 26, 1961]
- . Directive: Instructions to Confessors regarding the elections [January 30, 1962]
(Unconfirmed document)
- Gonzi, Michael, and Giuseppe Pace. Pastoral Letter: Lent Pastoral Letter February 26 1956.
- . Pastoral Letter: Lent Pastoral Letter [March 6, 1960]

—. Pastoral Letter: Pre electoral Pastoral Letter [January 25, 1962]

—. Pastoral Letter: Pastoral Letter on Laicism [June 21, 1963]

—. Pastoral Letter: Pre electoral Pastoral Letter [March 7, 1966]

Books and journals

Aarelaid-Tart, Aili. *Cultural Trauma and Life Stories*. Helsinki: Kikimora Publications. 2006.

Abela, Anthony M. "Shaping a National Identity: Malta in the European Union." *International Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 4 (2005): 10-27.

Accattoli, Luigi. *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness: The Mea Culpa's of John Paul II*. Translated by Jordan Aumann. Boston: Pauline Books, 1998.

Agius, Emmanuel, Joseph Galea Curmi. "Family Ministry: The Interface between Church and Doctrine and Pastoral Care." *Melita Theologica* 65, no. 1 (2015): 11-41.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. *Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power*. Bloomsbury Academic: London, 2011.

—. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012.

Alexander, Jeffrey C., Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkley, California: University of California, 2004.

Alynnna J. Lyon, Christine A. Gustafson, and Paul Christopher Manuel, eds. *Pope Francis as a Global Actor: Where Politics and Theology Meet*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Ana Ljubojević, Mia Jerman, Kosta Bovan. "Cultural Trauma Set in Stone? The Case of Shelling of Dubrovnik." *Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. 1-2 (2017): 197-219.

Apor, Balázs. "The 'Secret Speech' and its Effect on the 'Cult of Personality' in Hungary." *Critique* 35, no. 2, (2007): 229-247.

Aschenbrenner, George A. *Quickening the Fire in Our Midst*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.

Aydin, Ciano. "How to Forget the Unforgettable? On Collective Trauma, Cultural

- Identity, and Mnemotechnologies ." *Identity* 17, no. 3 (2017): 125-137.
- Azzopardi, Andrew, ed. *Young People and the Festa in Malta*. Imqabba, Malta: Society of St. Mary and King George V Band Club, 2015.
- Azzopardi, Anthony. *Il-Qawmien tal-Ħaddiem Malti: Storja tal-Partit Laburista, It-tieni Volum*. Malta: Dipartiment tat-Tagħrif Partit tal-Ħaddiema, 1986.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs Von. *Life Out of Death*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.
- Bansfield, Edward C. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958.
- Beal, John P., James A. Coriden, and Thomas J. Green, eds. *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2000.
- Benedict XVI. *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008.
- BenEzer, Gadi. "Trauma, Culture, and Myth: Narratives of the Ethiopian Jewish Exodus." In *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Mark Barad, Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, 382-402. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007.
- Bergen, Jeremy M. *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Past*. London: T&T Clark International, 2011.
- Bergolio, Jorge Mario. *Noi Come Cittadini Noi Come Popoli: Verso un Bicentenario In Giustizia e Solidarietà 2010-2016*. Translated by Bruno Pistocchi. Milano: Jaca Books. 2013.
- . *Open Mind, Faithful Hearts: Reflections on Following Jesus*. Translated by Joseph V. Owens. New York, NY: Cross Road Publishing Company. 2013.
- Bianchi, Enzo. *La Parrochia*. Magnano: Qiqajon, 2004.
- . *L'Altro Siamo Noi*. Torino: Einaudi, 2010.
- . *Per un'etica condivisa*. Torino: Einaudi, 2009.
- Bianchi, Enzo, and Massimo Cacciari. *Ama il Prossimo Tuo*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011.
- Bobo, Lawrence, and Vincent L. Hutchings. 1996. "Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer's Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context." *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 6 (Dec., 1996): 951-972.
- Boissevain, Jeremy. *A Village in Malta*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

- . *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1974.
- . *Saints and Fireworks: Religion and Politics in Rural Malta*. Valletta: Progress Press, 1993.
- Borghesi, Massimo. *Critica della teologia politica: Da Agostino a Peterson - a fine dell'era costantiniana*. Genova: Maretti 1820, 2016.
- Bronkhorst, Daan. *Truth and Reconciliation: Obstacles and Opportunities for Human Rights*. Amsterdam: Amnesty International, 1995.
- Buttigieg, Charles. *Ġużeppi Mercieca*. Valletta: Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2017.
- . *Ilkoll Ahwa fi Kristu: Ġużeppi Mercieca - Memorji*. Valletta: Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2014.
- Cahill, Lisa Sowle. "Theological Ethics, the Churchs, and Global Politics." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 35, No. 3 (2007): 377-399.
- Canetti, Daphna, Gilad Hirschberger, Carmit Rapaport, Julia Elad-Strenger, Tsachi Ein-Dor, Shifra Rosenzveig, Tom Pyszczynski, Stevan E. Hobfoll. "Collective Trauma From the Lab to the Real World: The Effects of the Holocaust on Contemporary Israeli Political Cognitions." *Political Psychology* 39, no. 1 (2018): 3-21.
- Carretto, Carlo. *Il Deserto Nella Città*. Milano: San Paolo, 2003.
- Carron, Julian. *Disarming Beauty: Essays on Faith, Truth and Freedom*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2017.
- Cassar, Anton. *Meta l-Għawdxin Kienu Mxewxa*. Malta: SKS, 1982.
- Cassiday, Julie A., and Emily D. Johnson. "Putin, Putiniana and the Question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88, no. 4 (October 2010): 681-707.
- Chenu, Marie D, and Mauro Pesce. *La fine del'era costantiniana*. Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013.
- Cipek, Tihomir. "The Spectre of Communism Is Haunting Croatia: The Croatian Right's Image of the Enemy." *Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. 1-2 (2017): 150-169.
- Clément, Olivier. *Il Potere Crocifisso: Vivere la fede in un mondo pluralista*. Translated by Laura Marino. Magnano: Qiqajon, 1999.
- Congar, Yves. *Chiesa e Mondo: Nella Prospettiva del Vaticano II*. Napoli: L.E.R., 1969.
- Cremona, Vicki Ann. "When the Saints Come Marching Out: The Cultural Playing of a Maltese Festa." *Themes in Theatre* 8, (2014): 181-199.

- Debattista, André. "Centred in self yet not unpleased to please." In *Public Life in Malta II: Essays on Governmance, Politics and Public Affairs in the EU's Smallest Member State*, edited by Mario Thomas Vassallo and Carmel Tabone, 25-51. Malta: Department of Public Policy, University of Malta, 2017.
- Delia, Emanuel P. *Catholic Social Teaching, Economic Thought and Four Hundred Thousand Maltese*. Malta: APS Bank, 2010.
- Dennis, Marie, Renny Golden, and Scrott Wright. *Oscar Romero: Reflections on His Life and Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Diacono, Ian. "Emotions and Religiosity: A Psychological Investigation of Participants' Experience in the Procession of 'Our Lady of Sorrows'." B.Psy, (Hons.) diss., University of Malta, 2019.
- Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2002.
- Eyerman, Ron, Jeffrey C. Alexander, Elizabeth Butler Breese eds. *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering*. London: Paradigm, 2013.
- Eyerman, Ron, Todd Madigan, Magnus Ring. "Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory and the Vietnam War." *Croatian Political Science Review* 54, nos. 1-2 (2017): 11-31, 2017.
- Eyerman, Ron. "Cultural Trauma: Emotion and Narration." In *Oxford Handbooks of Cultural Sociology*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ronald N. Jacobs, and Smith Philip, 564-579. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Eyerman, Ron. "Jeffrey Alexander and the Cultural Turn in Social Theory." *Thesis Eleven* 79, (November 2004): 25-30.
- Faggioli, Massimo. *Catholicism and Citizenship: Political Cultures of the Church in the Twenty-First Century*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017.
- Fares Diego, Austen Iverigh. "Come Comunicare in una Società Polarizzata." *Civiltà Cattolica* 4047, (2/16 febbraio 2019): 222-235.
- Fares, Diego. *The Heart of Pope Francis: How a New Culture of Encounter is Changing the Church and the World*. Translated by Robert H. Hopcke. New York, NY: Crossroad, 2015.
- Farrugia, Charles J., ed. *Sicut Lilium: Devozzjoni u Ritwali tul is-Sekli*. Imqabba, Malta: Soċjetà Muzikali Madonna tal-Ġilju, 2012.
- Farrugia, Max. *Enrico Dandria: Qassis, Politiku, Patrijott*. Malta: Kite, 2017.

- Ganado, Herbert *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*. Vol. 1. 4 vols. Malta: Self-published, 1977.
- . *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*. Vol. 4. 4 vols. Malta: Self published, 1977.
- Gregory Baum, Harold Wells eds. *The Reconciliation of Peoples Challenges to the Churches*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Grima, Adrian. "Fashioning' the Maltese Family." *Civil Society Project - Phase 2*. EDRC, University of Malta. Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence. 2006.
- Gruchy, John W. De. *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*. London: SCM Press, 2002.
- Hadjadj, Fabrice. *The Resurrection: Experience Life in the Risen Christ*. Translated by Michael J. Miller. Paris: Magnificat, 2016.
- Häring, Bernard. *Healing and Revealing: Wounded Healers Sharing Christ's Mission*. Slough: St Paul Publications, 1984.
- Henderson, Ernest F. *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1910.
- Hilda, Lee. *Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development*. Malta: Progress Press, 1976.
- Hirschberger, Gilad. 2018. "Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning." *Frontiers in Psychology* 9, (2018). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01441>.
- Holland, Joe. *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age 1740-1958*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003.
- Ivereigh, Austen. 2018. "To Discern and Reform: The 'Francis Option' for Evangelising a World in Flux." *The Way* 57, no. 4 (October 2018): 9-24.
- Koster, Adrianus. *Prelates and Politicians in Malta: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress (1800-1976)*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984.
- Lakoff, George. *The ALL NEW Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2014.
- . *The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to Your Brain and its Politics*. London: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Leahy, Brendan. 2008. "Christ Existing as Community: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Notion of Church." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 73, (2008): 32-59.
- Liwak, Adam. 2017. "Secularisation and Church State Relations: Towards a Typology." *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 30, no. 3-4 (2017): 176-201.

- Longrigg, Clare. *Boss of Bosses: How Bernardo Provenzano Svaed the Mafia*. London: John Murray, 2008.
- Maritain, Jacques. *Christianity and Democracy*. Translated by Doris C. Anson. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011.
- Mintoff, Dom. *Il-Kalvarju tal-Ħaddiem Malti*. Malta: n.d, 1964.
- Mitchell, Jon P. *Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- . "An Island in between: Malta, Identity and Anthropology." *South European Society and Politics* 3, no. 1 (1998): 142-149.
- . "The nostalgic construction of community: Memory and social identity in Urban Malta." *Ethnos* 63, no. 1 (1998): 81-101.
- Moloney, Francis J., and Daniel J. Harrington,. *The Gospel of John*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Monti, Eros. *Carità Come Politica: Responsabili verso gli altri negli attuali scenari*. Milano: Caritas Ambrosiana, 2005.
- Neufeld Redekop, Vern. "Teachings of Blessing as an Element of Reconciliation: Intra and Inter-Religious Hermeneutical Challenges and Opportunities in the Face of Violent Deep-Rooted Conflict." In *The Next Step in Studying Religion: A Graduate's Guide*, edited by M. Courville, 129-146. London: Continuum, 2007.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. New York: Image Doubleday, 2010.
- Oakley, Francis. "Obedience and the Church's Teaching Authority: The Burden of the Past." In *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, edited by Taylor, Charles, Jose Casanova, George F. McLean, 53-70. Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012.
- Ocáriz, Fernando B., José Antonio Riestra, Lucas F. Mateo Seco. *The Mystery of Jesus Christ: A Christology and Soteriology Textbook*. Translated by Michael Adams and James Gavigan. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011.
- Philpott, Daniel. *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Pirotta, Joseph M. *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964* . Vol. 1. 4 vols. Valletta: Studia

- Editions, 1987.
- . *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*. Vol. 2. 4 vols. Valletta: Studia Editions, 1991.
- . *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*. Vol. 3. 4 vols. Valletta: Studia Editions, 2001.
- . *Fortress Colony: The Final Act 1945-1964*. Vol. 4. 4 vols. Valletta: Midsea Books, 2018.
- Radcliffe, Timothy. *Take the Plunge: Living Baptism and Confirmation*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*. Translated by Brian McNeil. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005.
- . *Liberare la Libertà: Fede e Politica nel Terzo Millenio*. Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2018.
- Rosetti, Stephen J. *Why Priests are Happy: A Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2011.
- Roudomentof, Victor. "Collective Memory and Cultural Politics: An Introduction." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 35, (Summer 2007): 1-16.
- Rózycka-Tran, Joanna, Paweł Boski, and Bogdan Wojciszke. "Belief in a Zero-Sum Game as a Social Axiom: A 37-Nation Study." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 46, no. 4 (2015): 525-548.
- Rush, Osmond. "Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II." *Theological Studies* 74 no. 4 (2013): 785-803.
- Sant Cassia, Paul. "Tradition, Tourism and Memory in Malta." *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 5, no. 2 (1999): 247-263.
- Scannone, Juan Carlos. "Pope Francis and the Theology of the People." *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (2016): 118-135.
- Schreiter, Robert J. *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*. Maryknoll, Ny: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Schreiter, Robert J., R. Scott Appleby, Gerard F. Powers eds. *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics and Praxis*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010.
- Sciavone, Mario. *L-Elezzjonijiet f' Pajjiżna: Fl-Isfond Storiku (1800-2013)*. Malta: PIN, 2013.
- Six-Hohenbalken, Maria. "May I be a sacrifice for my grandchildrend - Trnasgenerational transmission and women's narratives of the Yezidi ferman." *Dialectical Anthropology* 42, no. 2 (2018): 1-23.
- Sperry, Len. 2010. "Understanding Pyschology's Contribution to Priestly Formation:

- Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow." *Seminary Journal* 16, no.1 (2010): 13-21.
- Taylor, Charles, José Casanova, George F. McLean eds. *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*. Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012.
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Tota, Ana Lisa. "Public Memory and Cultural Trauma." *Javnost – The Public* 13 no. 3, (2006): 81-94.
- Vanier, Jean. *Signs of the Times: Seven Paths of Hope for a Troubled World*. Translated by Ann Shearer. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2013.
- Volf, Miroslav. *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006.
- Volkan, Vamik D. "Transgenerational Transmission and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity." *Group Analysis* 34, no. 1 (2001): 79-97.
- Vollhardt, Johanna Ray. "Collective Victimisation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict*, edited by Linda R. Tropp, 136-157. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Wiechelt, Shelly A., and Jan Gryczynski. "Cultural and Historical Trauma among Native Americans." In *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research*, by Jerrold Brandell, Shoshana Ringel, 191-222. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012.
- Wiegel, George. *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism*. New York: Oxford, 1992.
- Williams, Rowan. *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002.
- Young, Allan. "Bruno and the Holy Fool: Myth, Mimesis, and the Transmission of Traumatic Memories." In *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, Mark Barad, 339-362. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Zaffarese, Andrea. "Co-Responsibility in Maltese Parish Communities in the light of Evangelii Gaudium." S.Th.D. diss., University of Malta, 2016.

Online sources

- Borg, Nicole. “‘Probabbli nerga’ ninvestiga abbuži sesswali mill-kleru’ – L-Arcisqof Scicluna.” *Newsbook*, May 13, 2019, <http://www.newsbook.com.mt>
- Caruana, Claire. “Mass attendance set to collapse in years to come.” *Times of Malta*, January 27, 2019, <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20190127/local/mass-attendance-set-to-collapse-in-the-years-to-come.700305>
- Elezzjoni Malta. “Jghajtu Mintoff Mintoff fil-Knisja ta' Bormla – 2012.” YouTube video, August 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xhwoqfx2n58>
- Faggioli, Massimo. “Asymmetric Culture War in the Church of Francis.” *Commonweal Magazine*, January 26, 2016, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/asymmetric-culture-war-church-francis>
- . “From Collegiality to Synodality: Pope Francis’s Post-Vatican II Reform.” *Commonweal Magazine*, November 23 2018, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/collegiality-synodality>.
- . “The Catholic Church and nationalism: The shadow of the 'long 19th century'.” *La Croix International*, May 7, 2019, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/the-catholic-church-and-nationalism-the-shadow-of-the-long-19th-century/10045>
- Galea, Beppe. “Kurt Farrugia ddejqu l-kelma ‘tradituri’ għall-MEPs Nazzjonalisti,” *Newsbook*, May 11 2019, <https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/11/filmat-kurt-farrugia-ddejqu-l-kelma-tradituri-ghall-meps-nazzjonalisti/>
- Hodgens, Eric. “Catholic Culture Wars,” *La Croix International*, January 29, 2019, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/catholic-culture-wars/9338>
- . “Catholic governance – a challenge for improvement,” *La Croix International*, April 8, 2019, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/catholic-governance-a-challenge-for-impr>

ovement/9846

LaSexta.com. "El papa Francisco reflexiona sobre inmigración con una concertina en sus manos: "El mundo se olvidó de llorar." Online video, March 31, 2019, https://www.lasexta.com/programas/salvados/mejores-momentos/el-papa-francisco-reflexiona-sobre-inmigracion-con-una-concertina-en-sus-manos-el-mundo-se-olvido-de-llorar-video_201903315ca116700cf2fb2ce3697a3f.html

Pentin, Edward. "What Did Pope Francis Mean By His Remarks About 'Proselytism?'" *National Catholic Register*, April 1, 2019, <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/proselytism>

Rai. "Che tempo che fa – Andrea Camilleri – 28/10/2018, 2018." Online video, October 28, 2018, <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2018/10/Andrea-Camilleri---28102018-de8eace9-844c-426c-a4c2-4f625780f5c0.html>

Ruggieri, Giuseppe. "La condanna dei comunisti del 1949." *Treccani*, Accessed September 12, 2018. http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/la-condanna-dei-comunisti-del-1949_%28Cristiani-d%27Italia%29/

Scaramazzi, Iacopo. "Parolin: dialoghiamo con tutti, perché non con Salvini?," *Vatican Insider*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.lastampa.it/2019/05/29/vaticaninsider/il-cardinale-parolin-dialoghiamo-con-tutti-perch-non-con-salvini-KXfx1uQv9WDBHgBKHZLuCJ/pagina.html>

Schemel, George J., and Judith A. Roemer. "The 7 essential elements of Communal Discernment." ESDAC. Accessed May 26, 2019, <http://www.esdac.net/The-7-essential-elements-of.html?lang=fr>

Schiwager, Christoph. "Filmat: Panama Papers: Mhux jien li ngħid min għandu jinkwieta – Muscat." *Newsbook*, May 13, 2019, <https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/13/filmat-panama-papers-mhux-jien-li-nghid-min-ghandu-jinkwieta-muscat/>

—. "Talba għal inkjesta f'Scicluna, Cardona, u Mizzi dwar il-VGH." *Newsbook*, May 13,

2019,

<https://www.newsbook.com.mt/artikli/2019/05/13/talba-ghal-inkjesta-fscicluna-cardona-u-mizzi-dwar-il-vgh/>

Sweeney, Michael. "Beyond Personal Piety: The Laity's Role in the Church's Mission,"

Newsbook, February 28, 2019,

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/beyond-personal-piety>

The New York Times. "Malta Archbishop Removes Interdict." September 24, 1964,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1964/09/24/archives/malta-archbishop-removes-interdict.html>.

Times of Malta. "The Epidemic of Loneliness." May 9, 2019.

<https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20190510/editorial/the-epidemic-of-loneliness.709544>

Vella, Matthew. "Silence is not an option | Mgr. Scicluna." *MaltaToday*, November 11, 2013,

<https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/interview/31362/silence-is-not-an-option-mgr-charles-scicluna-20131111#.XMIJg-gzaM8>

Appendices

1. Examples from history of the relationship between the Church and Maltese society

Source: Gellel, A., & Sultana, M. (2008). *A language for the Catholic Church in Malta. Melita Theologica*, 59(1), 21-36.

Historical Period	Use of the Past	Creation of local Mythology/legends	Vicinity to the population
Medieval Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Catacombs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of the legend about Paul's stay in Malta; • the miraculous interventions by St. Agatha and St. Paul to save the <i>Civitas</i> (Mdina) from Muslim incursions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaving the main <i>Civitas</i> and moving near the sparse rural populations; • establishment of parishes
Period of the Knights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the Pauline traditions with the construction and embellishment of Churches on places connected with St. Paul's stay in Malta; • use of Byzantine medieval rock-hewn chapels for the propagation of cults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and propagation of the Pauline myth; • the various myths related to the 1565 Great Siege of Malta; • reconstruction of the Norman liberation of Christians in medieval times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of an identity at local village level through parish and patron saints; • contribution to the development of social and political life the parish (through, for instance, festas and confraternities)
French Rule		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lachrymating effigy of St. Paul at Rabat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership role of the clergy in the revolts against the French; • the mediating role of Bishop Labini

<p>British rule</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on St. Paul's conversion of the islands; ii. emphasis on the heroic Christian character of the Maltese, especially during the 1565 Great Siege 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis and reconstruction of the Norman conquest of the islands and liberation of Christians; • the advancement of the hypothesis of the continuous existence of the Church in Malta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mediating role of the ecclesiastical authorities with the British rulers; • the establishment of philanthropic institutions by religious or trusted to religious
---------------------	--	---	---

2. Composition of the 1921 Senate and Legislative Assembly

Source: Schiavone, *L-Elezzjonijiet F'Pajjizna*, 92-105.

Elections were held between October 5 and 6. For these elections Malta was divided in two Electoral Districts for the senate and eight for the Assembly.

Senate

Party	Votes	%	Seats
Unione Politica Maltese	1,611	57.9	4
Malta Labour Party	598	21.5	2
Constitutional Party	553	19.8	1
Independent	18	0.6	-

Mgr. Panzavecchia was elected on behalf of the UPM from the 2nd district with 487 first count votes; Mgr. Gonzi was elected on behalf of the MLP also from the same district with 127 first count votes (quota: 223).

Legislative Assembly

Party	Votes	%	Seats
Unione Politica Maltese	7,999	39	14
Constitutional Party	5,183	25.3	7
Malta Labour Party	4,742	23.1	7
Partit Demokratiku Nazzjonali	2,465	12	4
Independent	86	0.4	-

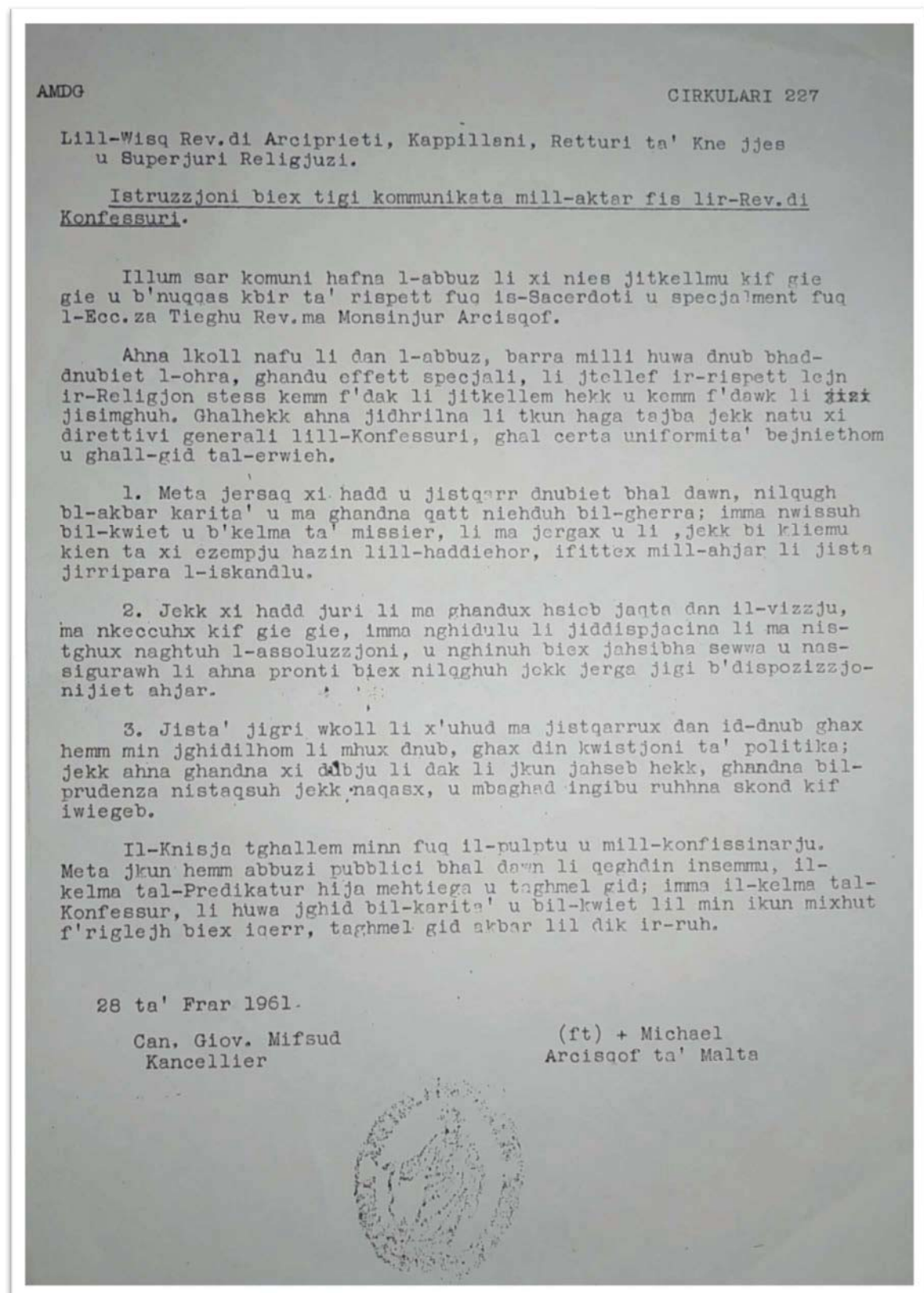
Rev. Enrico Dandria was elected on behalf of UPM from the 2nd district with 601 first count votes (quota 480); Can Carmelo Bugelli with 491 first count votes (quota 569) on the 4th district; Mgr. Francesco Ferris with 622 first count votes (quota 510) from the 7th District; and Mgr. Alfonso Maria Hili with 377 first count votes (quota 559) from the 8th district.

4. Jubilant poster by PN

Source: Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 113.



5. Circular 227: Instructions for confessors



6. Circular 229a censuring the MLP newspapers as reported in *Lehen is-Sewwa*



7. Reply to censorship in *Il-Helsien*, May 31 1961



8. Directives to confessors before and after the elections

Excerpt from Koster, *Prelates and Politicians*, 271.

DIRECTIVES TO CONFESSORS

The following (hitherto unpublished) directives were given to the clergy on 30th January, 1962.¹

Directives to confessors regarding the forthcoming political elections

1. Considering the present circumstances, there is a grave obligation on every person, capable of voting, to vote.
2. Any party which is socialist and hostile to the Church and which includes in its programme principles contrary to God and the Church, cannot, under pain of mortal sin, be voted for by a Catholic. This is normal Catholic moral theology.
3. Do not say publicly or even in confession that it is a mortal sin to vote for Mintoff or the Malta Labour Party, but say rather: according to the normal principles of moral theology, it is grave sin to vote for a party hostile to the Church.
4. If a penitent admits that he will not vote for a party hostile to the Church but cannot be persuaded to vote for other parties, one can suggest to him that at least he votes for individual candidates in whom he trusts, independently of the parties to which they belong. If he does not accept this suggestion, the confessor can absolve him and leave him in his invincible ignorance.
5. When one considers that the directives of the Diocesan Gunta are very important in the forthcoming elections, confessors must recommend the obeying of these directives to their penitents, especially after their approval by His Grace the Archbishop.
6. It should be explained to the people that anyone who intends to vote for a party hostile to the Church and who purposely leaves his confession till after the elections with the intention of going to confession after having committed his sin, will render his disposition and therefore the absolution doubtful. He will also be betraying the Church and will be an accomplice in all the harm which that party causes by following its declared socialist principles.
7. Finally all priests and confessors should take every priestly opportunity to recommend to all the faithful humble, trusting and constant prayer for the victory of Holy Mother Church.

NOTE:

- ¹. A typewritten sheet containing the above directives was privately shown to me in 1973. As some informants doubted its authenticity I inquired into its origin. It is an English translation of the verbal conclusion of a meeting for priest presided over by Archbishop Gonzi. It was read out to the clergy to be followed *ad litteram*. For obvious reason it was not an official Curia document.

Excerpt from Azzopardi, *Il-Qawmien tal-Haddiem Malti*, 161-162.

STRUZZJONIJIET LILL-KONFESSURI U PREDIKATURI

(Dan li ġej huwa maqlub għall-Malti, kelma b'kelma, mill-istruzzjonijiet bil-Latin maħruġin mill-Arcisqof fis-7 ta' Marzu 1962, u mqassmin bl-idejn lill-kappillani biss.)

A) Lill-Konfessuri

1) L-ewwel haġa, il-konfessuri għandhom jistaqsu lil min imur iqerr jekk kienx ivvota jew le.

2) Jekk il-penitent kienx mar jivvota, il-konfessur għandu jistaqsih għaliex kien skarta li jaqdi l-obbligu tant gravi;

a) Jekk il-penitent kien skarta dan l-obbligu bi traskuraġni waqt li kien jaf bil-gravità ta' dil-haġa, allura għandu jingħata l-assoluzzjoni.

b) Jekk kien skarta dan l-obbligu għax ma kellu fiduċja f'ebda wieħed mill-kandidati tal-partiti l-oħrajn (barra minn dawk il-kandidati ta' dak il-partit kontra l-Knisja), għandu dan jiġi mdawwar bl-argumenti u għandu jiġi mfiehem kemm kienet gravi din l-ommissjoni; b'danakollu m'għandux jingħata assoluzzjoni jekk ma jaċċettax fedelment id-direttivi, li għandhom x'jaqsmu ma' dan, li kienu harġu f'Mejju 1961, u kontra l-kelliema tal-partit politiku ta' kontra t-tagħlim ta' Ommna l-Knisja Mqaddsa.

c) Jekk ma kienx ivvota għax kien marid serjament, għandu jiġi skużat u tingħatalu l-assoluzzjoni.

d) Jekk fil-fatt kien skarta dan l-obbligu malizzjożament, għandu jiġu miċhud l-assoluzzjoni, jekk il-konfessur ma jkunx assolutament ċert mid-dispożizzjoni sinciera tal-penitent.

3) Jekk il-penitent ikun ivvota għal dak il-partit ostili għall-Knisja, il-konfessur għandu jistaqsih jekk, meta għamel dan, kienx dineb privatament jew fil-pubbliku (tali aġir pubbliku jfisser jew li għamel l-intenzjoni tiegħu magħrufa jew ikkanvassja għal dak il-partit).

a) Jekk il-penitent jiddikjara li kien dineb privatament, biex tingħata l-as jkun jiddependi mis-sincerità tiegħu u kif ser jimxi nkwantu d-direttivi msemmija iżjed 'il fuq.

b) Jekk, min-naħa l-oħra, ikun dineb pubblikament, m'għandux jingħata assoluzzjoni jekk u sa kemm ma jindimx fil-pubbliu u onestament iwiegħed li, fejn u possibbli, jagħmel riparazzjonijiet ta' l-istess daqs tal-ħsara li kien għamel lill-Knisja, lill-isqfijiet, lill-qassisin u lill-oħrajn kollha li seta' offenda.

4) Iżjed, f'dawk il-każi fejn tingħata l-assoluzzjoni, għandu jkun hemm ċertezza assolutament li l-penitent ikun iħoss bis-sincerità kollha l-gravità tal-ħażin li għamel; meta ma tistax tingħata assoluzzjoni, il-penitent għandu jiġi trattat bil-ħlewwa u bil-paċenzja jiġi mistieden biex jerga' jhejji ruħu biex ikun denn ta' l-assoluzzjoni.

B) Lill-Predikaturi:

5) Il-predikaturi jistgħu jkunu tassew siewja biex il-Knisja terġa' tirrijasserixxi ruħha fuq materji sew ċivili kemm politiċi skond kif titlob l-okkażjoni; biex jerggħu jintrebħu l-erwieħ mitlufin minħabba materji politiċi. Fil-priedki u t-taħdidiet tagħhom huma għandhom ifehmu dawk il-veritajiet li għandhom x'jaqsmu ħafna mal-ħtiġijiet spiritwali u temporali tal-lum; huma jenfasizzaw l-eżistenza, il-ħtieġa u l-asserzjoni (anke pubblika) ta' reliġjon waħda u Alla wieħed; għandhom jikkellmu dwar l-influenza divina tal-Knisja biex isseħħ soċjetà perfetta kemm privata kif ukoll pubblika; dwar is-setgħa divina tal-Knisja u l-ġudizzju li qatt ma jizbalja tagħha wkoll fuq liġijiet ċivili

fejn ikun hemm il-bżonn; għandhom jikkellmu fuq il-gravità tad-dnub il-mejjet, il-formazzjoni oġġettiva tal-kuxjenza, fuq il-kastig ta' l-infern għal dejjem, fuq iċ-ċensura u l-kastig tal-Knisja, siewja u fil-waqt, fuq l-edukazzjoni tajba tat-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh, fuq il-ħtieġa tal-għaqdiet kattoġiċi, u fuq materji bħal dawn.

Fil-priedki tagħhom, il-predikaturi m'għandhomx jittgħajru imma għandhom ikunu sodi; għandhom ikunu ħelwin u prudenti sabiex jirbħu l-erwieħ għal Ommna l-Knisja u mhux igerrxuhom 'il bogħod minnha. Hemm veri qassisin li jqegħdu l-ħtigijiet tal-Knisja qabel kull kunsiderazzjoni oħra. Bil-prudenza u l-karità nistranija għandhom ifehmu l-qerq tal-għedewwa tal-Knisja li jużaw id-duttrina soċjalista tagħhom biex iqarrqu u jwaddbu fl-infern dal-ġens nistrani.

NOTA: Il-Partit Laburista għandu ritratt ta' dan l-original bil-Latin.

9. 1962 and 1966 electoral results

Source: Schiavone, *L-Elezzjonijiet F'Pajjizna*, 394 *et seq*, 441 *et seq*.

The 1962 elections were held between February 17-19. For these elections Malta was divided in ten Electoral Districts.

Party	Votes	(%)	Seats
PN	63,262	42	25
MLP	50,974	33.8	16
CWP	14,285	9.5	4
PDN	13,968	9.3	4
CP	7,280	4.8	1
Christian Dem. Party	699	0.5	-
Independent	128	0.1	-

The 1966 elections were held between March 26-28. For these elections Malta was divided in ten Electoral Districts.

Party	Votes	(%)	Seats
PN	68,656	47.9	28
MLP	61,774	43.1	22
CWP	8,561	6	-
PDN	1,878	1.3	-
CP	2,086	1.4	-
Independent	392	0.3	-
Independent	128	0.1	-

10. The New York Times, September 24, 1964



11. Accusations of treason



Daniel Micallef, PL President (Current), February 12, 2019, retrieved on the same day.



Published on the PL Facebook page May 31, 2017 and retrieved on May, 25 2019

12. Press Release by the PL on the occasion of the 50th anniversary since the 1962 election

STQARRIJA
17 ta' Frar 2012

Maħruġa mill-Uffiċċju tal-Kommunikazzjoni tal-Partit Laburista

Għandna bżonn suldati tal-azzar biex indaħhlu aktar libertajiet ċivili

Biex ma nkunux biss qed ngħixu fin-nostalgija ta' 50 sena ilu, fix-xhur u s-snin li ġej pajjiżna se jkollu bżonn is-suldati tal-azzar biex jiġġieldu favur il-libertajiet ċivili tal-IVF, unjoni ċivili għall-koppji tal-istess sess, kontra ċ-ċensura u favur tibdil kostituzzjonali.

Sostna dan il-Mexxej tal-Partit Laburista Dr Joseph Muscat waqt attivita fl-Isla li fakkret il-ħamsin sena mill-elezzjoni tad-dnub il-mejjet.

Dr Muscat saħaq li se jerga' jkollna mumentu ta' prova fejn irridu nkunu lesti bhala moviment, li jiftaħ il-bibien lil dawk kollha li jemmnu fil-libertajiet ċivili. Li nkunu lesti li nisfidaw ix-xekel tal-konservatiżmu. Biex naraw li ssir ġustizzja ma' dawk il-koppji li ma jistax ikollhom tfal, iżda li l-bniedem u x-xjenza żviluppat għalihom mezz ta' kif ikollhom tfal.

Biex illum il-moviment ma jkunx biss qed jgħix fin-nostalgija ta' 50 sena ilu, għandu bżonn is-suldati tal-azzar li jgħidu iva għal-liġi tal-IVF sabiex jagħtu ċans lil dawn il-koppji.

Sahaq li għandna bżonn kuragg biex nisfidaw lil min ma jridniex nitkellmu dwar drittijiet ta' koppji tal-istess sess, għax nemmnu fl-ugwaljanza. Għandna bżonn suldati tal-azzar li jemmnu, jaħdmu u jwettqu biex f'pajjiżna ndaħhlu d-dritt ta' unjoni ċivili għal koppji tal-istess sess.

L-istess kif għandu bżonn suldati tal-azzar biex kull mara u raġel jithallew fil-liberta' li jkunu ċ-ċensuri tagħhom infushom, fejn tidhol l-arti.

Kuragg ukoll biex inwettqu bidliet fil-kostituzzjoni halli din tkun tirrifletti l-aspirazzjonijiet ta' nazzjon żgħir, żagħżuġh, iżda ambizzjuż li jrid ikompli jfassal il-gejjieni tiegħu għal rasu fil-familja Ewropea.

Il-Mexxej Laburista saħaq li qed jifakkur dan iż-żmien mhux b'nostalgija, imma bi dmir. Huwa ddeskriva dan iż-żmien bhala pass deċiżiv fil-proċess biex Malta ssir parti mill-Ewropa. Mhux l-Ewropa ta' fuq il-karti imma l-Ewropa tal-ħsieb.

L-avveniment qed jifakkur mhux biex nifthu l-feriti imma biex ngħinu sabiex dawn il-feriti jingħalqu.

Dr Muscat sellem lill-Arċisqof Emeritu Guzeppi Mercieca li kellu l-kuragg, ir-rieda u l-ħila li jirrikonoxxi l-iżball u jitlob maħfra. Qal li dan għen biex jibdedw jingħalqu l-feriti.

Il-Mexxej Laburista qal li, li titlob maħfra mhijiex sinjal ta' dgħufija imma sinjal li lest terfa' r-responsabbilta'. Għalhekk ma jiddejjaq xejn jgħid li kien hemm żmien fit-92 sena tal-Partit Laburista, fejn żbalja. Ta' dan tlabna maħfra, saħaq Dr Muscat. Haddiehor, li kellu rwol kbir meta 50 sena ilu kellu sehem biex tkissru l-libertajiet għadu jgħid li m'hemmx ta' xiex jitlob maħfra.

Continues ...



Dr Muscat żied jgħid li jittama li jasal iż-żmien fejn kull min ha sehem jirrikonoxxi l-iżbalji li għamel.

Qiegħdin hawn bhala moviment li jrid jirriaferma li jrid djalogu mal-Knisja u li l-Istat u l-Knisja jirrikonoxxu lil xulxin, iżda jkunu differenti u separati. Li jkunu hbieb li lesti jimxu l-istess triq flimkien, imma ma jkunux l-istess, għax hekk jixirqilha s-soċjeta' tagħna.

Illum għandna ċ-ċertifikat li dan il-partit wettaq l-iskop tiegħu meta kien il-moviment tal-libertajiet ċivili. Meta sar id-dar tal-liberali kollha Maltin u Għawdxin. Meta kien favur u tqabad f'deżert waħdu favur il-liberta' tal-kelma, il-liberta' tal-istampa, il-liberta' tal-assocjazzjoni, u l-liberta' tal-kuxjenza. Li l-ebda gvern, l-ebda awtorita, jew individwu m'għandu dritt jindaħal lil haddiehor dwar x'jemmen, x'jahseb u dwar kif jimxi.

Illum il-gurnata, sahaq Dr Muscat, kulhadd jirrikonoxxi li hamsin sena ilu kellna raġun, u konna fuq in-naħa t-tajba tal-istorja.

Filwaqt li sellem lil kull hadem u se jkompli jahdem favur il-libertajiet ċivili ta' pajjiżna, temm jgħid Persważ li b'dawn l-isfidi ta' libertajiet ċivili, mhux se jkun hemm bżonn 50 sena oħra biex ningħataw ir-raġun.

Waqt l-attivitá tal-lejla, għamtu l-interventi tagħhom diversi mistednin.

L-eks Deputat Laburista, t-Tabib Vincent Moran iddeskriva l-elezzjoni ta' hamsin sena ilu bhala l-ikbar sfregju tad-demokrazija f'pajjiżna. Sostna li jinsab kburi li dak iż-żmien kien wiehed mis-suldati tal-azzar li żammew mal-prinċipji tagħhom u taw sehemhom biex pajjiżna llum seta' jasal fejn wasal.

Indirizza l-attivitá wkoll it-tifel ta' Ġuże Ellul Mercer, li kien indifen fil-miżbla minhabba t-twemmin tiegħu. Martin Ellul sostna li f'dawk iż-żminijiet kienet inżergħet iż-żerriegħa ta' mibgħeda li fissret uġiegh għal hafna nies, liema uġiegh baqa' jinħass hafna snin wara.

Martin Ellul għalaq bil-kliem ta' Ġuże Ellul Mercer li kull min tweled bniedem għandu jgħix ta' bniedem, kemm jekk tweled bin il-għana, sew jekk tweled bin il-faqar.

Min-naħa tiegħu, Fr Mark Montebello sahaq li llum qed ingeddu l-istess hegga, holma, tama u rieda li Mintoff u hafna oħrajn kellhom diversi snin ilu, dik ta' ġustizzja soċjali. Li ma jkun hawn qatt aktar min jgħaffeġ fuq haddiehor, min jagħmilha impossibbli għal haddiehor biex jgħix b'mod diċenti u min jiddetta kif wiehed għandu jgħix, kif jgħix, jew x'għazliet jagħmel. Sahaq li wħud mill-istess forzi li rrezistew il-bidla hamsin sena ilu, għadhom magħna llum, filwaqt li sostna li għandna nibqgħu nahdmu biex tirbaħ dejjem il-ġustizzja.

Uffiċċju tal-Kommunikazzjoni
Partit Laburista

13. Definition of an Amoral familist by Edward C. Banfield

Source: Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*.

1. In a society of amoral familists, no one will further the interest of the group or community except as it is to his private advantage to do so.
2. In a society of amoral familists only officials will concern themselves with public affairs, for only they are paid to do so. For a private citizen to take a serious interest in a public problem will be regarded as abnormal and even improper.
3. In a society of amoral familists there will be few checks on officials, for checking on officials will be the business of other officials only.
4. In a society of amoral familists, organization (i.e. deliberately concerted action) will be very difficult to achieve and maintain. The inducements which lead people to contribute their activity to organizations are to an important degree unselfish (e. g. identification with the purpose of the organization they are often non-material (e.g., the intrinsic interest of the activity as a "game." Moreover, it is a condition of successful organization that members have some trust in each other and some loyalty to the organization. In an organization with high morale it is taken for granted that they will make small sacrifices, and perhaps even large ones, for the sake of the organization.
5. In a society of amoral familists, office-holders, feeling no identification with the purposes of the organization, will not work harder than is necessary to keep their places or (if such is within the realm of possibility) to earn promotion. Similarly, professional people and educated people generally will lack a sense of mission or calling. Indeed, official position and special training will be regarded by their possessors as weapons to be used against others for private advantage.
6. In a society of amoral familists, the law will be disregarded when there is no reason to fear punishment. Therefore, individuals will not enter into agreements which depend upon legal processes for their enforcement unless it is likely that the law will be enforced and unless the cost of securing enforcement will not be so great as to make the undertaking unprofitable.
7. The amoral familist who is an office-holder will take bribes when he can get away with it. But whether he takes bribes or not, it will be assumed by the society of amoral familists that he does.
8. In a society of amoral familists the weak will favour a regime which will maintain order with a strong hand.
9. In a society of amoral familists, the claim of any person or institution to be inspired by zeal for public rather than private advantage will be regarded as fraud.
10. In the society of amoral familists there will be no connection between abstract political principle (i.e. ideology) and concrete behaviour in the ordinary relationships of everyday life.
11. In a society of amoral familists there will be" no leaders and no followers. No one will take the initiative in outlining a course of action and persuading others to embark upon it (except as it may be to his private advantage to do so) and, if one

- did offer leadership, the group would refuse it out of distrust.
12. The amoral familist will use his ballot to secure the greatest material gain in the short run. Although he may have decided views as to his long-run interest, his class interest, or the public interest these will not affect his vote if the family's short-run, material advantage is in any way involved.
 13. The amoral familist will value gains accruing to the community only insofar as he and his are likely to share them. In fact, he will vote against measures which will help the community without helping him because, even though his position is unchanged in absolute terms, he considers himself worse off if his neighbours' position changes for the better. Thus, it may happen that measures which are a decided general benefit will provoke a protest vote from those who feel that they have not shared in them or have not shared in them sufficiently.
 14. In a society of amoral familists the voter will place little confidence in the promises of the parties. He will be apt to use his ballot to pay for favours already received (assuming, of course, that more are in prospect) rather than for favours which are merely promised.
 15. In a society of amoral familists it will be assumed that whatever group is in power is self-serving and corrupt. Hardly will an election be over before the voters will conclude that the new officials are enriching themselves at their expense and that they have no intention of keeping the promises they have made. Consequently, the self-serving voter will use his ballot to pay the incumbents not for benefits but for injuries, i.e., he will use it to administer punishment.
 16. Despite the willingness of voters to sell their votes, there will be no strong or stable political machines in a society of amoral familists. This will be true for at least three reasons: (a) the ballot being secret, the amoral voter cannot be depended upon to vote as he has been paid to vote; (b) there will not be enough short-run material gain from a machine to attract investment in it; and (c) for reasons explained above, it will be difficult to maintain formal organization of any kind whatever.
 17. In a society of amoral familists party workers will sell their services to the highest bidders. Their tendency to change sides will make for sudden shifts in strength of the parties at the polls.

14. An ‘incriminating’ tweet by Mgr. Scicluna.

Source: Caroline Galea, “Government attacks Archbishop for sharing The Shift News article,” *The Shift News*, May 31, 2018, <https://theshiftnews.com/2018/03/31/government-attacks-archbishop-for-sharing-the-shift-news-article/>

The screenshot displays a tweet and two replies. The main tweet is from 'The Shift News' (@The_Shift_News), retweeted by Bishop CJ Scicluna. The tweet text reads: 'What in Sicily is known as Cosa Nostra, what in Calabria is known as Ndrangheta, what in Naples is called Camorra, in #Malta we call 'il-gvern' (the government)'. It includes a photograph of a shirtless man in purple briefs running while holding a rifle. Below the photo is the caption 'The system we created' and the website 'theshiftnews.com'. The tweet has 21 replies, 29 retweets, and 49 likes. The first reply is from Glenn Bedingfield (@GlenBedin...) replying to @The_Shift_News and @BishopScicluna, stating: 'Pity the @BishopScicluna didn't give up bashing the government for Lent. That would have been too big a sacrifice.' The second reply is from David Farrugia (@farrd) replying to @The_Shift_News and @BishopScicluna, stating: 'In Malta, when we hear #Curia, boy screwing and land snatching, comes to mind. Chasing #pedofiles within his own circles has clearly damaged this guy. #notfitforpurpose'.

15. Steps of communal discernment

Source: George J. Schemel and Judith A. Roemer, "Communal Discernment," *Review for Religious* 40, no. 6 (November/December 1981) Revised July 1992.

- 1) **An explicit attitude and atmosphere of faith.** A group needs its faith consciousness in full awareness at the time of the discernment process;
- 2) **Prayer: before, during, after for light and purification.** The individuals in the discerning group, and the group as group, need contact with the Lord in the discerning process. The prayer is for light and purification. It is not simple unthematic or contemplative prayer.
- 3) **Interior freedom: poised spiritual liberty.** The discerning members and the group as a group need to be repentantly aware of their disordered affections and attachments.
- 4) **Information: disseminated, assimilated.** Discernment does not dispense with the need for having concrete information about all sides of the issue.
- 5) **Formulation of the Issue into a simple declarative sentence and the separation into con and pro reasons.** The discerners are asked to give separate and quality time to the consideration and articulation of the reasons against and the reasons for the issue.
- 6) **Attempt at consensus.** Discerners are asked to name the consensus that has formed in the group.
- 7) **Confirmation (congruence) is both the internal and the external.**
 - a. Internal: joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.
 - b. External: how does the decision work out over time? Is the decision congruent with legitimate authority?

While the first three elements refer to attitudes of the mind and heart, the second three elements are the more formal part of the process, while the last is the monitoring over time of the decisions as they tested and worked out.