

CHAPTER II SPIRITUAL FORMATION - DEFINITION AND PERSPECTIVES

Overview

"Spiritual Formation" had long been applied to the shaping of Christian life by the Anglican and Catholic traditions, rather equivalent to "sanctification", "growth in grace" in other traditions. In Catholic theological education the primary goal was stated as spiritual and priestly formation. Whatever their previous interest in this area, today all of the churchly traditions are engaged in exploration of the nature of spiritual formation. This is particularly so because both modern psychology has helped us understand individual uniqueness and that traditional stereotyped formation of all in common is not adequate. It is also true that the needs of Christians in the modern world have called for this.

Since the 1960s there has been a steady growth of interest in spiritual formation, including the funding of projects by Lilly Endowment and others, the establishment of centers, and the advocacy that it be taught in seminaries by the prestigious Association of Theological Schools. The books now being published are almost too numerous to mention.

Spiritual formation assumes that there is a spiritual dimension to life and a spiritual element to the formative and developmental aspects of the person. Formation is not only biological and psychological. Spiritual formation also points up that the potentials of human life are not only realized by developing what is inherent in us, but that there are gifts, directions, and potentials which are given to us from the God/Transcendent dimension of life. It is essential to relate to God then not only because we owe this to God, but because it is necessary for the full living of life. In a sense then one could call spiritual formation "a psychology or anthropology which takes the spiritual seriously".

"Spiritual direction" has been the term given to the process of directing persons in their spiritual formation. "Spiritual director" has been the term for the religious professional who does "spiritual direction", though for most persons today this term sounds too autocratic. Such terms as "spiritual friend" and "soul friend"⁴⁴ have been suggested for those who guide others in their spiritual growth. Spiritual direction is distinguished from psychotherapy and pastoral care because the primary concern is not the problems of the person, but the person's relationship with God. God is also seen as the primary agent of the person's formation and the director, or "friend", merely provides knowledge, interpretation and valuable techniques to facilitate the person's growing relationship with God and developing quality of life.

In the broadest sense, spiritual formation is the process of becoming what a Christian should be and the enabling of what a Christian should do. Thus it may include seeking of direction on vocation, ethical behavior, responsibility for creation, social and political action, etc. It is not concerned solely with the individual's relation with God, though this is necessarily its base.

1. Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction*, Paulist Press, 1980. Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend, The Practice of Christian Spirituality*, Harper and Row, 1980.

Because it deals with a person's relationship with God, and life with God and for God, it becomes necessary for it also to explore the nature of the human experience of life as a whole. Life is complex, and God needs to be identified among the various components of life experience. If we are to live for God, and if we are to be in the best sense "human," we must know and be able to deal with the many dynamics of life. Thus spiritual formation draws upon the best of Christian experience and reflection, together with the sciences (particularly psychology), to help persons interpret life, cope and mature. It develops a theology of suffering which helps persons live creatively with life's sometimes harsh realities. Above all it points out that humans are spiritual and that they have a soul.

The traditions of Christianity (especially its mystical traditions), modern depth psychology, and the mystical traditions of other religions, provide information about techniques which aid spiritual growth: prayer, devotional reading, journaling, meditation, contemplation, etc.. These all contribute to the development of a "spiritual discipline" which helps one grow in the directions one needs. Disciplines are no longer viewed as practices designed for everyone without distinction as to personal preferences and needs. They are usually designed, drawing upon our common spiritual heritage, to focus on the developmental needs of the individual. They are not intended to produce feelings of self-righteousness or failure, but designed to keep us growing. Biographies of those who have been spiritual pilgrims inform and excite.

It is coming to be recognized that to be a spiritual friend, or director, does not necessitate entering some type of esoteric vocation or specialization. Though there is a need for those who are specialists, all religious professionals and counselors working within a context of religious commitment and community are really "spiritual directors". What is needed is a spiritual direction/formation perspective on many of the tasks of ministry, counseling, and aspects of the church's life. In counseling the therapist comes to therapy from the depths of his/her own spirituality, ready to deal with spiritual issues where they emerge.

Those who minister professionally provide knowledge of the Christian tradition, including the Bible and theology, give instruction as to ethical and social issues, provide a place for human fellowship and encouragement, provide education and fellowship for children and youth, provide pastoral care and administration of sacraments. Spiritual formation sees these aspects of the church's ministry as happening with a focus on facilitating persons' relationship with God, helping them discover God in their lives, and enabling the living of their lives. It is interesting to speculate as to how this might affect the way we do various aspects of our ministry: e.g. what would we do in Christian education if our primary purpose were to help children in their relationship with God, the identification of God in their lives, and in living through with God the issues they were encountering in their human and developmental process?

It is recognized that in our society, which is rapidly becoming secular and pluralistic and does not culturally support Christian faith and values, spiritual formation is becoming a necessity. Christians need to be able to deal with religion experientially so that they can carry their values and faith with them and be able to sustain a sense of their truth outside the context of the Christian fellowship.

Up to the 1960s most seminaries trained their professionals in academic knowledge of the various Christian traditions and helped them develop professional skills. Their academic language was an "in-house" language which validated itself by its logical coherence, not by its relationship to experienced reality. Theology and Christology were taught without exploring how God and Christ might be identified in life. Christian ethics was taught from a biblical and theological base, without always coming to grips with the complexity of real-life ethical decisions. We were taught liturgics without being taught how to pray and to draw significant life-resources from relationship with God. Christian growth was advocated without adequate exploration of how it happens, what its realistic possibilities are, and without provision

of techniques to facilitate growth. Those trained for pastoral counseling and psychotherapy were not always prepared to take spiritual dimensions seriously. They practiced secular psychological perspectives in a religious context.

There is a story of a man who passed by a Hassidic synagogue and through the window saw the members of the synagogue dancing. He spoke to his friend, a Rabbi, asking why they were moving in that way and what they were doing. The reply was, "My friend. You would better understand if the window were open and you could hear the music to which they were dancing." Simply defined, spiritual formation seeks to help us hear the music to which we dance.

The Foci of Spiritual Formation

It should be clear from what has already been said that spiritual formation is not merely a concern for individualistic religious experience and piety. It is as multidimensional as life and faith itself. Spirituality involves all that constitutes being Christian (or religious). However, it must be seen somewhat as the spiritual gifts are described in the New Testament. Persons are gifted for and invest themselves in different aspects of life and spirituality. Thus it is not necessary to have everyone do and be everything. That is not possible within life's limits. It is important, however, that the church, the religious community, out of the individuality of gifts and preferences, constitute a whole in which all perspectives exist, where variety is recognized, and all contribute to the common good, treating life's needs and God's call comprehensively. Particular and sometimes narrow foci will result from the needs of historical contexts if those within the context heed the call to be *what God would wish in that situation and for that moment in time*. The temptation is always to see one's vision and commitment exclusively rather than as part of a larger and more inclusive whole.

There is the spirituality of children,⁴⁵ of men,⁴⁶ of women,⁴⁷ of adolescents,⁴⁸ of education,⁴⁹ of leadership,⁵⁰ of pastoral care,⁵¹ for the renewal of public life,⁵² and creation spirituality.⁵³ Among

2. Iris V. Cully, *Education for Spiritual Growth*, Harper and Row, 1984. Judy Gattis Smith, *Developing a Child's Spiritual Growth Through Sight, Sound, Taste, Touch and Smell*, Abingdon, 1983.

3. James Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality*, Westminster, 1988. John A. Sanford and George Lough, *What Men Are Like*, Paulist Press, 1988.

_. See section on Feminine Spirituality.

48. Charles M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality: Pastoral Ministry for High School and College Youth*, Loyola Press, 1983. J. David Stone, *Spiritual Growth in Youth Ministry*, Group Books, 1985.

49. Parker Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education*, Harper, 1983.

50. Henri M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, NY: Crossroad, 1989.

51. Gerald L. Borchert and Andrew D. Lester, eds., *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care*, Westminster, 1985.

Ben Campbell Johnson, *Pastoral Spirituality: A Focus for Ministry*, Westminster Press, 1988.

William, M. Moreman, *Developing Spiritually and Professionally*, Westminster, 1984.

Nelson Thayer, *Spirituality and Pastoral Care*, Fortress, 1985.

52. Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life*, Crossroad, 1983.

53. See section on creation spirituality.

other areas there is also writing on spirituality and the arts⁵⁴ and business.⁵⁵ Diaries or journals, such as those of Henri Nouwen, provide a rich source of insight into applied and lived spirituality.⁵⁶

Because of the significance of liberation, feminine, and creation spirituality to Christian reflection today, challenging traditional approaches and calling to new perspectives, treatment of these will be given special consideration after a treatment of the significant theological issues in the history of spirituality.

Theological Issues

When reading the history of spirituality one finds a number of issues struggled with, many of which will be recognized as issues in the history of theology. These will receive treatment in various ways throughout this book. Here I would like to present them in bold and brief fashion so that the reader might keep them in mind and know that there are differing views on each.

1) *The human predicament which affects what is possible and how it is possible.* Within Judaism and Christianity there are myths about the predicament, particularly the human fall in Gen. 3 but also the fall of the angels described in Judaism and Christianity's reinterpretation of Gen. 6. The period of early Christianity was affected by dualism which meant a negative perspective on the body of flesh, its problems and possibilities. Uncontrolled feelings and drives, especially sexual feelings, were dangerous and the Law pronounced all sin that was not controlled in the service of God. However, there were still the affirmations of the goodness of creation in Gen. 1, some Psalms, and in Wisdom Literature which recognized that there were two creation narratives and preferred Gen. 1 to Gen. 2-3. Thus the stage was set for debate on whether much was possible for humans, whether they had any inherent spirituality and whether God was in any sense in them.⁵⁷

2) *The nature of the world in which one lives.* In much of Judaism, Hellenism, and early Christianity the world was viewed dualistically. This would mean that spirituality would have been seen by many as involving separation from the world, asceticism. It would have its goal beyond this world (heaven) and at the end of time when this world would pass away. This characterizes much of early Christian spirituality. Some modern spirituality has tried to affirm the spiritual nature of creation, world, and human existence.

3) *Is spirituality an individual journey or is it important to be part of a community?* Does community support or hinder spirituality? Is spirituality in its very nature individual or communal?

4) *How does one understand life as it is experienced?* Is life simple or complex? Is evil a factor? Where is God in life?

5) Historically the question has often been raised as to whether spirituality is possible for woman as woman or only as woman denies and separates herself from her nature. Generally, spirituality has often

54. For example, Photography: Minor White, *Octave of Prayer*, NY: Aperture Book, 1972. Ralph Hattersley, *Discover your Self through Photography*, NY: Association Press, 1971. Art: Frederick Frank, *The Zen of Seeing: Seeing/Drawing as Meditation*, NY: Vintage Books, 1973, and *The Awakened Eye*, NY: Vintage (Random House), 1979.

55. Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers, *Creativity in Business*, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1986.

56. Henri Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery*, NY: Doubleday, 1966; *Gracias: A Latin American Journal*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983; *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey*, NY: Doubleday, 1988.

57 It is interesting to view John 1:1-18 as a preface of the editor mentioned in John 21:24, calling upon the reader to view life and faith in terms of Gen. 1 and not Johannine dualism.

been seen as separation from world and bodily existence. This really raises the question of whether it is possible to include *sexuality* and *body* in spirituality?

6) *What is it possible for a person to do and what must God do?* This is the issue of grace and divine sovereignty versus human action. Can one contribute to one's spirituality or is it all of God? Does the human contribution make possible spirituality or God's gift, or is spirituality the appropriation and realization of God's prior gift?

7) Understanding the human predicament and what God brings into life, *what is possible in human transformation?* Is it possible to be transformed, perfected, without "sin"? If there are limits, how does one then come to terms with what is possible? How does God come to terms with human nature and possibility?

8) *Subjectivity versus objectivity.* Is religious experience and spirituality more subjective than other aspects of religious life? Is there any reality or objectivity to it? Is fear of subjectivity in experience misleading because subjectivity affects all of life?

9) *Does spirituality assume individual forms or is there some general standard or norm?*

Liberation Spirituality

Liberation theology and praxis is calling our attention to a particular type of spirituality which it would regard as essential for a proper and faithful spirituality. In 1982 *Espiritualidad y liberacion* appeared in Costa Rica, a collection of articles by twelve authors with an appendix that lists seventy-four titles on spirituality from a liberation perspective. Gustavo Gutierrez in 1971 published his *Beber en su propio pozo*, published by Orbis in 1984 under the title *Drink from Our Own Wells*, as a reflection on the experience of the praxis of liberation theology. Out of the well of those who have committed themselves to the liberation of the poor a new spirituality can be described and though it is their well, we also may drink from it.

Jon Sobrino, in *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, argues that spirituality is not only a dimension of life and theology, but integral with both:

I hold that spirituality is not merely a dimension of theology, it is an integral dimension of the whole of theology. Having rediscovered and assimilated the corporeal, societal, praxic, and utopian dimensions of human life, the theology of liberation wishes to integrate all these dimensions into spirituality. This intuition is only a prolongation of the Pauline presentation of the new human being as the spiritual human being. Spirituality here has very little indeed to do with immateriality, or with any subcompartment of the Christian life. It concerns the entirety of that life.

From the Christian standpoint, spiritual men and women are men and women filled with the spirit of Christ, and filled with it in a living, observable manner. After all, the force and life of that Spirit invades their whole person, and all their activity.⁵⁸

Sobrino's description of the essence of Gutierrez's views is helpful:

⁵⁸ Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 1988, a translation of *Liberacion con espiritu*, 1985, by Robert R. Barr, p. 49. Quotation in second paragraph from Ellacuria, *Conceptos Fundamentales*, p. 302.

1. Spirituality is the totality of the Christian and historical life. Christian life cannot be separated from historical life.
2. The following of Christ is the totality of the Christian life in the concreteness of one's history, not a repeating of what Jesus did and said: it is "a journey into the Spirit of Christ".
3. It is not the formal elements of a spirituality (God, Spirit, journey) that differentiate spiritualities, but the historical nucleus around which a spiritual pilgrimage is constructed. In Latin America this experience is the encounter with the Lord in the poor. Thus Gutierrez not only speaks of an irruption of God within history, but an irruption of the poor. In poverty the life of my neighbor is at stake and so we are presented with both a challenge and an invitation. We are offered the grace to proclaim a meaning for this history.
4. It is in the praxis of liberation that God and God's will (reign) are encountered. In this encounter we are asked what we ought to do and what we are. "In this encounter we discover where the Lord lives and what the mission is with which the Lord entrusts us." On this encounter with God depends the depth of liberation.
5. Individualism and elitism in spirituality is a distortion. Spirituality must be the spirituality of a people. Gutierrez paraphrases the words of Archbishop Romero: "To this have we been called, to rise with the people in the area of spirituality..."
6. Gutierrez describes spiritual persons in terms of:
 - "conversion: demand for solidarity" - conversion from sin against God and the poor;
 - "gratuity: climate of efficacy;" - It is not enough to approach love from the perspective of intent or duty. Gratuity "is of the essence of God's communication with human creatures, and our love for others should be shaped by it." Love's efficacy is in our response to concrete needs.
 - "joy: victory over suffering;"
 - "spiritual childhood: precondition of commitment to the poor;"
 - "community: outgrowth of solitude" - in God's presence where all that is left us is the conviction of doing God's will and serving a poor people (this forms the context of prayer).⁵⁹

The above expresses the character of the liberated person, the person liberated from oneself so that one is free for the struggle of liberation in view of love and justice. It can be summed up in "the freedom to love."

It is helpful to note that many of the traditional elements of spirituality are here, but with a different focus. For example, purification is the process of being freed from oneself so that one can love and identify oneself with the poor and with God. Illumination comes in becoming aware of the irruption of the poor and God within the history of the present. Following Christ is journeying into the spirit of Christ in the present. Union is identification with God and the poor in the process of liberation.

There are questions that one must raise about viewing spirituality totally in terms of liberation and political action. And yet there is much that may be learned here. Particularly significant is the question of whether one engages in a journey of spiritual transformation and then acts upon the world or whether one is spiritualized in praxis.

⁵⁹. Ibid., pp. 49-66.

Feminine Spirituality

In a sense spirituality is as varied as persons with their individual histories and personal characteristics. Thus it is as difficult to speak of spirituality within categories as it has been to try to describe all spirituality as if it should fit a common mold. For example, I have found that feminine spirituality is not just feminine. Some men resonate with what is described as feminine spirituality because its concerns are closer to their own experience and legitimize their nonconformity to masculine stereotypes. Feminine spirituality has also spun off new desires of men to define (and sometimes defend) their spirituality and to discover what it is to be masculine. James Nelson in *The Intimate Connection* does an excellent job of helping males rethink both their sexuality and spirituality. Since self-understanding for women and men is somewhat related to biology, he advocates for the male a self-understanding not only in terms of the erect, aggressive and penetrating phallus, but primarily in terms of the soft penis which symbolizes the *Via Negativa*: emptying, trusting, being. Most importantly he deals with the need of males for intimacy with self, others and God

I feel that the defining of feminine spirituality is a necessary stage to affirm the unique experience of women and to right the wrongs done them in a male dominated culture that often did not listen seriously to their stories and experiences. That their submission was part of a hierarchy of social and political submission, from God and emperor down to children and slaves, does not diminish what was done but raises the experience of women as a symbol of marginalization and liberation. It is tragic that in the history of the Christian Church, which began with so much feminine participation, by the second century woman was regarded as the "devil's gateway", to quote Tertullian, unless she assumed the ascetic life and thus became "male".⁶⁰ Such an attitude towards women is reflected as early as I Timothy, a letter as it exists not by Paul and probably from the late first or early second century. In I Timothy a woman is to dress modestly, learn in silence with full submission and not teach or have authority over a man. The reason for this is that she, not Adam, was deceived and became a transgressor. Women under 60 also should not be enrolled in the order of the widows since younger women are influenced by their sensual desires.⁶¹ Additions to I Corinthians regarding the public role of women seem to have been made about the same time, reflecting pressure towards returning women to more conservative social roles.⁶² To return women to a more conservative social role might not have been so destructive if it was not also coupled with suspicions about the nature of women by which it was justified. Though Gen. 3 assigns the responsibility of the Fall to Eve, something that Judaism only focused on in the Intertestamental Period, it should also be remembered that there was much in the literature of the ancient world which reflected suspicions about the nature of women. Part of it seems to have been due to the traditional Greco-Roman

60. Tertullian in his "On the Dress of Women", says:

God's judgement lives on in our age: the guilt necessarily lives on as well. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree: you are the first forsaker of the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the devil was not brave enough to approach; you so lightly crushed the image of God, the man Adam; because of your punishment, that is death, even the Son of God had to die. (quoted as punctuated)

However, commitment to the ascetic life allowed women to appear to overcome the negative qualities of femaleness and consequently to become "men" or "angels". As Jerome said, when a woman prefers Christ to a husband and babies "she will cease to be a woman and will be called a man," now being considered man's equal and not inferior.

Tertullian and Jerome in Elizabeth A. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, Studies in Women and Religion, vol. 20, Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986, pp. 26, 43.

61. I Timothy 2:8-15, 5:9-16.

62. I Cor. 11:3:16; 14:33b-35. These passages interrupt the logical flow of their context and do not fit Paul's practice of including women in mission.

emphasis on reason as controller of the passions, the desirability of *apatheia*, and a distrust of anything uncontrolled and irrational. Virgil in his poetry sees woman as exemplifying passion, disorder, madness and inciting sexual lust.⁶³ Thus one must see the definition of the nature of woman as part of the cultural perspective and not just due to the application of Gen. 3 in Intertestamental Judaism and early Christianity. The great women of Christian antiquity were then those who renounced the flesh, became ascetics, and followed the model of Mary as it was coming to be understood. This driving of a wedge between woman -- the symbol of the earth, birther of life, passionate, symbol of the uncontrolled mysteries of existence -- and ancient religious and intellectual life, supported by the dualism of Hellenistic, Jewish and early Christian thought, cost not only women but Christianity a great deal. But one must be aware of the difficulties of seeing and understanding apart from one's culture.

A friend and former student wrote a paper on "Seeking A Biblical Model For Women's Issues In Pastoral Counseling." In it she advocates the importance of women telling their story, because in so doing they become uniquely themselves. Biblical stories should be reshaped in the light of their own stories and not the other way around. To confine one's story within the walls of some other story is to fail to hear one's own. And at the heart of spiritual formation is the telling and hearing of the story of one's life.

The most important element in healing for women comes in the telling of their story, and becoming able to glean from it the truth of their experience. Women have long given the shaping of their experience to men, and to the stories of men. What does not fit into the prevailing conceptions of valid experience has been left behind, or split off, left to be evidence in their own minds of their implicit unworthiness, or inferiority. They may try to fit themselves into the stories told by men about women, becoming a biblical figure, or they will work themselves into a man's story. On a personal note, this is the dilemma I experienced upon being asked to give a "call" story in Pastoral Care, and given the story of Moses as a model. Struggle as I might, and familiar as I was to telling my own story through genograms and the *Lebenslauf*, I did not belong in the story of Moses. At another time of my life, I might have interpreted this to mean that I did not have a call, or that I was "strange." It would have been an opportunity for shame. What I chose to do is to take the story of the biblical Ruth, and present the possibility to the Pastoral Care group that Ruth had a call in going with Naomi, and that her life became a ministry through which God replenished a house of Israel. Rather than simply fit into, or become a figure in a biblical story, I was seeking to reshape the story of Ruth, and reshape the concept of call into one which fit my experience. Having no doubt to the validity of my experience, I was not thrown into self doubt by the air of discomfort with which my story was received by the other students. The idea that there are other models for one's "call," and that they could seek a model more true for themselves did not occur to them, even the women. Instead, there was a patronizing air in the responses I received, countered by my own self assurance (I have myself) and the instructor's affirmation. In all honesty, I was just as uncomfortable with the stories of the women who believed that they did indeed fit into Moses' story. I wondered what parts of their experience they were afraid to own. According to Carol Christ, "There is a dialectic between story and experience. Stories shape experience; experience shapes stories. There is no primary preverbal experience utterly unshaped by stories. In a sense, without stories there is no experience."⁶⁴

63. Elizabeth A. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, pp. 136-137.

64. Ruth Borkowski, "Seeking A Biblical Model for Women's Issues in Pastoral Counseling," unpublished paper, 1990. Quotation from Carol P. Christ, "Spiritual Quest and Women's Experience," *Womanspirit Rising*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979, p.229.

It has been recognized that modern developmental psychology advocates a model influenced strongly by the study of males and focused upon individuation. This has been acculturated in American individualism, as Robert Bellah discusses in *Habits of the Heart*.⁶⁵ In the usual developmental process of the female, relationship, mutuality and interconnectedness are important.⁶⁶ Thus this should play a significant role in feminine spirituality. Interestingly enough, this aspect of feminine spirituality is on target regarding the nature of the Christian life advocated for all within much of the New Testament material. A later section in this chapter, on "Spirituality and Love," will argue that love is of the essence of Christian spirituality.

Carol Ochs in *Women and Spirituality*⁶⁷ presents "mothering" as a feminine contribution to spirituality, providing insights not only into what one can give to another but what one must receive from others. To know that we were mothered is to know that life is a gift and to remember what is prior to knowledge. Examining the boundary situations that define human existence in traditional spirituality (circumstance, conflict, guilt, suffering and death) and the way they lead to an other-worldly spirituality, she pushes beyond the negative view in each case and discovers a life and world affirming spirituality through the use of the mothering experience. If attention is called to the failure of mothering, fathering would fare no better. From mothering we can know that

- beyond circumstance and its terror there is love, for not being able to sustain ourselves we are sustained;
- beyond conflict, unity and wholeness can be experienced, as in pregnancy;
- suffering may negate pleasure, but not joy which is an expansion of the self;
- giving arises not out of guilt, but out of fullness: passing on the gifts of life;
- death is countered by birth, an image which invites to life's fullness.

Kathleen Fischer in *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction*,⁶⁸ uses the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) to describe the evolving feminine spirituality as follows:

- a new model of holiness and wholeness which affirms that all the significant spiritual qualities are attainable by men and women and that both have the capacity to image God;
- an interdependence where caring for self and relationships are both possible;
- a spirituality of inclusion which breaks down "us" "them" distinctions;
- a thirst for justice and the elimination of oppression.

The story of Christ can also be interpreted in a feminist way. Varied perceptions of the meaning of Christ are as old as the four Gospels. Thus a feminist interpretation, though at first uncomfortable to those of us used to thinking in male terms, makes good sense even though it does not have *explicit* precedence in the biblical materials, though it certainly does in the history of mysticism.⁶⁹

65. Robert N. Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985.

66. Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1982.

67. Carol Ochs, *Woman and Spirituality*, Rowman and Allanheld(Division of Littlefield), 1983.

68. Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction*, NY: Paulist Press, 1988.

69. Feminist thought has made much of the figure of Wisdom in Jewish Wisdom literature: e.g. Susan Cady and Marian Ronan, *Sophia: The Future of Feminine Spirituality*, Seabury, 1986.. Carl Jung in his *Answer to Job* recognized that this was an appearance of the feminine in the Jewish tradition. John 1:1-18 and Col. 1:15-20 are patterned after Jewish thought about Wisdom and are similar to passages in Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. While in John 1 the term is *Logos*, a masculine

Christin Lore Weber in *WomanChrist: A New Vision of Feminist Spirituality*, though acknowledging Christ as a male, feminizes the space around and within Christ. In discussing the significance of Mary at Jesus' crucifixion in John she says:

The dying of Jesus happened in womanspace, as did his birth and rising. He is the prototype of humankind, she of woman-body/womansoul: the container of power, the bone weaver, the vast space in which and through which the Word of creation is spoken and enfleshed. Contrary to androcentric interpretation, she does not take her meaning from him; rather, she is a source of meaning in her self, as woman. Out of her he lives, and into her he dies. Together they are the process of creation, the ebb and flow.⁷⁰

Weber speaks of the need of woman to descend to the abode of the dark Mother, after the ancient way embodied in the Sumerian myth of Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, who abandons the sky to descend into the underworld where she is stripped of her divinity and life itself. Inanna is then reborn and becomes goddess of all the mysteries of life, death and rebirth, a symbol of wholeness. In her descent woman strips herself of all protection and falseness, enters her own darkness and mystery, and is reborn and embraces all of life.

Weber then deals with the Incarnation as a descent. If the Incarnation is only identified with maleness, then God is forever completely other than woman. If the full meaning of the Incarnation is to be limited to one man and one time, then mystery and imagination are robbed. She continues:

Just imagine for a moment that what we call Incarnation is not an event applicable only to the one person of Jesus at a distinct point in time. Imagine, instead, that Incarnation is a non-historical quality of the creative process of Ultimate God-Mystery that transfigures created being, radically shifts all consciousness in the cosmos, and results in what is earth-created matter becoming transformed into God.⁷¹

What distinguishes Jesus from the rest of us is that Jesus knew who he was. The myth of Descent and the Incarnation intersect by affirming that we must all descend into our physical, psychic, spiritual, cosmic bodies where through the touch of the Holy at the center, we become incarnate God just as did the bodysoul of Jesus. Lest we not give this "Christology" a fair hearing, it is important to remember that the Christology of the Johannine community could not have been maintained unless there was a correspondence in the consciousness of its members where they knew that they were also of God.

Meister Eckhart, Matthew Fox and Creation Spirituality

Much of spirituality has followed a model derived from the Hellenistic world and the theological perspectives of Intertestamental Judaism and early Christianity. Augustine is frequently blamed for the dualistic perspective of much of Christianity since his time, but in truth dualism is very evident in the New Testament itself -- in the very sources of our Christianity. This is discussed elsewhere in this book. One must go to the Old Testament, much of which represents Judaism before the development of dualism in the Intertestamental Period, and treat the New Testament rather selectively to present a positive

noun, rather than *Sophia*, a feminine, if the Prologue is modeled on Wisdom in Sirach 24 then in a sense that which became incarnate in Jesus could be considered feminine.

⁷⁰. Christin Lore Weber, *WomanChrist: A New Vision of Feminist Spirituality*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987, p. 20.

⁷¹. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

perspective on creation and human existence. The great affirmation of creation in John 1:1-18 may be helpful if we can indicate that it is the key by which to interpret the more dualistic tradition within the Gospel. Though this is beyond what I wish to treat here, an adequate affirmation of creation and human existence is dependent on a critical appraisal of our biblical sources and, in some ways, a going beyond them. Such affirmation of creation not only corrects some of the New Testament dualism, which I see as the form of the Gospel in the first century, not its essence, but it provides a model for the mystical experience of those who find God through creation and function in a more extroverted fashion where not only internal but external, historical life is to be spiritually significant. This is not to deny that there is some truth to what was perceived about the dangers of existence in the development of dualism.

One of the significant developments in spirituality in recent years has been "Creation spirituality" advocated by Matthew Fox.⁷² Rather than discussing Fox here I would like to discuss one of his primary sources, Meister Eckhart.

One might at first judge that an optimistic and creation affirming spirituality would have arisen in the best of times and dualistic spirituality would be characteristic of more tragic times. However, this was not the case with Meister Eckhart. Fox in his book *Breakthrough* mentions Barbara Tuchman's book *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*, whose thesis is that the apocalyptic upheavals of the 14th century mirror our own time.⁷³ It was a time of population expansion but economic contraction, corruption in high places, cultural upheaval and disillusionment. Eckhart was born in 1260 and died shortly before 1329, after his trial by a papal court. He was trained as a Dominican and served various teaching, preaching, and administrative positions in Paris and Germany. That such a positive affirmation of creation could have arisen in such times is testimony to the contribution of personality to reaction to one's times, but more specially to the need to find some way to trust creation and life in the worst of times. If there is nothing in the world safe and loving that one may trust oneself to, then life indeed is tragic. As will be indicated, it was central to Eckhart's theology that one can "let oneself go" into creation and into God. This was not only for the sake of his own sanity, but for the sake of those to whom he preached.

Fox summarizes the essential elements of Eckhart's theology as follows:

1. *The creative word of God.* Here Eckhart uses especially the idea of the creative word in Gen. 1 and John 1. God creates by his word and because of God's goodness, creation is good.
2. *Blessing.* Using ideas derived primarily from the Old Testament understanding of blessing, creation is seen as a divine blessing. The holy "isness" permeates all things, making all things equal at the level of being. The purpose of life is to return the blessings one has received by blessing others.
3. *Panentheism.* God is not out there or above us. God is in creation and us, and we are in God. This is not pantheism (that all is God), rather panentheism (that God is in all).
4. *Realized Eschatology.* Heaven is not something that begins after life. Eternal life is now and we are already in God. As Eckhart says in a moving passage:

⁷² Fox, Matthew, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1980; *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*, Bear and Company, 1983; *Western Spirituality, Historical Roots, Ecumenical Routes*, Bear and Company, 1981; *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, Harper, 1988

⁷³ Matthew Fox, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1980, p. 11.

You don't need to seek him here or there. He is not further off than the door of your heart; there he stands and tarries and waits to find someone ready to open up to him and let him in. You don't need to call him from afar; he can scarcely wait for you to open to him. He is a thousand times more eager for you than you for him.⁷⁴

5. *Celebration of all beings in God's blessing-filled cosmos.* Blessing flows out from God and still remains within God "in a panentheistic ocean of divine pleasure". Thus the search for God is not within oneself alone, but within the entire universe. The reaction to this is rejoicing and celebration.

6. *Letting go, and letting creation be the holy blessing that it is.* Our tendency to try to control and possess prevents our celebrating with creation. Therefore we must *let go and let be*. By letting go we learn true reverence for things. By letting go of our fear, we can "sink" into the blessing and grace that creation is about, and into the God who is in but beyond creation.

7. *The unknown, unnameable God who is a non-God.* This is part of Eckhart's *via negativa*. In this the self is not put-down, but let go of and God is recognized as being beyond the images of God. This is why he "prays God to rid me of God".

8. *The divinization and deification of humanity.* Eckhart calls for persons to allow a "breakthrough" of God into consciousness, the birth of God's son within us, a "new birth" which indicates that we are sons and daughters of God.

9. *Spirituality is a growth process.* There are no limits to growth as there are no limits to the divine. "If people lived a thousand years or even longer they might still gain in love." Growth is not a competitive and compulsive climbing of Jacob's ladder, but an expanding spiraling which "touches the ends of the cosmos and returns us to our primal origins refreshed."

10. *Creativity is the work of God in us.* In the image of God we are also creators. Artistic work is the "work that works as God worked." Eckhart's theology of art and creativity is well expressed in Sermon Twenty-nine, entitled "Be you creative as God is creative," included in Fox's book.

11. *Compassion, the fullness of spiritual maturity.* God's compassion flows towards us in creation. Out of God's compassion we respond in birthing compassion and justice.

12. *Everyone a royal person.* Here Eckhart sees all as royal persons, within this biblical tradition, who are responsible for creating compassion and justice.

13. *Jesus Christ as reminder of what it means to be God's child.* Jesus is the first and foremost reminder that a birth as God's child is possible. "He is a creative and compassionate person, in touch with his divine origins and his divine destiny. Jesus on leaving this earth sent his Spirit to vivify us and render us other Christs."

14. *Laughter, newness, and joy.* God is the eternally new, young. To let oneself go is to let life, newness, and joy be. "Rather than fleeing pleasure, we are to penetrate it to find God there and we are to struggle to share it. Laughter may well be the ultimate act of letting go and letting be: the music of the divine cosmos."⁷⁵

One difficulty with creation spirituality is that in its interpretation of human existence and history it does not preserve an adequate role for radical evil and sufficiently recognize the complexity of the factors which make up historical experience. All is not of God and all is not good.

⁷⁴. Ibid., p. 247.

⁷⁵. Ibid., much of the above is derived from pp. 43-49. I have not always exactly quoted or used quotation marks because of the complexity this would introduce. The categories are verbatim the categories of Fox.

Spirituality and Love

*Someday, after mastering the winds,
the waves, the tides, and gravity,
we shall harness for God the energies of love;
and then, for the second time
in the history of the world,
the human race will have discovered FIRE.
Teilhard de Chardin ⁷⁶*

In I Corinthians 13 love is the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith. In I Cor. 8:1-3 Paul indicates its primacy over knowledge. There is danger in knowledge for "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Within the Corinthian church knowledge separated because various groups and persons "knew" differently (see I Cor. 1). Paul adds, "If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know." This means that knowledge without an understanding of the limits of knowledge is not true knowledge. He then speaks of the knowledge that ultimately matters: "But if one loves God, one is known by him." It is God's knowledge of us, not ours of God, that is saving. As Paul indicates in I Cor. 13:12, only in the end time, when we see God face to face, will we know God as God knows us. Thus the primary responsibility of the human in relationship to God is love, not knowledge. Here it becomes clear that God's knowledge of us is understood as interpersonal knowledge, in the Hebraic sense. Thus our response is interpersonal, i.e. love. In this passage "love" is the equivalent of "faith". In much of the New Testament faith has the character of love, as in the lovely poetic piece in I Peter 1:8-9 (speaking of Christ):

Without having seen him
You *love* him;
Though you do not now see him
You *believe* in him
And rejoice
With unutterable and exalted joy.
As the outcome of your faith
You obtain the salvation of your souls. ⁷⁷

In the Johannine community, rent by the division described in I John, there is incongruity in the lives of those who claim to love God but not their brother.

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (I John 4:7-12)

Love is the new commandment, which is of old (I John 2:7-11). Yet with all of the Johannine emphasis on love ("If any one says, I Love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." I John 4:20), the Johannine community has

⁷⁶. Source unknown.

⁷⁷. Love and believe/faith are expressed in synonymous parallelism.

no love for those who have separated from the community (I John 2:18ff) and no love for the world (I John 2:15ff). It has its blind spots.

I Peter, at the end of its ethical section, reminds the Christian community: "Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." (I Peter 4:8) This letter is most striking in its advocacy of redemptive activity towards the non-Christian world (the state), towards non-Christian husbands and masters who may be abusive, though here it does not use the word love which seems to be used for relationships within the Christian community, preferring "Honor all people". (I Peter 2:17) It is the only New Testament epistle which develops an ethical code about the relationships of Christians to non-Christians, reminding them that Christ also suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous, "that he might bring us to God." (I Peter 3:18).

Love is not approached merely as a virtue, even the primary Christian virtue. It is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), it is the product of the reality of God in one's life. It comes from God's being and action towards us, and does not merely originate in our action on behalf of God or others. I believe that this is important to note. I would like to develop this aspect of love, and then to suggest another aspect of love as inherent in the dynamism of the human organism. How love as created by God's action towards us, freeing us from the limits of our biological organism, and love as inherent in and necessary to the human organism may be reconciled, I am not sure. All I know is that both exist.

First, regarding love as the possibility God creates beyond our humanity, when one considers the nature of the psychobiological human organism one realizes that there are many needs which are part of one's humanity. Clearly evident are the needs for food, sex, recognition, identity, etc.. They are "fleshly" needs. Unfortunately, much of the New Testament presents a rather negative attitude towards the flesh and its needs. One has only to examine such a passage as Galatians 5 to see that the works of the flesh are understood in a negative way. One needs to seriously question whether the natural needs of our humanity should have so negative an appraisal. These needs are essentially related to human survival and functioning. It is apparent, however, that our natural human needs may become distorted or may make us destructive towards others. There may also be times when we need to give up our needs on behalf of others, even surrendering survival itself.

Love may be seen as action and attitude beyond self-need, beyond the drives of one's psychobiological organism. If it is an action beyond self-need, then it would seem that some of the most pressing human needs must be cared for to give one the freedom to engage in action beyond one's self.

It then begins to make sense when the New Testament speaks of our love growing out of God's prior love towards us. God's love provides the conditions for the satisfaction of many of the basic human needs: we are cared for, receive an identity and sense of personal worth, and find the longings of our loneliness met. These needs then do not need so extensively to affect our relationships with others. Though we will still have these needs, they are placed in a different perspective by God's relationship to them. Thus we can be more sensitive to others. For a human to love, in more than the sense of being attracted to someone who will satisfy us, means that we are able to transcend our human organism and this in itself is a sort of "miracle", a transformation made possible by the presence of God's love. Loving does not mean the denial of our needs nor that they have disappeared in some sort of change of our human substance, but that in full awareness of their reality we can go beyond them. In such a simple (or complex matter) as sex, it means that in the reality of our sexual needs we are able to care for the other beyond our needs.

Now there is also the need to love which is inherent in the dynamism of the human organism. Before birth the embryo exists in the warmth and security of the womb, conscious of all the body sounds and presence

of the mysterious other who bears it. After birth, if the baby is nursed, the proximity of child to mother continues. But gradually there is separation, a sort of "weaning". The energy of the child moves in many directions, but most primarily it moves outward towards others, seeking to recreate interpersonal links. I would like to call this undefined energy "love". Perhaps it could be spoken of as an innate spirituality. It is related to the outgoingness of the organism, not merely as a way of gaining satisfaction, but because it is its nature to be outgoing. It is related to the natural flow of its energy which if not allowed to flow outward towards life, world and others, must be repressed. Because it is the extension of the life of the child, if the child's outgoingness is rejected, the child itself is rejected.

In the life experience of most one soon learns that one cannot naively and innocently reach out to others. Our significant others, in their needs, frequently limit love, requesting it for themselves alone. Those to whom we extend our "souls" frequently reject and at times abuse. And so we learn that it is not safe to love, to indiscriminately and naively satisfy our hunger for relationship, to let our energies flow towards a world that hurts. And yet to repress or suppress love harms the functional dynamics of the whole human system. If one cannot love, one's energies cannot freely flow for the human energy system is a basic unity. If we cannot love we cannot enter into interpersonal relationships of any depth. If we cannot love, the "we" behind the love is judged unacceptable. If the problem is severe enough, we withdraw in a type of autism and psychologically and spiritually die.

Thus in one sense love is a possibility beyond one's biology created by the love of God. In another sense, love is an expression of the dynamics of the healthy human organism.

In any case, to be able to love is not simple, though it is of the essence of our spirituality. It involves a process of growth in our "loving" skills, in gaining freedom from the anxieties which inhibit our reaching out to others, and in our acceptance of the love of God which frees us for dealing with others. Many have experienced so little of love and have been free to love so seldom in life that the process of accepting the love of God and one's own love takes many years. It is not merely a conscious process, but a process which involves changes in the structures of the unconscious. It is here that the loving and supportive Christian community becomes important. People need a place to continue to experience love and to experiment with its expression. The Christian community really needs to give more attention to love than righteousness, which often excludes love. It also needs to work intentionally with contemplative experience in which persons expose themselves directly to the love of God, out of which life is resourced. It is strange that we recognize the centrality of love, as stated in I Corinthians 13, without intentionally working on love in the life and educational processes of the church.

Spiritual Direction, Psychotherapy, and Pastoral Counseling and Care

Kenneth Leech in *Soul Friend*, after an excellent history of the role of the spiritual director in the early church, the Russian tradition, pre- and post- Reformation developments in the West, Anglicanism, and Protestantism, summarizes the qualities of the spiritual director as one who should: be possessed by the Spirit, for here one fulfills a charismatic rather than a hierarchical role; have struggled with the realities of prayer and life; be a person of learning; be a person of discernment "who can read the signs of the times, the writing on the walls of the soul;" and be a person who gives way to the Holy Spirit. As Thomas Merton expresses it: "A spiritual director is then one who helps another to recognize and to follow the inspirations of grace in his life, in order to arrive at the end to which God is leading him."⁷⁸

⁷⁸. Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: The Practice of Christian Spirituality*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980.

These remarks help to point out the distinction between spiritual direction and other approaches to helping persons with life-adjustments. Gerald May, psychiatrist at the Shalem Institute and Director for Spiritual Guidance, in a lecture on "Spiritual Direction, Pastoral Counseling and Psychotherapy -- A Differentiation," distinguishes the three as follows.

In terms of *content*:

Spiritual direction however deals primarily with an individual's personal relationship with God, deepening that realization and responding to its call. In contrast psychotherapy focuses primarily on intrapsychic conflict and pastoral counseling's emphasis is more on personal growth, especially in relation to other people. Thus a spectrum of interest can be seen in which psychotherapy focuses most on private psychic experience, pastoral counseling on relationships with other people, and spiritual direction on relationship with God.

At a more fundamental level it can be said that psychotherapy and pastoral counseling are characteristically concerned with the contents of consciousness -- thoughts, feelings, images, memories, perceptions, etc. Psychotherapy is especially interested in the dynamic *origins* of those contents which result in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic disorders. Pastoral counseling tends to deal more with the *manifestations* of the contents of consciousness - the behavioral patterns with which an individual relates to self and world. In contrast with this emphasis on contents, spiritual guidance is more concerned with the *source and nature of consciousness itself*. The direct experience of being conscious is the fundamental perception of human existence. It forces people into experiential confrontation with the mystery of creation, thus raising the ultimate questions of life. In spiritual guidance the specific contents of this consciousness are seen primarily as events which may enhance or obscure one's concern for the source of consciousness, God.

In terms of the *process* utilized by each of the three:

All three disciplines are usually characterized by two people sitting down and talking. But there are significant differences in the way the interactions take place. In psychotherapy, specific *therapeutic techniques* are employed by the therapist with the explicit aim of correcting intrapsychic disorder. In pastoral counseling, "*helping acts*" are performed by the counselor, designed to facilitate the client's growth ... with the counselor more likely to give advice or make specific suggestions. Thus the conscious relationship rather than unconscious transference is the fundamental helping vehicle of pastoral counseling. While the spiritual director may also give advice and make suggestions, the matrix for decision making differs radically. Rather than relying on knowledge of specific techniques, helping acts or any other element of personal expertise, the spiritual director is basically concerned with *discerning and surrendering* to the will of God. In spiritual guidance, neither transference nor relationship, but a prayerful attitude is the fundamental helping vehicle. More simplistically one might say that the psychotherapist tends to get behind the growth and healing process and push it; the pastoral counselor runs alongside and urges it on; and the spiritual director tries to clear the ground and get out of its way.

In terms of *attitude*,

In psychotherapy it is assumed that healing takes place as the direct result of measurable restructuring of the patient's psychodynamics. the therapist is assumed to be ultimately

responsible for the healing of the patient - as long as the patient cooperates. In the more humanistic approach of pastoral counseling it is assumed that the client, with the aid of the counselor, is enabled to change behaviors, gain insights, and otherwise grow. In spiritual guidance, however, it is generally understood that healing and growth are not the result of willful endeavors of either or both parties, but are seen as gifts - the result of God working through grace, the ultimate nature of which is always mystery. These attitudes determine the way in which the person being helped is seen. In psychotherapy the person is a *patient*, a sick individual in need of cure. In pastoral counseling it is a client, a "*troubled person*" who is in need of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Here the person is seen primarily as a *soul searching for or being searched (for) by God*.

... psychotherapy is interested in self-understanding; pastoral counseling is interested in self-determination; and spiritual direction is interested in self-surrender to the discerned will of God.⁷⁹

Such distinctions as May makes in this earlier lecture are important so that one know clearly what one is about in spiritual direction/formation and that one recognize particularly that spiritual formation is God's process and not ours.

In his book *Pilgrimage Home: The Conduct of Contemplative Practice in Groups* May treats further the relationship between psychology and spirituality, here providing real help for the beginner in spiritual direction who may struggle with whether the phenomena observed are spiritual or psychological, how these phenomena should be treated, and how one might integrate into a comprehensive model the spiritual and psychological elements of the person. May says:

While we accumulated many valuable learnings and interesting conceptual models in this process our most valuable learning may have been that we were going about dealing with the problem in altogether the wrong way.

We had assumed that spirituality and psychology were basically different phenomena which needed to be unified by a new way of thinking. Now it appears more likely that psychology and spirituality *are in fact only different ways of THINKING ABOUT one basic reality*.

If our sense of this is true, then to try to integrate the concepts would be only an exercise in mental gymnastics. It would be much more reasonable to try to cut through the concepts altogether, ease our habitual desire to think *about* reality, and see if we can perceive the uncluttered and common truth which lies beneath the concepts of *both* psychology and spirituality. Such an approach is at the very heart of contemplative spirituality. It is a process of watching reality very carefully, directly and immediately, being willing to be involved in it just-as-it-is, without window dressing or prejudice. Out of this kind of perception seems to come a sense that truth and health are in fact the same thing.⁸⁰

May then goes on to indicate that psychology deals primarily with three things: one's awareness and its quality, contents and clarity; one's images of oneself and one's world, the values placed on these and their relationship to reality; the way in which one's desires and fears impinge upon one's feelings and behavior,

⁷⁹. Gerald May, "Spiritual Direction, Pastoral Counseling and Psychotherapy - A Differentiation," printed lecture.

⁸⁰. Gerald May, *Pilgrimage Home: The Conduct of Contemplative Practice in Groups*, NY: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 59.

including the question of one's freedom from these attachments. These three things also determine the degree to which a person can perceive truth/reality. Thus the search for truth is no different than the search for health. However, care must be taken in thinking that by dealing with only the one the other is automatically cared for: this is ultimately dualism. "A wholistic approach to human beings does not have to be created - things are wholistic just as they are. There only needs to be room in one's mind to realize this ..."81

Out of May's experience of the relationship between psychology and spiritual reality has come the phrase: "*It's only complicated if you try to figure it out.*"

In order to provide help with "psychiatric considerations encountered in spiritual direction", May has provided another book: *Care of Mind/Care of Spirit: Psychiatric Dimensions of Spiritual Direction*.82 Let me summarize it briefly.

May begins with defining spiritual guidance and psychotherapy, some attention to developmental and biological considerations about human existence, and then turns to the impact of unconscious dynamics on human behavior, not all of which should be seen as pathological. Especially contributory to spiritual growth is the *uneasiness* which people experience in a life filled with various sorts of satisfaction. He identifies as psychological conditioning which affects spiritual growth: mistrust, preconceptions of self-image, early symbols and images of God, childhood experiences, and pre-existing mind sets. He then explores the fear of dying (or living) that is often a part of *unitive* religious experience, wherein a part of oneself rebels, and the psychodynamic changes which occur in spiritual growth: freedom, enhanced intuitive abilities, lessening of attachments which may be accompanied by a grief process, the possibility of spiritual narcissism, and depressions or "dark nights" which can be a psychological response to spiritual growth.

In treating the interpersonal dynamics in spiritual direction, May indicates that the director "needs to keep remembering the reality of what is happening," which means to continually remind oneself that attention and awareness needs to remain focused on God. Distractions and divergences are all right, if not persistent. Such focus of attention on God is really an open awareness which excludes neither oneself nor the directee. The primary concern is to keep attention from being narrowed so that whatever captures attention excludes God.

In spiritual direction, if nowhere else, we must confront the unavoidable truth that "taking care of it" - whatever "it" may be - will happen of God and not of our singular personal willfulness. We may be instruments of God in taking care of something. We may be actual parts of Christ's body in God's work. But regardless of how intelligent or psycho-theologically sophisticated we may be, we eternally lack the ultimate wisdom to know how to take care of anything independently. Even if we cannot bring ourselves to admit this to ourselves in the rest of our life, we *must* accept it when it comes to the care of other souls. There is no psychological method, no theological treatise, no scriptural message, and no private or collective wisdom that can inform us of the full and ultimate desire God may have for a specific soul at a specific time.83

81. Ibid., pp. 55-66.

82. Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind/Care of Spirit: Psychiatric Dimensions of Spiritual Direction*., San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982.

83. Ibid., p. 101.

May then gives attention to transference and sexual feelings in direction. The latter need exploration as to whether they constitute a problem or not, whether they are expressions of basic spiritual energy, how the feelings are affecting the direction, and whether the director has the maturity to handle these feelings and discuss them where appropriate. The last two chapters deal with psychiatric syndromes and referral, consultation and collaboration, also acquainting the reader with the categories of the *DSM-III* (the latest revision of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* at that time).

Spirituality and Our Theological Traditions

Though Protestants have not, by and large, used the terms spiritual formation and direction until the present and often think about their churches in terms of their history, worship, and creeds, almost every tradition has a spirituality, named or unnamed. An excellent source for exploring this is *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, edited by Frank Senn.⁸⁴

Since I have briefly discussed Moravian spirituality in the Introduction, I would like to summarize some of Senn's comments about Lutheran spirituality as a model. Senn, a Lutheran, approaches Lutheran spirituality through an examination of the spirituality of Luther himself, affirming that "Luther's spiritual experience cannot be separated from his exegetical discoveries and theological reflection." This is clearly evidenced in recent scholarship, though this is not to deny that he also has medieval roots.

It is amazing how many older interpretations of Luther failed to recognize the significance of the fact that his basic convictions were not arrived at as a result of purely academic research but as a consequence of his struggles with God. It was his personal experience of a gracious God who forgives sinners for the sake of Jesus Christ which set his reform movement on its way. Because it was the Bible which brought him to this experience, he emphasized its authority. Because the Bible taught that man lives before God by faith, he de-emphasized the role of religious works. Because faith comes from what is heard, Luther emphasized the preaching of the gospel rather than the performance of ritual acts. Because the Church's testimony did not lead others to the same kind of experience, he emphasized the divinely-instituted means of grace (Word and Sacrament) over human institutions (e.g. the papacy, monasticism, etc.). A certain kind of spirituality is the consequence of these theological emphases with their implications for institutional reordering.⁸⁵

He then traces two elements in Luther which are common to all spirituality: asceticism and mysticism. When Luther entered the monastery of the Hermits of St. Augustine, there is solid evidence that he took his vows seriously and even went beyond the ordinary requirements of the Rule. Though in later reaction to the legalism of the late Middle Ages, he preferred not to make rules and regulations binding the consciences of others, he did attempt to portray the responsibilities of "evangelical freedom." And his own personality continued to carry the effects of his monastic discipline. Luther saw his continuing problem as *Anfechtung*, best translated as "spiritual struggle" in the presence of God where the wrath of God against the sinner is experienced. As he says, in such a situation "There is nothing left for him but this unspeakable sighing through which, without knowing it, he is supported by the Spirit and cries, 'Why does God pick on me!'" Luther found a way of dealing with *Anfechtung* in his study of Romans 1:17. In the Preface to the Complete Edition of his Latin Writings in 1545 he says:

⁸⁴. Frank Senn, ed., *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986.

⁸⁵. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely, by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me.

Luther then became fond of many of the mystics, but not in mysticism as a conceptual system. He was interested in "the inner side of the external creed, personally appropriated and felt," in the God who is hidden and yet revealed in the suffering and death of Christ. In his Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 Luther developed his "theology of the cross" for the first time. The true God is not an omnipotent monarch, but is the "crucified God."

Luther's spirituality can also be found in his prodigious liturgical revision, with the centrality of the Word which creates faith in the hearer, and the centrality of the Eucharist where Christ is as really present as in the Word.

The Smaller Catechism, a mainstay of Lutheran spirituality, was written for use in the households of ordinary persons. It focuses on the personal relationship with God which finds expression in prayer, providing that the Christian's day is to begin and end in remembrance of one's Baptism and including Luther's morning and evening prayers.

Luther and his coworkers also made extensive use of hymns, borrowed from previous traditions, modified or newly created, and the implication of his perspective on the priesthood of all believers, Senn believes, "lies not so much in its implication for church polity as in its implications for spirituality and social ethics." "...all Christians must live by grace alone through faith in the daily struggle between the 'flesh' and the 'Spirit', 'between sinful self-centeredness and faithful God-centeredness.'"⁸⁶

One could explore similarly the traditions of other denominations: what experiences gave them birth, in what forms did they express their faith and life, what disciplines of life and devotion, of liturgy and music did they develop? To see a tradition in terms of its spirituality is to listen to the heart-beat which originally made it live. It is so easy in the institutionalization of our traditions for succeeding generations to forget the sources of their life until times and the break-through of the Spirit make us realize again that they deal with living and lived matters.⁸⁷

A Brief History of the Rebirth of Spirituality

The sixties and early seventies seem to have been a significant decade for the development of modern interests in spirituality.

86. Ibid., pp. 9-49.

87. I wish to call attention to a fine book which makes contemporary the traditional Mennonite approach to spirituality in terms of discipleship, with full recognition of contemporary developments. John B. Martin has written *Ventures In Discipleship*, Herald Press, 1984, out of the research of his D. Min. project at Lancaster Seminary: "Discipline for Discipleship: A Handbook on Discipleship and Discipling with an Anabaptist Perspective". *Ventures* is intended to be used as a handbook in congregational groups.

I would like to begin by discussing the history of a movement that is not so well known today. In early Spring of 1964 the Lilly Endowment gave a grant of \$50,000 for a Project on Deepening of the Spiritual Life of the Seminary Students which later decided on a different starting point and was renamed Project for the Deepening of the Spiritual of the Seminary Faculty. Other grants were to follow over a more than ten year period. It was a personal concern of Harold Duling, a director of Lilly Endowment who, because of his contact with Charles Whiston, then teaching Systematic Theology and a course in prayer at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, asked Whiston to direct the project.⁸⁸ Shortly after the Lilly Board voted the grant Duling died.

The project originally started as a one-year study, consisting of regional conferences and retreats, conducted during Whiston's sabbatical. Some sixty theological seminaries were approached, out of which only 32 gave serious response to the Project. It was during this time that I became a representative from our Seminary, one of those graced events whose significance is not initially transparent. By 1968 national conferences for seminary faculty were started and the National Tryst Group or Fellowship came into being, an association of seminary faculty and administration committed to a personal discipline and the teaching of prayer in theological education. The discipline consisted of:

1. A daily tryst with Jesus Christ, (at such and such a place, and at such and such a time).
2. Content of the daily tryst with Christ:
 - a. A daily renewal of Covenant with Christ
 - b. A daily reading devotionally of the New Testament, to expose oneself to Christ as Person of God, and to meet Him and hear Him through the Bible World.
 - c. Daily intercessory praying for
 1. The other members of the Fellowship, who are also under the Rule.
 2. For one's own seminary faculty colleagues and students - by name.
3. Periodic examination of how the Rule has been kept, with appropriate thanksgiving or confession. At the end of each semester or quarter to report to some other person, some colleague or to the Director.⁸⁹

The last meeting of the Tryst Group was held in 1977 after which funds no longer were available to assist in the travel of the members. A report on this project was published in 1970, actually labeled "Final Report."⁹⁰ I believe that the impact of this Project may be impossible to evaluate, but I would assume that, often indirectly, it was a prime contributor to the present interest in spirituality.

One of the oldest of the spirituality institutes is that founded by Father Adrian Van Kaam at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, in 1963, where he came to teach in 1954 and aid in the development of a department of psychology. Van Kaam's commitment to spiritual formation dates back to the earlier years

⁸⁸. Charles Whiston was from 1930-38 Professor at Central China College, Wuchang, China. From 1938-45 he served Episcopal churches in New England, and in 1945 - 1971 was Professor of Systematic Theology at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley. He is the author of *The Ministry of Jesus* (Pilgrim Press), *When We Pray, Say 'Our Father'* (Pilgrim Press), *Instructions in the Life of Prayer* (Forward Movement Commission), *Teach Us to Pray* (Pilgrim Press), editor of Fenelon's *Christian Perfection* (Harper) and of *Pray: A Study of Distinctive Christian Praying* (Eerdmans), which was to be his last book. It is in this last book that one may best discover his insights and style of discipline.

⁸⁹. Charles Whiston, *The Lilly Endowment Project on the Deepening of the Spiritual Life of the Seminary Faculty, Final Report*, December 1970, p. 6. I believe this was published from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and should be in their library. I indicate this because it is my impression that there are no adequate historical records of this project except in the files of those who were involved.

⁹⁰. Ibid..

of his work as a member of the community of the Spiritans in his native Holland. In 1963 he started a subdivision of the University which was first called "The Institute of Man," having as its purpose "to foster integrative, theoretical research in the area of distinctively human formation."⁹¹ The Institute then took over a program in religion and personality from the psychology department and developed it in the direction of spiritual formation. Eventually it was renamed "Institute of Formative Spirituality." In the late 1960s Susan Muto affiliated with the Institute, first as an assistant to Father Van Kaam and then as its director, editor of its publications, and coordinator of its graduate programs. Together she and Father Van Kaam have produced an extensive body of literature, her specialization being formative or devotional reading. Father Van Kaam's contributions are discussed in the chapter on Psychological Models. Susan Muto now also directs the Epiphany Association which is an outgrowth of the Institute's programs for laity, originally called *Domus Dei*.

The Shalem Institute, Washington, DC, is a consequence of the spiritual journey of its founder, Tilden Edwards, an Episcopal priest. Edwards was director of the Metropolitan Training Center. During a sabbatical for three months he attended retreats and programs ranging from an Ignatian Retreat in Pennsylvania to intensive practice with Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama in Berkeley. He describes this journey in *Living Simply Through the Day*.⁹² On return he gathered an ecumenical group of clergy to meet every Friday morning to experience a wide range of meditation and prayer disciplines. Edwards' commitment to the importance of programs offering spiritual emphases in dealing with clergy development led to the formation of Shalem as a separate component of METC in 1975 and eventually its independence in 1979.⁹³ Dr. Gerald May, psychiatrist and neurologist, at first affiliated with Shalem as associate staff and faculty in 1973, in 1983 became Director for Spiritual Guidance. His works in psychology and neurology are very significant. In *Will and Spirit* he provides a contemplative psychology and in *Addiction and Grace* he published the first fruits of his "Brain Project", a three year project studying the relationship of neurological insights to spirituality.⁹⁴ Shalem's educational activities provide programs for spiritual directions, spiritual guidance, long-term spiritual formation programs, writing and research.

Though Faith at Work now operates with diminished resources and staff, at one time it had a Seminarian Program, started in 1972 and during my time of contact with it headed by the Rev. Stanley Jones. In March of 1975 it sponsored a "think tank" on spiritual formation in seminary communities, held at the Marriottsville Ohio Spiritual Center, attended by both students and seminary staff. In 1976 a second gathering was sponsored on "Exploration In Spiritual Development", using as a keynote speaker a psychoanalyst, George Bensen. The third and last gathering occurred in 1977, focusing on the theme of "The Use of Scripture In Spiritual Formation," using Walter Wink of Auburn Seminary to provide leadership. With the diminishing of Faith at Work resources the program ended there. As with the Lilly Project under Whiston, who can really trace the full impact of these three years of significant contribution upon those who participated.

91. *Institute of Formative Spirituality* (brochure), Pittsburgh: Duquesne U., 1987, p. 4

92. Tilden Edwards, *Living Simply Through the Day*, NY: Paulist Press, 1977.

93. See also Shalem News, June 1983, in which Edwards reflects on the beginnings of Shalem on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. Gerald May also tells the story of Shalem in *Pilgrimage Home: The Conduct of Contemplative Practice in Groups*, NY: Paulist Press, 1979.

94. Gerald May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982, and *Addiction and Grace*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Voyage: Vision: Venture is the 1972 Report of the Task Force on Spiritual Development of the then American Association of Theological Schools.⁹⁵ The first several paragraphs of the Editorial Introduction give the background:

For a number of years the Executive Committee of the American Association of Theological Schools have shared with the staff the conviction that a priority issue of major dimensions is that of the spiritual development of persons preparing for ministry.

From concerned laymen, from church leaders, from seminary presidents who interpret the educational enterprise to the constituency have come expressions of concern that a clear word be said and significant steps taken to give some assurance that those sent out to be preachers, teachers, and church leaders should not only *know about* the eternal God but that they should *know* firsthand the One to whom the scriptures bear witness.⁹⁶

A grant was received from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and a task force appointed, whose report constituted the 1972 issue of *Theological Education*. The report offered such conclusions as:

-quoting the late Samuel H. Miller, Dean of Harvard Divinity School: "The spiritual maturation of the theological student is a prevalent need. The seminaries are too intellectual and academic. They should be more concerned about the fitness they are preparing the student to have. Particularly Protestants have tended to think that all problems can be solved at the intellectual level. The men who come to us now to be trained for Christian ministry do not begin in faith ... they hunger for it."

- "Students really do expect those of us who work within theological faculties and administration to be onto things of faith, about which we can speak with intelligence, and by which our own life styles and professional competence are informed and given shape."

- "The matter of spiritual development stands as a delicate, knotty matter, highly subjective yet intellectually demanding. It must be given new and priority reflection within our own lives, in relation to our tasks, in tandem with our colleagues, with and for the sake of our students. We are convinced that it is in dealing with the matter of spiritual formation that theological intelligence finds its mooring and it is there that ministry still discovers its justification for being and its power to act redemptively in human affairs." ⁹⁷

As a consequence of the findings of the task force a follow-up was called for. This follow-up took the form of six regional conferences to share models and information related to the place of spirituality within the theological curriculum, staffed by the Shalem Institute. This was then followed by a national conference on spiritual formation in Denver in June 1980, just preceding the regular meeting of the Association of Theological Schools.

There are many who have contributed to recent interest in spirituality. In 1980 The Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry focused on programming for spiritual formation in continuing education. One only has to mention the name of Henri Nouwen to think of the many he has influenced by his teaching and writing, and by his many experiments in his own ministry. There is the

⁹⁵. *Theological Education*, Nashville: The American Association of Theological Schools, Spring 1972.

⁹⁶. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁹⁷. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

programming of the Center for Religious Development, Cambridge, MA., under the direction of Fathers William Barry and William Connolly, which for a time had a joint program with Weston Seminary. The work of Alan Jones at General Seminary's (New York) Center for Christian Spirituality and John Yungblut's work in the development of the Guild For Spiritual Guidance, Rye, NY, really deserve more attention. John Biersdorf, Director of what was previously the Institute for Advanced Pastoral Studies (now part of the Ecumenical Theological Center in Detroit), provided spirituality programming because of his special interests and attempted the establishment of a D. Min. in spirituality. In 1982 The Upper Room began an Academy for Spiritual Formation in Nashville. Matthew Fox and his emphasis on creation spirituality has had a significant impact, headquartered at the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality, Oakland, California. Then there is Parker Palmer's writing and experimentation with Christian community at Pendle Hill, Wallingford, Pa., and presently at the St. Benedict Center in Madison Wisconsin and the significant writings of Kenneth Leech at the Runnymede Trust, London. One should mention also the development of programming in Jesuit centers using Jungian psychology and the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* as models. Thomas Merton's writings have continued his impact following his unfortunate death. The Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle Project together with the work of Fowler and others have helped in understanding the process and stages of faith.⁹⁸

It is not possible to give all credit who deserve credit nor to trace interactions and lines of influence which may never be clear. Suffice it to indicate that since the 1960s there has been a rebirth of spirituality which one can only hope is not a fad, but a persisting contribution for the future.

⁹⁸. See Chapter on Type and Faith Development.