

**ANISABEL PALMA**  
THEOLOGY 468  
SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY/ SPIRITUAL JOURNEY  
CLASS #2, EARLY CHRISTIAN NARRATIVES  
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The readings for the second week of class were around the topic of biographies and autobiographies with examples of how this literature genre has the capacity to influence audiences in spiritual matters including the author in autobiographies. The paper will include the treatment Higgins gives to the topic and one example of each.

In 1988 or 1989, Michael Higgins delivered an address on Autobiography as a Mode of Spiritual Inquiry. It was part of the Christian Culture Series at the Assumption University in Windsor, the address was later published as an article for us to read and know that for Higgins autobiography act as a form of spiritual inquiry in the way that it is the space where the author can freely do some sort of self-exploration. It does not have to start with a plan in place or follow a particular format. The author writes from the place she or he is at that very moment, what and how they are experiencing of a specific event. It is a self-giving opportunity to observe critically themselves (pp.164-165).

Patrick sees autobiography as a way to return thanks to God (p.67). He wanted his brothers and relatives to know the sort of man he was with hopes they could understand what was to which he committed his soul (p.68). On his self-presentation Patrick highlights his abduction, the time of his captivity, how we has guided by God to escape his captors, the way to return home and God's constant and providential assistance for his ministry. Patrick seems to follow a chronological order of events without giving specific dates but making great use of Scripture. It looks like he was able to find a passage for every happening on his life! In addition, the text is full of citations that at this point I do not know if Patrick himself or the editor of the translation of the text placed them.

In the fourth century, Jerome dedicated a writing on the life of Paul the first Hermit to Paulus of Concordia. Jerome starts his writing with an introduction to the life of Paul. In paragraphs 2-3, he describes with examples what the martyrs of the time had to go through. In paragraphs 4-6 Jerome describes the events that led Paul to hermitic life but in paragraphs 7-9 narrates, the journey of another great saint of the time took to meet Paul. Paragraphs 10-12 Jerome describes the time St. Anthony and St Paul were together. Paragraphs 13-16 focus on what Anthony did around the death of Paul. Finally, Jerome devotes the last two paragraphs to warn those who do not center their lives on God and what their final destiny could be. In the text, Jerome praises central traits of Paul like a gentle disposition, a deep love for God, someone who could confirm his will to the necessity, and above all, the virtues of prayer and solitude. Jerome attributed these virtues helped Paul to live on earth “the life of heaven.”

The difference I can sense between biography and autobiography in the accounts of Patrick and Paul is that Patrick decided what to write for others to know about him and Paul had no say on what Jerome wrote about Paul. In addition, as Paul’s biography was written after the death of Paul and because of the secluded life Paul had, Jerome found no way to know details of Paul’s middle life years and how he resisted Satan. The sources that Jerome cite are two disciples of Saint Anthony, Amathas and Macarius and Cyprian. Jerome references to the Scripture are scarce. However, two could be highlighted: when the raven brought them a whole loaf of bread (instead of the usual half loaf of bread). Jerome references that event to I Kings 17:1-6. A second Scriptural reference was added after Anthony’s response to his disciples who wanted to understand what he meant when he said he had seen Elias, John and Paul (“There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” Eccl. 3:7.)

I am grateful and inspired to read how the Holy Spirit moves both the authors of biographies and the authors of autobiographies. Both authors are able to capture eloquently with their pens what is inside of their hearts and how God is working on them through the events and happenings in the life journeys they are describing. Their writings illuminate readers to advance on their own spiritual journeys.