

A Theology of
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

for the

**Presbyterian Church
of Southern Africa**

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Abstract

This essay is written in response to a lacuna that appears to exist within the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa with regard to the ancient and highly regarded ministry of spiritual direction. My primary assertion is that, in the light of what might be perceived of as a crisis of relevance in Presbyterian life and spiritual practice, spiritual direction offers one particular way of fostering an exciting and existentially relevant spirituality for the denomination. Through the hoped-for renewal brought about by direction, Presbyterians may well have something to say to a South Africa racked not only with violence and poverty, but also bored by an increasingly irrelevant Christianity.

The essay traces that history of spiritual direction most apposite to Presbyterianism in South Africa. This includes an overview of aspects of the Celtic and African spiritual traditions with a view to finding any correspondence that would help to narrow the distance between the spirituality of its black and white members. It then asks questions about the character and tasks of directors. Highlighted is the task of fostering an awareness of God that is not purely "heavenly minded", but is able to speak into the real issues facing Presbyterians today. The essay goes on to explore the relationship that should exist between director and directee, focussing for a moment on the direction necessary in the directee's prayer life.

The essay comes full circle as it considers the implications of introducing direction more widely in this largely "directionless" denomination. As a microcosm of the country, divergent cultures are as much a reality in the P.C.S.A. as in the rest of South Africa. So respect for uniqueness and the practice of interpathy are encouraged as part of the familiarisation process.

Throughout the essay, I attempt to show that spiritual direction is a means of allowing the directee to more clearly discern the voice of the Spirit, who constantly encourages the transcendence of self - viz. the breaking of and dying to old perceptions, habits and beliefs so that s/he might more fully enter into the mystery that one usually refers to as **God**.

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Appendix I

1 Introduction

The front-cover article of *Newsweek* magazine entitled *The Search for the Sacred*, pays homage to the contemporary quest for spiritual meaning that is so evident throughout the world today:

From stock brokers to artists, from Andre Agassi to David Mamet, millions of people around the world are embarking on a new search for the sacred in their lives. Whether out of dissatisfaction with the material world or a sense of apprehension inspired by the approaching millennium, they are seeking to put spirituality back into their lives. For...it's even OK to use the S words - soul, sacred, spiritual, sin. (*Newsweek* November 1994:3)

This search for a new depth of meaning in life is not found exclusively among people who do *not* already subscribe to a particular religious tradition. Even committed Christians in the denomination of their choice are beginning to seek out new or unexplored ways of deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ. This means that Christian denominations that lean towards a more rational and dogmatic approach need to rediscover their authentic spiritual heritage in order to meet the growing demand by people to put "spirituality back into their lives".

Spiritual direction is a ministry that has little following at present in the denomination of *my* choice, the P.C.S.A.¹ But here is a ministry that has for centuries offered an important, if not crucial, alternative means of learning about God, self and others to Christians who are serious about their commitment to spiritual growth. In this essay, I hope to show that spiritual direction can offer to members of the P.C.S.A. a particular way of fostering their spiritual lives. Spiritual direction could well be exactly what many members, who are no longer satisfied with a faith limited to a few parts of an already over-compartmentalised life, are looking for to find the depth of God in their lives as a whole. Having said that, one should keep in mind that spiritual direction is not some panacea that promises to cure the spiritual ills of the denomination. It is merely one, albeit important, form of ministry that has been largely neglected by Presbyterians in South

Africa.

The structure of the essay is as follows: After an investigation into what I feel is a clear need, even a mandate, for spiritual direction in the denomination, the essay traces that history of direction in the church that has a direct bearing on P.C.S.A. members. Thus it focuses on the relevant strands of the various traditions of Christian spiritual direction, namely;

- the biblical and early church traditions, which are relevant to all Christians.

- the Celtic church and the Reformed church traditions, which are relevant specifically to P.C.S.A. members of European and Scottish descent.

- the African indigenous traditions, which impact on especially the denomination's African members.

By synthesising these traditions of spiritual direction into the present South African context, I hope to show that Presbyterians have something unique to offer the spiritual seeker in this country given the present concerns for social and environmental justice. This aim is achieved by exploring the tasks and characteristics predicated of directors in the P.C.S.A.

The question of the relationship between director and directee is examined next and supplemented with a treatise on direction in the prayer life of the directee. The essay ends with how direction might be introduced into the P.C.S.A. as well as how it might be encouraged to grow on a wider scale, giving due consideration to the challenges posed by cross-cultural spiritual direction.

Stated simply, this essay investigates three broad questions; the *why*, the *from whence* and the *where unto* of spiritual direction in the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa.

2 Definitions

It might be useful to make an initial attempt at defining some terms that may occur on a regular basis in this essay which have a direct bearing on spiritual direction. I do not mean for these definitions to be theologically final in any sense, but they should serve to clarify and orientate further discussion.

I think of *soul* as an all encompassing term for the whole of individual existence manifested by the entirety of one's being, body, mind and spirit. *Spirit* is thought to represent the vital energy, or dynamic force of being that brings the soul into living reality (May 1992:7). Thus, while soul includes spirit, spirit both includes and transcends soul. The individual spirit is fundamentally and mysteriously grounded in the Spirit of God. This Spirit is to be clearly distinguished from those forces which impel us away from God's Spirit, known classically as "evil spirits". This process of distinguishing between the different actions of these spirits on our lives is known as *spiritual discernment*.

Spiritual guidance comes from many different sources - friends, parents, elders, church activities and Biblical teachings - and is that activity which helps a person to deepen his² faith and spiritual growth. However, *spiritual direction* is when spiritual guidance occurs in a specific, one-to-one relationship with a person who has greater experience in things of the spirit than the one seeking guidance. The director and directee usually meet at regular and mutually agreed upon intervals. Notice that I think of the term *spiritual mentoring* as a synonym for spiritual direction. Barry and Connolly (1981:8) give a very useful definition of spiritual direction. It is the

help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.

The focus of attention in spiritual direction according to Barry and Connolly is the *experience* of the directee,

especially the experience of the mystery that is God. They are careful, however, not to create a false dualism between experiences of God and experiences of the mundane. An experience of God is viewed "not as an isolated event, but as an expression of the ongoing personal relationship God has established with each one of us" (Barry & Connolly 1981:8). One's relationship with Ultimate Reality can be expressed in every aspect of one's life, but only when these areas are recognised as being imbued with the presence of God, and the consequences of this reflected upon. The director is specifically interested in what happens when a person consciously comes into God's presence, and this can happen through *any* experience.

Spiritual direction happens, then, when two people meet on the level of the heart, coming together to hear about the action of the Spirit in the life of the directee. God's presence is sought as they walk as it were on holy ground through their sharing in love and trust. The directee is supported, encouraged and challenged to a deeper relationship with God and this may be a painful process. Nevertheless, the goal is always a greater openness and responsiveness to God's presence in one's life. It is not an escape from the real hurt, pain and suffering of the world. And so as one's relationship with God is deepened, there is a corresponding maturity in one's relationship with others as they are recognised and met at the level of the spirit, which both includes and transcends a meeting of minds and wills, leading to the situation in which we can say with heartfelt conviction: *I can see in you the glory of my King and I love you with the love of the Lord.*

3 Why Spiritual Direction?

3.1 A Quest for Meaning

Few people would disagree that the world finds itself in a state of crisis that is a moral and spiritual

one at heart. Jung (in Clift 1983:6) recognised that individuals are suffering more than ever from the problem of meaninglessness. He found that people's outer circumstances would inevitably lack the ability to give real meaning and purpose to their lives. So often they would begin at this time a quest for a spiritually meaningful life not obtainable from universities, libraries, or even, sad to say, churches.

Since the break up of the medieval world, there has been a dramatic increase in the development of people's rational faculties, as is witnessed to by modern science and technology. However, as John Macmurray (in Barry 1991:104) points out, there has not been a corresponding emotional development. Westerners have allowed their minds the freedom to grow, but have been distrustful of their emotional lives, which are still largely underdeveloped. As a result, people are experiencing a dramatic loss of faith. Faith does not mean an intellectual assent or decision to accept a doctrine, dogma, or set of truths, but a heartfelt commitment (ie. a mature, affective response) to God's intention for our world. Macmurray (in Barry 1991:103) goes on to say that when we lose faith "we lose the power of action; we lose the capacity of choice, we lose our grip on reality and so our sanity"; one would think a fair description of the western world today.

So people feel the lack of faith in their lives even if they are intellectually unaware that this is the cause of their sense of meaninglessness. They are seeking for a way to come into contact with transcendent reality in a personally relevant way, but are disappointed by the way many churches are offering to meet this need. They find the church far too cerebral, too bent on ensuring a right rational understanding of, and assent to, dogma.

3.1.1 The Turn to Psychotherapy

Jung (Clift 1983:7) recognised that people who suffer from a sense of meaninglessness needed inner

healing. He also felt that the healing required in such cases was, in essence, a function of religion and not psychotherapy. Unfortunately, traditional spiritual guides were found wanting in his opinion. Jung and his patients were interested only in guidance that stemmed from direct, personal experiences. Books, scriptures and churches seemed able only to offer the experiences of others. So Jung took upon himself the task of spiritual guide as he attempted to foster the awareness of the images of wholeness, or *archetypes*, that arose spontaneously from the unconscious independently of the conscious mind.

Since Freud and Jung, people have turned to the psychologists in droves to find guidance in all sorts of matters, and have often found answers to questions of family life, personal difficulties, and inner conflict. Thus, in the lives of many churchgoers a schism has occurred. Church still offers fellowship, moral guidance and a sense of rootedness in tradition, but it is no longer the centre of psychological and emotional guidance that it has been for centuries (May 1992:3). But people have become disillusioned with what the proponents of pop-psychotherapy have to offer. Again, people are not content with the experiences of these self-appointed gurus but are looking for answers within their own very personal struggle with the real issues of meaning in life ... a task for religion, not psychotherapy as Jung so rightly discerned.

Some people have turned to the charismatic churches which have offered a less intellectual, more profoundly direct experience of the Holy Spirit. Others have turned East to find an experience of God; people interested in Zen, *Satsang* meetings, Buddhist retreats and saffron-clad, mantra-chanting worship of Lord Krishna are no longer a curiosity along South Africa's broadening religious horizons.

Then there are those who have turned to more traditional forms of spiritual direction. As a result there has been a plethora of articles, books and seminars on the subject. But, as May (1992:5) cautions, spiritual direction is not an easy undertaking, not some cure-all formula. There are deep theological questions that need to be considered. For example, there is clearly a need for training, but one has to question how much of spiritual guidance can really be taught. Is it not in fact a charism, a gift of the Spirit? There are issues of

denominational differences to consider, questions of inter-cultural direction and the relation between, and integration of, spiritual direction and psychology. No treatise on spiritual direction for the present-day Presbyterians or other Christians would be complete without addressing May's concerns, and I attempt to do so in the various sections of this essay.

3.1.2 Spiritual Crises and Transformation

The quest for spiritual meaning is often initiated by a spiritual awakening that completely transforms the life of the individual. Religion itself is concerned with transformation, the turning of individuals, communities, the world and the universe towards a higher unity with Ultimate Reality. Various authors through the ages have attempted to map out the process of transformation, often using the analogy of a journey of a pilgrim through a hostile land. Many Christian authors have understood transformation as a three-fold process, which includes a time of *purification*, followed by a time of *illumination*, then *union* with God.

Roberto Assagioli (1991:112) identifies two important and decisive crises that accompany the process of inner transformation. These include, first, the crisis that precedes inner rejuvenation (one's first orientation towards God) and the later "dark night" that takes place in the spiritually advanced person. Both crises are potentially painful periods, but are necessary to show that

every individual thing, even a good thing, divorced from everything else...is of transient value and useless....But man - blind, ignorant - is afraid to let go, he does not want to give up the crutches that support himself....So he resists with all his might the invitations and commands of the Spirit - until, when his resistance runs out, he has no choice but to give himself up. Then to his joy, he discovers that, instead of the feared annihilation, he has a new, greater and superior type of life (Assagioli 1991:113).

The problem is that spiritual awakening is more often than not accompanied by complications, disturbances and fear that closely resemble certain states of schizophrenia. But whilst the experiences of both are similar, the "mystic provides the example of the method whereby the inner and outer world may be joined, the schizophrenic the tragic results when they are separated" (in Leech 1994:104).

In primitive cultures, there were specific, time-honoured means of aiding a person undergoing such a crisis to resolve it. However, in a society such as ours that "does not provide referential guides for comprehending this kind of crisis experience, the individual...typically undergoes an intensification of his suffering" (in Campbell 1972:210).

For generations of Christians experiencing spiritual awakening, the spiritual director was the person who guided the individual through the dangers of the inner journey. They had to discern for themselves those who were emotionally mature and also those who were weaker. The former could be pressed into a deeper walk with God. The latter would not be encouraged to deepen their exploration of the inner world.

Contemporary psychologists are less supercilious today than ever of the various religious traditions' mystics who attempted to point to the reality of nonordinary states of consciousness. These were the people who used innovative and imaginative signs and symbols to express their essentially inexpressible experiences of transcendence. Thanks to Freud and Jung, they realise that instances of nonordinary states of consciousness cover a wide spectrum, from purely spiritual states on the one end to pathological states that require medical treatment on the other (Grof 1989: xiii). What contemporary counsellors (be they directors or analysts) are required to do is adopt a balanced approach, which avoids the tendency to pathologise mystical states or alternatively, the tendency to spiritualise psychotic states. Therefore, just as directors need to be have a reasonably good grasp of psychological issues, at least enough to recognise those cases they would need to refer, so too do psychoanalysts need to avoid the tendency to denigrate the importance of people's spiritual lives.

3.2 *Psychotherapy and Spiritual direction*

Directors are being increasingly exposed to the Jungian school of thought. The fact that the latter is less antagonistic to religion than their Freudian predecessors means that the differences between psychotherapy and spiritual direction are less remarkable now than ever before. But differences there are and so need to be recognised.

Normally, the psychologist or counsellor becomes necessary when there is a *specific* problem that requires fairly immediate attention; for example a relational problem, depression, neurosis or psychosis. In contrast, spiritual direction tends to be a process that occurs most often when there are not specific psychological problems. In fact it is the person who is relatively well integrated - psychologically and emotionally, that stands to benefit most from spiritual direction.

Unlike directors, psychologists are normally clinic-based rather than church or community-based. As a result they normally lack the continuous involvement with the patient's family and friends which is so essential to pastoral care (Leech 1994:97). On the other hand, the director normally belongs to the same community as the directee unlike the therapist. And even though the director/directee relationship is one-on-one, spiritual direction has a very definite prophetic character that impacts on the wider community.

Finally, psychological counselling most often aims at enabling the individual to adjust to societal norms. Making the individual fit into normal society is the great achievement. But direction simply refuses to see mere adjustment to what society deems "normal" as a goal. South African Presbyterians will be keenly aware of the dangers of finding peace with a society that not too long ago justified oppression of others by using Biblical passages to bolster their arguments. As Leech (1994:98) succinctly puts it;

The Christian ideal of life envisions something higher than freedom from anguish or invulnerability to its ravages. Its goal cannot be the perfectly adjusted self (in) the world as it is.

3.3 *Why Spiritual Direction for the P.C.S.A.?*

My discovery of the long and distinguished tradition of the ministry of spiritual direction in the Christian church has been both a joy and a privilege. Nevertheless, I ask myself why this discovery occurred in an academic institution and not as a vital part of the life of the denomination in which I have been nurtured, and in which I now serve. Clearly there is a need to spell out what is meant by this ministry and to point out its salient features to a denomination that has denied itself of the great value of spiritual direction.

I believe that the Presbyterian Church of South Africa is in a crisis. This crisis is primarily one of *relevance*, and it affects two broad but interrelated areas of concern: There is the quest of the denomination to become relevant on the *communal* level for a post-apartheid South Africa, and there is the need for a new and relevant spiritual and contemplative experience of God on the *personal* level.

3.3.1 *Communal Relevance*

The first crisis is the question of the P.C.S.A.'s broad communal relevance. Politically, this country has for the first time in its history a democratically elected government. A greater number of previously disadvantaged people have access to western education and enjoy growing economic clout. South African television programming tends to promote American lifestyles and values, with sports such as American basketball boasting a huge following among South African youth. The sociological implications of these factors means that South Africa's newly empowered people are being introduced to Western values at an ever increasing rate. These values pose a serious challenge to accepted norms of family and religious life of South Africa's African population and will quite likely continue to undermine the traditional African concept of community - *Ubuntu*.

There is also the search for justice in a country that has a long history of human rights abuses, an inequitable distribution of its economic and land resources and a rampant crime rate. How does the P.C.S.A. effectively address these concerns in a contextual and relevant way? What then does the P.C.S.A. have to offer the people of South Africa who have diverse socio-religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and who are facing unprecedented changes in their lifestyles and thinking?

South Africa is also witness to the worldwide phenomenon of the growing interest in spiritual matters. The end of South Africa's international isolation has seen a breaking of the strong influence certain Christian denominations had on much of the media. The broadcasting of non-Christian religions on television is forcing people into questions of whether there are legitimate alternatives to conceiving of, and expressing faith in, Ultimate Reality. Magazines with mass appeal continue to carry starsign predictions which are more popular than ever. Almost every year we read news reports on Satanic rituals and practices. Rumours abound in black communities of children being abducted to be used in the making of *muti*. There are continued media reports of UFO sightings. There has been an increased interest in, and use of, mind altering drugs. All this has contributed to a growing awareness of the fact that phenomena from areas of consciousness (both good and evil) beyond so-called normal consciousness do impact on our everyday states of wakefulness.

There are many concerned citizens who see these things as signs of increased wickedness among Godless people. But this reaction lacks insight and discernment. Clearly, the abduction and murder of people is abhorrent and the perpetrators need to be brought to justice. Nevertheless there seems to be a marked turn to esoteric ideas, practices and religion, especially in academic circles. Is this in itself wrong? Is it not because the churches are no longer seen as places where meaning can be found? Is it not about time that the churches admit to themselves that many of these issues are indicative of the desperate cry for a meaningful spirituality by a people who are not able to find it in the churches that purport to offer a way to a spiritually fulfilled life in Christ? Do not "drugs, sex and Rock and Roll" speak eloquently of the church's *inability* to meet the

spiritual need of our times?

I think that the P.C.S.A. needs to address these issues as a matter of some urgency, and question themselves about what steps are being taken to meet the earnest cry for spiritual meaning. The snappy catchphrase "A church for our times" decorating P.C.S.A. magazines and correspondence shows a desire to be relevant, but somehow advertising is not enough. People are turning to the East or drugs because the church has hidden its light under a bushel through its almost idolatrous insistence on "correct" dogma, most often only accessible through an intricate and often confusing system of theological "newspeak" (this paper is a good example!).

To the sceptics in the Presbyterian church I pose the questions: In the face of dwindling numbers that no ecumenical union with other denominations should seek to mask, is our current spirituality truly relevant for the people of our country? Is it even relevant to those of us *within* the P.C.S.A.? The answer is perhaps not an unqualified "no", but the fact that the questions are being asked should at least give cause for Presbyterians to rethink the way in which Christ is presented to people. If our spirituality is not fully relevant to people today, then we need to find ways to make it so.

One way is to rediscover lost or ignored forms of spirituality within the Presbyterian community - present as well as past. My suggestion in this paper is that, in the search for an existentially relevant spirituality for people in the P.C.S.A. and South Africa, the ministry of *spiritual direction* is the means of exploring new ways of creating the catalyst that will unleash a new reformation for a church presently floundering in the spiritual doldrums.

3.3.2 Personal Relevance

Second, there is the crisis Presbyterians face with their *personal* spirituality in these topsy turvy times.

Less and less people in the P.C.S.A. are satisfied with "pure" Reformed theology and spirituality. As people come into contact with other religions, or become theologically literate (many Presbyterians study theological subjects through institutions which offer courses by correspondence, such as UNISA), they realise that issues, previously thought to be sacrosanct, are far from having found any final theological formula: For example, the validity of infant baptism, the corporeality of the resurrection of Jesus and the meaning of the Trinity. Added to these questions is the growing desire among people today to find God in more meaningful ways, to engage in the deep questions of their own relationship with God. Presbyterians are wanting to respond to the call to an ever deepening walk with God, but do not know how. They know that they need to find new ways of praying and living out their faith but cannot find the people who can show them how to do so.

I found in my interviews that there were a number of ministers in particular who certainly seemed to be in need of spiritual direction. A friend and fellow student for the ministry in the P.C.S.A. recently took up his new position as assistant to a minister in a local Presbyterian congregation. Fresh from his years of theological study at Rhodes University, he enthusiastically threw himself at the challenges and opportunities that came his way. But his enthusiasm, which could well have been a breath of fresh air blowing through a congregation grown musty in its staidly traditional ways, was almost immediately perceived of as a threat. Soon this young person felt utterly rejected by his immediate superior and the session. He also felt alienated from the local Presbytery whose lack of support made a mockery of its vow to nurture and encourage his budding ministry. It is not surprising that his disillusionment turned quickly to hurt and a questioning of his call into the ministry.

Quite obviously the conflict between supervisor and probationer would suggest a need for immediate pastoral counselling. Both supervisor and probationer required some form of mediator to help resolve differences. What is less obvious is that the young man's relationship with God had been adversely affected. This is where we see the first signs for the real necessity for spiritual direction. To whom could this young

person turn to express his feelings of anger towards and disappointment in God because of his experiences? Certainly not his session or Presbytery. How was he supposed to be able to discern God's will in this situation, to discover what is God saying to him through this experience? He desperately needed a spiritual director.

But the need in the P.C.S.A. for spiritual direction is not limited to young people entering the ministry for the first time. A minister of thirty years with whom I spoke had suddenly realised that his prayer life was practically non-existent. He could not remember when last he had felt any assurance of God's love and intimate presence. He had lost interest in the work and life lived as an offering to God and God's people. How is this person to understand his present experience? Who can he turn to when he needs someone who will help to lead him back into the heart of God's love?

Feminist issues are also becoming a major concern within the P.C.S.A. A woman (one of the very few female clergy in the P.C.S.A.) felt that the inherently patriarchal attitude of her colleagues was in direct conflict with her experience of God: a God who accepted the value and importance of her gifts and talents precisely as a woman, a God who in her experience was as much Mother as Father. The questions that arose included the following: Is it God's will that she stay to confront the sexism in the P.C.S.A.? Or should she leave to take up a position in another part of the world where imbalances between men and women in the ministry are not so thoughtlessly (one hopes) propagated? How is she to know which alternative to choose? How is she to discern the will of God in this situation? What are the consequences of her own actions and those of her colleagues in terms of her walk with God? Clearly, this minister is in need of spiritual direction.

Writing on spiritual direction for women, Kathleen Fischer (1988:5) suggests

As in the past, so today fresh theological and spiritual impulses are transforming the spiritual direction context. Chief among these are the insights of feminist theologians, spiritual writers and therapists. In the light of their challenge, it is clear that spiritual friendship will not meet the needs of women unless it reflects an awareness of the cultural and religious situation in which women find themselves

and an acknowledgement of the harmful effects of the sexist society in which we live.

These are examples of people who have problems and find themselves in need of direction. Yet while direction is an excellent means of helping people with difficulties, it is even more effective for people who do not have specific problems, as we shall see later. I think then that on the personal level, direction clearly offers a way towards a meaningful and relevant spirituality.

Of course, these two areas of concern - the personal and communal - are not unrelated, as if our spirituality had nothing to do with the real issues of life! Spiritual direction, concerned as it is with the transformation of our own consciousness, is not introspective in a self-serving way, but intimately concerned with the everyday issues and crises that we are presently facing. A truly Christian spirituality is never purely heavenly-minded, but always centred on a present hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Christian spirituality affirms that the Kingdom impinges on this world already through the Incarnation, in spite of the evil in the world. Because of the Incarnation, the continued felt presence of Christ exists right now. It is given as gift to all who seek it. Spiritual direction creates the opportunity for one to develop a vision broad enough to see the reality of Christ in every bit of one's life.

Kenneth Leech (1994:186) has said that vision and clear insight are the fruits of contemplation, and this clear vision allows us to see through the phoney claims of human systems. For spiritual direction to foster this kind of vision, it needs to be integral, taking into account both our denomination's contextual situation and its members' quest for a personally relevant and authentic spirituality. That spiritual mentoring is a necessity for Presbyterians who require it (note: not all Christians will necessarily have need of direction) is already abundantly clear to those people who know about and actively practise this ministry. One respondent to my questionnaire - a minister who has been in direction with a Jesuit priest in Pietermaritzburg, spoke eloquently of the tremendous benefits accrued from having seen this director. His sense of God's love, calling, and vision for his future ministry was appreciably deepened, along with his prayer life.

But it is precisely here that the problem lies; this was the only Presbyterian of all my respondents (about twenty) who had experienced spiritual direction in its full sense! Worse still, so *few* Presbyterians know anything at all about spiritual direction. And more often than not, the little that is known is distorted by caricatured images of overbearing bishops lauding their spiritual authority over a confused laity. But in the Christian tradition, spiritual direction has always been an important element in the quest for spiritual maturity. Why has there been so little in the Reformed church?

3.4 Scarcity of Direction in the Reformed tradition

The practice of regularly turning to a director for assistance in one's spiritual life has been far less common amongst the Reformers than the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox denominations. An investigation into why this is so reveals that spiritual direction seemed to be thrown out as part of the general anti-Roman Catholic polemic propagated by the early Reformers. In other words, spiritual direction - understood in the full sense of the term - was never *specifically* rejected by the Reformers, but seemed to be pushed out with many other "Roman" spiritual practices. What then, were some of the specific reasons for the Reformers not fully embracing the practice of spiritual direction?

3.4.1 A Narrowing of Perspective

After the council of Trent (1545-1563 C.E. just after the Reformation) there was a severe narrowing of the perspective on spiritual direction. Kenneth Leech (1994:53f) explains that spiritual direction had become concerned almost entirely with questions of morality and good character, and the director came to be the person who settled specific problems in a rather casuistic fashion. The director had become a person

who only heard confession and gave absolution. Absolution, in turn, became little more than a judicial act in which the priest passed sentence very much like a judge.

Jean Calvin (Institutes III, IV, 19: 645) was virulent in his rejection of the practice of certain forms of confession. He branded it

...a thing so pestilent and in so many ways harmful to the church...useless and fruitless (and having) occasioned so many impieties, sacrileges, and errors, who would not consider that it should be abolished forthwith?

He added that the forgiveness of sins was not dependent on the person receiving the confession, in other words the priest himself, and refused to concede that the "gate to paradise is closed to one who has neglected the opportunity... (to confess) in the ear of some priestling" (Institutes III,IV, 18:644). But Calvin did not reject all forms of confession, and had a "deep concern with the question of guidance of conscience" (Leech 1994:81). Nevertheless, he has a bone to pick with certain ways in which confession was practised. Regrettably, it seems as if Calvin's polemic against confession led to spiritual direction being seen in a rather negative light by many people within the Reformed tradition. It is this attitude that I now wish to address.

At no time in the Christian church was the role of spiritual director ever fully equated with the priest who offered sacramental absolution. Confession played (and still does play) a most significant part in the *metanoia* sought for in the direction process ie. confession, repentance and transformation. The Reformers did not reject confession itself, but, as has been stressed, only the way it was practised at the time. This then led to the spurning of spiritual direction by default, simply *because* of its uncomfortably close association with confession at the time. Thus one might say that direction had become preoccupied with the examination of *conscience* as opposed to *consciousness*. In other words, there was an over-emphasis on issues of morality as opposed to encouraging directees to become more reflexively aware of the fact that they have consciousness, that they are able to reflect on the things which occur in their awareness.

Of course unlike today, the reality of God did not have to be positively fostered for the people of

Europe in Calvin's time. God was palpably present in their hearts and minds as well as in their shrines in the towns and countryside (Townsend 1991:44). So the phrase *examination of conscience* would not have been defined as casuistically as it is today. Nevertheless, an *examen* (to use Ignatius of Loyola's term - Calvin's contemporary) is always at risk of degenerating into a kind of rigid moralising that suffers from an absence of a God of grace. This certainly seemed to have been the case with the watered-down version of direction in the church at that time.

But did Calvin actually *do* anything to overcome what he considered to be an unbalanced approach to confession and direction in the Roman Catholic church? I think not. It is significant that Calvin begins his *Institutes* by dealing with the interrelatedness that exists between the knowledge of God and knowledge of self.

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves...In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God" (I,I 1:37) .

In this statement one realises that Calvin understood that contemplation of one's sins *only* is not sufficient to come to a full knowledge of self and God. He goes on to say that "it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face". Unfortunately, on a *practical* level, Calvin seemed equally unable as the Catholic church of the time to break free from this tendency to pay more attention to sins and the fallen state than to the fact that human beings are able to *reflexively* contemplate the mystery of their own existence. Notice that immediately after his magnificent opening statement, Calvin "solution" to human separation from God is that....

each one of us must ...be so stung by the consciousness of his own unhappiness as to attain at least some knowledge of God...(for it is) from the feeling of our own ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity, and - what is more - depravity and corruption, we recognise that the true light of wisdom...rest(s) in

the Lord alone (Institutes I, I, 1:36).

The use of the word "consciousness" should not mislead one into thinking Calvin had overcome the moralistic bias. In fact, Calvinism went on to become a "system in which God is most highly glorified and man most deeply abased" (Meeter 1960:38), with Meeter actually applauding this approach as "highly commendable." If anything the Calvinists, instead of breaking out of a religiosity of moralising and then broadening the area of contemplation to include all other aspects of human consciousness, simply got bogged down even further than the Catholics in issues of sin and conscience. Thus, my contention is that through the lack of adequate investigation into the true meaning of direction by the Reformers, the very ministry that might have contributed to the overcoming of a narrowing of perspective in so many areas of religious and daily life in its fostering of an ever deepening of consciousness, was overlooked.

3.4.2 Sacerdotalism

Sacerdotalism stems from an excessive reliance on the priest in one's spiritual walk. For the Reformers, no person could stand in the place of Jesus as the mediator of God's grace and salvation, and they felt that the priest was never in any position to usurp the place of Jesus. Once again the Roman Catholic church of the time would have agreed wholeheartedly with this sentiment, but the Reformation was in full swing, and no one really wanted to look for and find commonalities amid the frenzied Papist-bashing that was so popular at that time³.

The term "spiritual direction" sounded too authoritarian to the Reformed ear, and for them in direct conflict with the insistence that it is God's grace and not human action that is the primary factor in spiritual development (Rice 1991:142). Given the misunderstanding surrounding the practice of direction at the time of the Reformation, directors were regarded with suspicion as people who tried to usurp the authority of Christ in the life of the believer. This suspicion has carried through in the Reformed churches to this day,

although it is far less prevalent now that the true meaning and value of this ministry has steadily come to light.

3.4.3 Reformed Practices

The third factor that discouraged the use of directors was the growth of certain Reformed spiritual practices. One important aspect of Reformed devotion was an insistence on *private* prayer and reading of scripture. This practice, which although very useful and necessary, tended to make people value their private relationship with God more than their need for others. For example, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* stresses the solitary character of one's spiritual journey. Leech (1994:82) suggests that this has influenced large sections of evangelical Christianity to stick to a sturdily independent, "do-it-yourself" spirituality.

But in his article *Consultation; Spiritual Guidance in the Reformed tradition*, Howard Rice (1991:121f) emphasises the Reformed tradition's basic conviction concerning the corporate nature of the Christian faith. Unfortunately, in this age of individualism, Reformed church members have ostensibly forgotten that the Christian life cannot be lived without the support, guidance and the challenges in love of others. These current tendencies reveal an egocentricity that runs counter to classic, Reformed spirituality.

We (often) interpret our experiences in ways that serve our own purposes and hardly know that we are doing it. Thus we need the church, the companionship of other Christians, and personal relationships in which we can be mutually accountable and receive guidance from one another.

The very *basis*, then, of Reformed spirituality lends itself very well to a personal, one-on-one, helping relationship between two Christians who desire to grow in their love of and service to God.

There are several examples of direction relationships within the Reformed tradition (see p37 below), but is there a Reformed theological mandate for a direction relationship? If we turn to Calvin again, we find in his treatise on *Private confession in the cure of souls* that he encouraged people to help one another with

"mutual counsel and consolation".

Therefore, let every believer remember that, if he be privately troubled and afflicted with a sense of sins, so that without outside help he is unable to free himself from them... he should use private confession.... (Institutes III,IV, 12: 636).

A closer look at the guidelines that Calvin proposes for this sort of consultation correspond remarkably well with those that have been part of spiritual direction for centuries:

First, the non-institutionalised nature of the confession relationship is encouraged, since the "duty of mutual admonition and rebuke is entrusted to all Christians" (Institutes III,IV, 12: 636). In similar fashion, spiritual direction is characterised by its non-hierarchical nature.

Secondly, there is the recognition that Christians are left a free choice as to whom they choose to confess to; ie. to "one of the flock of the church who seems most suitable". This freedom of choice ought to be "stoutly defended" by pastors if they wish to "avoid tyranny in their ministry and superstition in the people." This sort of relationship, as with direction, was not to be seen as a strict requirement for every Christian, but to be "commended only to those who know they have need of it." Here, the initiative is left to the person wanting the help, another strong characteristic of classic spiritual direction.

Thirdly, Calvin knows that the person being confessed to needs to be someone of sound experience. In Calvin's view the people best suited to the task of receiving the confession are pastors. But not just any pastor. Only those who have been judged to be "especially qualified above the rest". One of Leech's (1994:84) criteria for spiritual directors is that s/he be a person who has experienced the struggles of prayer and life.

Guides who have not encountered their own passions, their own inner conflicts, who do not truly know their darkness and their light, will be of no value in the spiritual battle. The great helpers of humankind are not 'the ideal bearers of final truths, but rather 'the most extraordinarily human members of the community'.

I think it would be true to say that quite often it is the pastor who has had the opportunities to enter into the struggles of prayer so necessary for good direction, and Calvin's remarks reflect an awareness of this.

Clearly then, Reformed spirituality and theology are in no way opposed to the relationship that is fostered in the ministry of spiritual direction. But direction has never really been encouraged in Reformed churches because of the misunderstandings surrounding the nature of the ministry which was fuelled by the strong anti-Roman Catholic rhetoric at the time of the Reformation. Also, there was the mistaken idea that it would interfere with the individual's relationship with Christ, and then there was the rise in popularity of certain individualistic spiritual practices that did not encourage a more communal approach to spirituality.

4 Spiritual Direction: traditions

While preparing for this paper, which included conducting interviews and handing out a questionnaire (this has been included in appendix 1), I came to realise that Presbyterians in this country are on the whole unfamiliar with the concept of spiritual direction. As such they might be forgiven for assuming that this is something that only Catholics and some Anglicans do. It seemed to be an assumption among at least some of those I interviewed that Christians have no need of such a person, since *Jesus* is the only true spiritual director who guides us through the Holy Spirit. It surprised not a few Presbyterians that spiritual direction had a long and time-honoured tradition in the history of the church, and even in the Reformed church albeit not a particularly comprehensive tradition.

In this section I trace a small part of the history of spiritual direction that I feel is most relevant to Presbyterians. By tracing its history, Presbyterians might be encouraged to realise that spiritual direction is

not an obsolete practice, and that our denomination has become spiritually poorer for its ignorance in this regard. I am particularly eager to explore the roots of direction that existed in the rich soils of the early Celtic church. This would have two particular advantages:

First, a glance back to the Presbyterians' pre-Reformational roots ie. to the Christianity of such people as St. Columba, founder of Iona, will hopefully stimulate a new appreciation for the place of spiritual direction in our ancestors' spiritual lives. This in turn should encourage Presbyterians to reconsider our present attitudes towards spiritual direction, and the paucity of its occurrence in the denomination.

Second, there is an amazingly close correspondence between the spirituality of the Celts and that found in Africa. This similarity provides a good point of contact for the drawing together of a church comprising an ever-growing black African contingent. By recognising their Celtic roots, white Presbyterians in this country will find themselves connected to Africans on a more profound level than any socio-cultural, political or intellectual level - viz. the deep level of the spirit.

4.1 A Caring God: Our Judaeo-Christian Tradition

The following section is by no means an exhaustive exposition on the biblical origins of spiritual direction. I wish, however, to give some historical background to the oft misunderstood ministry.

4.1.1 Old Testament Sources

Spiritual direction concerns itself with caring and friendship, themes which are found in the very first Christian accounts of God's interaction with humanity. Before humankind's loss of innocence, God gave them a beautiful garden in which to live, and was both provider and mentor. In spite of wilful separation, God

continued to care for and nurture God's creation as the Old Testament continuously reminds us in sagas, psalms and poetry. Psalm 23 captures beautifully the essence of God as guide and comforter: Here, God is seen as the *Shepherd* who "lets me rest in fields of green grass" and also "leads me to quiet pools of fresh water." Once the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity is established, the Shepherd "gives me new strength" and most importantly, "guides me in the right paths." But certainly there will be times that I will need to go "through the deepest darkness" as I grow spiritually through the experiences of my journey, yet "I will not be afraid, Lord, for *you are with me.*"

In the Deuterocanonical book of *Wisdom* (in Sellner 1970:30) God is portrayed as a feminine wisdom figure who "in each generation passes into holy souls" and makes them "friends of God and prophets" (7:27). Since she knows and understands everything, she acts as a teacher and guide (9:10-11).

Yet, even though God is seen as the ultimate mentor and spiritual guide, one person spiritually mentoring another is a fairly common theme in the Old Testament. One thinks of some of the great personages in the Old Testament and their relationship with a personal spiritual guide; Samuel and Eli, David and Samuel, Esther and Mordecai, Elisha and Elijah.

4.1.2 New Testament

This theme of God as friend, guide, teacher and comforter is radicalised when God becomes incarnated in the world through Jesus. Jesus begins his public ministry by quoting Isaiah, who might in some sense be thought of as Jesus' "spiritual director" (in Lk 4: 18-19), saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel..."(NKJV). Jesus then becomes, for his disciples, the quintessential spiritual director as he encourages, loves and commissions them to preach the Good News.

I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.... I appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures.... This then, is what I command you: love one another (Jn. 15:15b-17).

Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit who "reveals the truth about God and who comes from the Father" who will "speak about me" (Jn. 15:26). But Jesus also says to his disciples that they, too, "will speak about me" and so commissions them to work in tandem with the Holy Spirit to bring people to a deeper knowledge of God's love for them - the very aim of spiritual direction. Thus, part of the early communal life was the practice of gentle confrontation (Gal 6:1-2) and confiding in one another.

4.1.3 The Early Church

According to Ivan Kontzevitch (in Allen 1994:15) the nascent (ie. inherent, but not yet clearly defined) form of spiritual direction is "eldership." He argues that in this form, spiritual direction can be traced right back to the apostolic age itself. This assertion differs from many authors such as Merton and Leech who see direction as having arisen specifically in the monastic tradition of the desert. Kontzevitch shows that the task of the elder is *edification, exhortation* and *comfort* (1Cor 14:3), and to some extent this is what directors are called to do for their directees.

In no way does this imply, however, that in order to be a director one has to first become an elder in the church. On the contrary, it was clearly not the director's ecclesial position that set them apart to be a director, but their relationship with God. Thomas Merton (1975:14) points out that the director's role was in no way hierarchical, but charismatic. Their own holiness, the fact that s/he was possessed by the Spirit, qualified them to be a director. Nevertheless, both directors and elders, share the gifts of exhortation, edification and ability to bring comfort. I would prefer to think of eldership as having a clear mandate to provide *spiritual guidance*, not necessarily *spiritual direction*. But certainly the qualities of eldership would

stand an elder in good stead to be a director.

The underlying connection that exists between the elder and the spiritual director is a little tenuous, but could become important for Presbyterians given the prominent position of eldership in Presbyterianism. Insofar as the denomination has elders with good eldership skills, it would also have an excellent resource for developing a strong ministry of spiritual direction. Understandably, elders in the Presbyterian denomination are largely unaware that part of their function may well be to provide spiritual direction to those in their care who are seeking to deepen their spiritual life. Nevertheless, if they were alerted to the benefits of direction and properly trained, Presbyterian elders could become most proficient in the area of direction. However, the autonomy of the director would need to be preserved by ensuring that directors do not necessarily have to be ordained elders before providing direction.

Spiritual guidance, at least in its nascent form, has always been part of the Christian endeavour at enabling one's brothers and sisters to grow in their faith. But the practise of *spiritual direction*, as an activity that occurs between two people who are searching for God's presence in the life of one of the persons, gained its clearest expression in the Eastern church during the time of the Desert Fathers and Mothers; the *abbas* and *ammās* of the desert. One might say that just as the doctrine of the Trinity only gained its fuller expression in the church after the last book of canonical scripture had been already written, so too did spiritual direction gain clarity, expression and popularity in the particular historical context of Christian people through the ages struggling to come to a deeper understanding of their relationship with God.

4.2 The Desert Tradition

According to Thomas Merton (1975:13), spiritual direction is a concept that was given birth by the

monastic movement in Christianity. Out of the experience of solitude came the need for an intensive and personal guidance. The deserts of fourth and fifth century Egypt, Palestine and Syria were witness to a scattering of holy women and men who lived a life searching for inner peace through external solitude. Tired of overcrowded cities and a disintegrating civilization, they opted for a life of holiness as they sought for intimacy with God.

Others would come to seek out the advice of these spiritual mothers and fathers, whose *discretion* in matters of the spiritual life was particularly highly regarded. Commenting on these men and women, Leech (1994:37) says that the spiritual director was not simply one who taught a spiritual technique, but a person who helped shape the inner life of his directee through prayer, concern and pastoral care. Some of these guides were reputed to have the ability to invoke the Spirit and transmit a felt experience of the Spirit's power, similar to the *shaktipat* of Hinduism and *baraka* of Sufism (Corcoran 1989:450).

It is from here that the tradition of allowing the directee to initiate the relationship stems. In fact the "voluntary giving of advice is a sign that we regard ourselves as possessed of spiritual knowledge and worth, which is a clear sign of pride and self-deception" (in Allen 1994:34). Macarius of Egypt would give this advice to prospective spiritual directors: "If you wish to save your soul, do not speak before you are asked a question." Abba Moses had an inflexible rule never to give instruction in the spiritual life except to a person who asked for it "in faith and heartfelt contrition" (in Leech 1994:38).

These early monks and hermits encouraged seekers after God to spare no effort at finding a teacher and guide, a person filled with the Spirit, humble and of good disposition. Having found such a person, the directee is urged to

cling to him with body and spirit as a devoted son to his father and from then onwards obey all his commands implicitly, accord with him in everything, and see him not as a mere man, but as Christ himself (in Allen 1994:44).

What is quite clear from an examination of the Desert *Abbas* and *Ammas* is the tremendous importance they attached to spiritual direction. They put into practise their belief that the opening of one's heart to another, or *exagoreusis*, led to peace of heart, or *hesychia*. And still today we continue to benefit from the rich store of spiritual wisdom that resulted from the spiritual direction in the deserts at that time.

Certain links existed between the spirituality of the desert and that of the early Celtic church, the focus of the next section.

4.3 The Celtic Church Tradition

Anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head.

This now famous saying, attributed to St. Brigit, has caught the attention of not a few Presbyterians. Who was this "soul friend" and why, the question has to be asked, did our Celtic ancestors place such tremendous value on spiritual friendship?

Margaret Donaldson (unpublished: 1) suggests that, if answers are to be found to some of the pressing questions we face today, we ought to go back to earlier cultures and traditions and learn from them. Is there a better place for Presbyterians to look for answers on the issue of spiritual direction than the spirituality of their Celtic forebears? Not only does it make sense in terms of our Scottish/Celtic heritage, but the close relation between Celtic and African spirituality offers a unique and exciting point of contact for discussion of common spiritual concerns that arise in a multi-cultural church such as ours.

4.3.1 Anamchara

The *anamchara* - a Celtic term (with really no truly satisfactory English word one could use translate it) denoting the wise and holy person to whom people in the Celtic community would turn to for guidance in spiritual and other matters. As a soul friend, this person played a key role in the development of individual and communal spirituality. Seeking out the advice and guidance of the *anamchara* was clearly encouraged; "Though you may think you are very solid, it is not good to be your own guide" says one old Irish monk (in DeWaal 1991:46). The desire to find a soul friend was often inspired by the wonderful hagiographical accounts of the wisdom, personal holiness and ascetism of the saints. These heroes and heroines were also known for their ability to heal people and even raise them from the dead. The famous saints such as Brigit, Brendan Patrick and Columba became the spiritual guides to their own particular communities. All were known for their special wisdom, and it was this that many pilgrim travellers sought.

The search for wisdom and healing for the Celt was a search for wholeness. For them this had to mean a search for the totality of healing; body could not be healed apart from spirit, spirit apart from God (DeWaal 1991: 97). This meant that the *anamchara* was concerned for the wellbeing of the whole person, and not just spirit apart from body and mind.

The role of *anamchara* in the Celtic church came about as a result of two major influences. First, its development had historical links with the desert *abbas* and *ammias*. Knowledge of the desert practices of counselling, healing and lay confession was brought west through writings and probably by those who had visited and consulted with these by now famous desert guides. Unlike the desert hermits, however, the Celtic monks preferred not to remain in solitude, but embark upon a journey known as *peregrinatio* - an abandoning oneself totally in God's hands on a pilgrimage to wherever God might lead. These journeys often culminated in the founding of a monastery or commune of women, men and children.

Second, this concept of spiritual direction was easily assimilated by a people with a history of their own teachers, counsellors and spiritual guides. The spiritual practices of the Celts' pre-Christian ancestors

relied in part on the role that the druids played as religious leaders and guides. Often the king would have an advisor-come-bard, who was not subject to the decrees of the king as were the people. For example, the Pictish king Brude had a Druidic advisor, Broichan (Stokes 1936:114), and this relationship was typical of all the tribes on the British Isle before Roman cultural influences were felt.

Clearly, the soul friend became an important part of the spiritual growth and development of Celtic Christians. Interestingly, because the pre-Christian Celts respected women as equals before the advent of Christianity, the ministry of *anamchara* included a fair number of women, thus continuing the non-sexist trends in the direction of the desert hermits. Murphy and Rankin (in Sellner 1990:70), writing on the practice of Celtic penance, say, "As in the East, the lines separating confessors who are priests and those who are not ordained are by no means clearly perceived". This respect for women thus affirmed the non-hierarchical status of this ministry, since women were not able to be ordained as priests.

Part of the Presbyterian quest for relevance will have to entail going back to their pre-Reformational roots. Concepts such as the Celtic *anamchara* allows one to see that the Celt's relationship with God took the form of "effective dialogue," (in Sellner 1990:63). The reality of a dialogical relation with God was affirmed and deepened by the continued practice of spiritual friendship. There is no reason why this same realisation of a dialogical relationship with God cannot continue to be fostered and enhanced through this ancient ministry. It has always led to a transformed Christian spirituality when practised properly and will continue to do so now given the opportunity.

I will not deal with the development of the ministry of spiritual direction in the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions here, as important as these may be. In spite of the paucity of direction in the Reformed tradition, there are certain well-known Reformers who were also excellent directors.

4.4 Reformed Directors

Even though the term spiritual direction may not have been used, or the concept fully developed, spiritual guidance has certainly played an important role in the Reformed tradition as was mentioned earlier. This was especially true for the Puritans, who developed various forms of direction, most notably that of mutual accountability. Individual spiritual growth was sustained through the popular self-examination technique of journal-keeping. The works of Richard Baxter were especially influential among these Puritans, and his influence was eventually spread through much of Protestant spiritual practice.

A common form of spiritual guidance at the time of the Reformation was letter-writing. Calvin found spiritual guidance⁴ for himself through the letters of William Farel and Martin Bucer, but "regretted the lack of opportunity to confide in Farel personally and thus seek his help and advice" (Rice 1991:136). The Scottish Presbyterians, Samuel Rutherford and John Knox, did not hesitate to write letters of spiritual counsel. In a letter to George Spenlein, Luther urged him to reveal the "condition of thy soul" (in Leech 1994:80).

One needs to keep in mind that whilst not all the early Reformers may have developed actual theologies concerning the practice of spiritual direction, their letters to which we now have access are probably indicative of the fact that they engaged in these practices in their everyday ministries. One Presbyterian that did in fact write a treatise on spiritual guidance, *Therapeutica Sacra*, was David Dickson of Irvine (died 1665). Later, the Scottish pastor John Watson stressed private consultation in his work *The Cure of Souls* (1896) (see Leech 1994:81). Calvin joined Luther in rejecting the sacrament of penance, but he certainly encouraged the continued practice of confession on a voluntary basis. He would announce a time for consultation on the Sunday before communion would be celebrated. The visiting of the pastor or an elder before communion remained in practice for many years as a source of solace and healing, but this practice

is not nearly as common as in the past, especially in the city and suburban congregations. The point is that the initiators of the Reformation seemed to have understood very well the importance of a one-on-one time of confession and self-examination for the purpose of furthering one's relationship with God.

Present-day one-on-one helping relationships differ to these earlier forms in that today this help is largely seen not so much as help with one's spiritual life as help with one's psychological condition. Thus the direction practised by the Reformers was much closer to the original concept of direction than many of the types of helping relationships one has today. So while the Reformers were not spiritual directors in the classical sense, the Presbyterian church might wish to re-examine with new eyes the way this ministry was conducted then so that the current practice of direction might benefit from the wisdom of these early pioneers.

This brings to an end the examination of the history of spiritual direction which I feel is particularly relevant to Presbyterians. Perhaps the primary lesson to be learned from this history is that spiritual direction must be allowed to speak into those situations facing Christians in *any* era - including our own. But this can only be done if we "understand spiritual direction as a *ministry* which can never be relegated to history; it must be something always happening today, because ministry is what the Church *does*" (Allen 1994:3).

5 The Task of the Presbyterian Director

5.1 Recapturing the Deeper Traditions

*Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees
Takes off his shoes.*

(Little Zen Companion: 1995)

The theme of God being found in every dimension of our lives has been largely lost in the modern worldview, so influenced by the dualisms propagated by Cartesian and Newtonian thinking. But once again I would encourage Presbyterians to look to not only their immediate Reformed traditions, but to their deeper heritages, both Celtic and African, in order to see that our common tradition is that *creation* is a theophany of God.

Celtic Heritage - De Waal (1988:5), who is something of an expert on the early Celtic church, writes

They (the Celts) were unable to discern boundaries of where religion began and ended and thus found it natural to assume that God was lovingly concerned in everything they did. They felt totally at home with God.

The Celtic world was filled with sacred trees, springs and sky. There was an interconnectedness between person and universe that inspired songs of poetic mystery and a sense of belonging. There was a radical interpenetration of sacred and profane which meant that reverence of God could be, and was, expressed through a reverence for creation. Celtic spirituality echoed an awareness of God as present in all things, and all things as being an expression of the greatness of God.

There is a marked similarity with Eastern concepts of God's immanence. Swami Prabhupada (1984:512) expounds a passage from the Bhagavad-Gita:

"I enter into each planet, and by My energy they stay in orbit. I become the moon and thereby supply the juice of life to all vegetables"...It is understood that all the planets are floating in the air only by the energy of the Lord. The Lord enters into every atom, every planet, and every living being.

I have found many Presbyterians to be very suspicious of anything that even vaguely resembles Hindu or Buddhist practice or philosophy. It is labelled *New Age* or *pantheistic* and too often this labelling is sufficient

reason to utterly forego critical investigation - as if these terms were self-explanatory! But there are certain biblical passages that also point to God's radical immanence in the world. Yet Christians today do not accuse Paul's christocentric cosmology in Colossians of being pantheistic. In fact, commenting on Colossians 1:16, the rather conservative theologian G. Caird (1976:176) says that there is no contrast in this passage by Paul between the perfection of heaven and the imperfection of earth, for both form two complementary aspects of our environment.

In the Celtic worldview there was also no simplistic pantheism - viz. the belief that the sum of all things equal the whole of God. Rather, there was the realisation that God is both immanent in all things, but *also* transcendent. Ultimately, God was beyond all description, thought or concept.

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; What is essential is invisible to the eye" (Antoine de Saint-Exupery in Schiller 1994:153).

Thus the Celts intuitively understood the balance between God's immanence and transcendence. The contemporary Protestant often struggles with Christ's immanence in all things (Paul's *Ta Panta*) probably because of no clear appreciation of the implications of the Incarnation of God through Christ. But a return to the Celtic understanding of God in all things would give Presbyterians a fresh vision to a people so often cut off from God in their daily living. The spiritual director in the Presbyterian church, then, will always strive to recapture this transformative view of reality through the contemplation of God's presence in creation.

African Heritage - The African understanding of the balance between God's transcendence and immanence is well expressed in this confession of the Lugbara tribe

"We do not know what God is like; he is everywhere, in the wind and in the sky" (in Mbiti 1970:15)

Mbiti (1970:15) comments that many pre-Christian or Muslim African people have only a few phrases and words that describe God's existence, and beyond that they readily admit that they do not know much about God. Scholars of African religion are well aware of the apparent contradiction between the presence and absence of a supreme deity, for he is acknowledged by most Africans, but not directly worshipped, most often ignored.

Spring rain in a dry spell, strikes the ants in the head with a club.
 And the ants say: My father has seen
 And they do not know whether he helps people
 And they do not know whether he injures people.
 (in Ray 1976:60)

The divine is acknowledged and recognised in nature by Africans, though it is considered dangerous, best approached cautiously and through mediaries. The Turu believe that while God is transcendent in the sky, God shows God's immanence though manifesting Godself in the lion, hyena, python, lightning, storms, pools of water and gusting wind. Those Presbyterians who have black African ancestry share in this clear call from past traditions to a God-filled view of creation.

There is a close correspondence between the early Celtic and African view of God's presence in creation (see Donaldson unpublished article). We might ask ourselves - as Presbyterians and descendants of the Celts and Africans - what are we doing to honour the way in which our ancestors saw God and the world? If we were to recapture the breadth of their vision, we would be able to contribute significantly to the changing of people's attitudes towards creation. One of the ways to alter people's attitudes is via a spiritual direction relationship that emphasises, among other things, God's immanence in creation.

5.2 *Direction and the Environment*

We shall not be able to achieve social justice
without justice for the natural environment.

Jurgen Moltmann (in Abraham 1994:68)

In the past it was assumed that concern for the environment was something the "rich" people did while the poor concentrated on issues of economic exploitation and injustice. However, there are theologians and others who are now keenly aware that environmental destruction not only threatens human survival itself, there is also an organic link between ecological concerns and social, political and economic injustice (see Boff 1995, *Ecology and Liberation*).

A major concern of Presbyterian directors will have to be a focus on the ecological crisis, which is not unlike a veld fire burning unchecked and out of control, fuelled by a spiritually dry and uncaring humanity. One fundamental cause of the problem is the fact that people are caught up in the uncritical - and often unconscious - belief that matter is dead. Creation has become devoid of God's sacramental presence: If it is dead, why bother preserving it? Why not mine it, smelt it, separate it into its constituent parts, dump what we don't use into the ground and sea?

I believe that Presbyterian directors would have something unique to offer directees and the wider church, and this is the worldview of their forebears. The Celtic and early African worldview offers an alternative to the western world-as-machine paradigm which could so alter present perceptions of the reality of God in creation, that the destruction of the environment would become quite unthinkable. We would again become a people who see that earth is indeed pulsating with the energising presence of an awe-inspiring God. Trees would again become sacred - the abode of God - not just a resource to be exploited at will. Rivers would again be filled with the presence of *the* River of Life - which is the Spirit - not filled with toxic waste and chemical pollutants. Perhaps the sky would again become clear like crystal to reveal the glory of the *Son*,

not remain ensmogged, obscuring the *sun*.

With an attitude of profound respect for environment that this worldview engenders, issues of social, political and economic concern would very naturally be addressed as part and parcel of wider justice for the earth.

5.3 *Fostering Awareness*

A close correlate of finding God in all things is the director's task of assisting the directee to come to know God better by *fostering an awareness* of God in and through the things in this world in the directee. The director, by carefully listening for signs of the working of the Spirit, gently draws the attention of the directee to those areas in his life that are being addressed by the Spirit. Of course, ultimately, this means *all* areas of life. Put simply, our everyday life is God's gift to us, in fact *everything* is God's gift to us, and as such the way God reveals Godself. Quoist (in Cusson 1989:139) explains this beautifully:

If we only knew how to look at life as God sees it, we should perceive that nothing in the world is profane, but that everything contributes to the building of the Kingdom of God. To have faith is not only to raise one's eyes to God to contemplate him; it is also to look at this world - but with Christ's eyes. If we had allowed Christ to penetrate our whole being, if we had sufficiently made our gaze single, the world would no longer be an obstacle. It would be a perpetual incentive to work for the Father in order that, in Christ, his Kingdom might come to earth as it is in heaven.

To further illustrate the point, one might turn to the development of Ignatius of Loyola's spirituality, based as it was on the *discernment* of spirits, or *noticing* our responses to various situations. He dreamed both of noble deeds and of imitating the saints and following Christ. He began to notice that the latter dreams gave him a feeling of consolation that did not fade away, whereas dreams of noble deeds gave only temporary

joy. Through this Ignatius came to realise that God spoke to him in his daydreams (Barry 1991:106). But if God does indeed speak to one through so ethereal an activity as daydreaming, how much more does God speak through the real, existential activities of one's daily life?

David Townsend (1991:45f) agrees with the thesis that the primary task of spiritual direction is to foster a positive awareness of the reality of God in life. He considers the *day* to be of central importance in becoming aware of God's activity in one's life since the day is "the privileged place for the moment-to-moment meeting with God". If one accepts that God is indeed being revealed continually, that God constantly creates, preserves and refines, then the divine activity that occurs all the time through people, events and activities is what we need to examine if we are to know God's will for our lives.

The task of fostering the awareness of God requires that the director be aware of three important things: First, God is constantly at work in people's lives, especially in the little things that we need to take notice of, in order to draw people into an ever closer and more mature relationship with God.

Second, it is possible for us to learn how to *recognise* and *respond* to God's prompting. A perusal of Christian literature shows that the church has almost two thousand years' experience of God's grace and activity in its life. We are called to use this experience and apply it to our own lives, for it exists as a wonderful source of wisdom for guidance.

Third, this wisdom has to be applied to present experiences with discernment. One cannot ignore the wealth of experience one already has, but needs to give due consideration to the possibility of God doing a new thing in one's own life and the life of the community. Hopefully this new environmentally attuned awareness will lead to the following:

5.3.1 Finding God in All things

One of the most important tasks of the spiritual director is to foster the awareness of God in all things within the directee. People have been affected by the modern tendency to compartmentalise the sacred and profane, which invariably has resulted in the loss of a sense of the presence of God in one's own life. The American Presbyterian, E. Peterson (1987:150f), points out an interesting dimension of the contemporary director's task: He says that Western culture conditions us to approach people and situations as would a journalist; look for the sensational, exploit the crisis and, mostly, to overlook the commonplace. But in direction, we are called to notice the small things that happen to the directee, to come to an appreciation of the obscure. The director must constantly be exploring the specific details of the directee's everyday life and their ramifications. In this way, the director is engaged in the task of "helping a person take seriously what is treated dismissively by the publicity-infatuated and crisis-sated mind" (Auerbach in Peterson 1987:150).

To find God in all things takes effort, discipline, and especially a new way of viewing reality. For the director, this change in paradigm means taking seriously the casual remarks made by people, "pray for me". It means becoming attuned to the experience of God breaking into the routine of everyday life, even *being* the experience of everyday life. For the director, unobtrusive "signals of transcendence" or "rumours of angels" are not peripheral issues, but the quintessence of spiritual direction.

5.4 Forming an Alliance

Spiritual direction is at its heart a relationship. For direction to be truly effective and focused, it is advisable for the director to encourage a mutually agreed upon *alliance* between herself and the directee. This alliance should entail a conscious acceptance of the directee's desire to grow in her or his knowledge and love of the mystery we call God. The alliance requires commitment from both parties, but it needs to be flexible. Spiritual direction is not a matter of contractual obligation. Direction is entered into for only as long

as it remains helpful. If I were to formulate a basic rule for those who are serious about their spiritual life, it would be this: All these people should *have* a director, but it is not always necessary for them to *use* the director. There are seasons for direction, and seasons for other activities. Nevertheless, directees should be careful of stopping direction at times when it becomes painful. There can be no spiritual growth without inner conflict and self-sacrifice.

Whilst the primary purpose of getting together is to facilitate the directee's relationship with the Ultimate in the directee's life, it need not for that reason be conducted in a stiffly formal manner. Rather, it should be one of friends and comrades engaged in a mutual search for God's will in their lives, and principally the life of the directee.

The relation between director and directee is dealt with more extensively below. Right now I wish to explore the ideal characteristics of the spiritual director.

6 Characteristics of the Director

Spiritual directors attempt to make people aware of the divine element in their experiences. This allows the directee to become attentive to what God is saying. A significant contributing factor to the success of this task is the director's experience and knowledge of the things of the Spirit. But along with this there are certain *personal* characteristics which makes a person a "good" director. I will limit this investigation to just two desirable character traits: S/he should be filled with the Spirit, and also be humble.

6.1 Filled with the Spirit

The efforts of the director are directed towards increasing the receptivity of the directee to the Holy Spirit. The directee's experience of the Spirit will of course largely depend on the earnestness of his search and openness. Abba Moses had an inflexible rule never to give direction to anyone unless it was sought "in faith and heartfelt contrition" (in Corcoran 1986:450). But it also depends to some extent on the *director's* experience of the Holy Spirit. According to Barry and Connolly (1982:135ff), there can be no suggestion of the spiritual director *not* being a person in a conscious relationship with God. If direction were nothing more than the dispensing of advice for right living and right praying, then anyone who has taken any arbitrary course in pastoral work would suffice irrespective of their own walk with God. But the reality of direction is that one is called to help a person relate personally to a personal God, and this demands a personal knowledge and experience of the Spirit's power.

There is some indication that certain Celtic and desert monks had an extraordinary ability to invoke the Holy Spirit and create felt experiences of the Spirit's presence. This is not unlike the experience of *shaktipat* in Hinduism and the *baraka*³ experience in Sufism (Corcoran 1986:450). What is important, however, is the director's ability to discern the movements of the spirit in the heart. Is this spirit of God or not? In Ignatian language, does the movement lead to consolation or desolation? The director, having discerned the spirit, would then be in a position to make recommendations for spiritual wholeness, since s/he knows better than others the spiritual disposition of the directee.

6.2 Humility

The relationship with which directors are dealing has as one of the partners the Ultimate in mystery, a God who is accredited with working in the most mysterious and wonderful of ways. Becoming proud of one's spiritual achievements is a serious danger faced by directors. In Galatians 6:6 Paul encourages the

person who "is being taught the Christian message (to) share all the good things he has with his teacher." But he warns "those who are spiritual" to watch themselves and not think too highly of themselves and so deceive themselves (6:1 and 6:3). Directors are people who, through *humility*, have developed the ability to engender a feeling of companionship, a sense of being a fellow traveller in search of God, thus avoiding the temptation of appearing to be the expert in matters spiritual.

On the other hand, a feeling of inadequacy can also be an inappropriate response. We need to realize that God uses fallible humans to conduct God's business in the world (such as writing Scriptures) precisely because of God's grace. No doubt, then, God uses people who are in *themselves* incapable of providing real spiritual direction. This realisation in a very real way takes the pressure off being a director, for s/he knows that no-one is adequate to the task without the Spirit's intimate guidance. In fact, God may very well, through grace, use a person as a director who at first glance appears unsuitable for the task. David Lonsdale (1986:568) points out that one of the great spiritual directors of the nineteenth century, Abbe Huvelin, suffered from gout, migraine, depression and frequent thoughts of suicide. Yet for thirty years he managed to transmit hope, love and assurance to many thousands of people, including Charles de Foucauld and Baron von Hugel.

All this points clearly to the mystery of God's grace which arises in the most unusual circumstances to reveal God's love and mercy. No doubt the reliance of the director on God's grace will come as welcome news to those Presbyterians with a finely honed awareness of the primacy of Jesus in any Christian relationship. Grace, however, is no excuse for laziness. The Presbyterian director is still responsible for growing in the Spirit in order to learn how to become a better and more effective director, which stems from his desire to truly be of service to the directee.

There is really no perfect way of being a director. Merton (in Sellner 1990:79) says that the soul friend is not to be regarded as a "magical machine" to solve all problems and declare the will of God. The

director is rather one who, by the grace of God helps to strengthen the directee's efforts to discover and integrate the will of the Holy Spirit in his life, for the Spirit remains as always the true Director.

7 *The Relationship between Director and Directee*

7.1 *Mutuality*

Friendship has always been a common description of the relationship found in spiritual direction, and would have to form the basis of any model of spiritual direction devised for the Presbyterian church. Generally, directors today are not referred to as *spiritual fathers*, *physician of souls* or *spiritual masters*.

These tend to stress the expertise of the director and encourage an uncritical obedience in the directee. The help offered in direction is far more like a companion on a journey who has a map to take along, but does not necessarily know every step of the way.

The words *friendship*, *companion* or *partner* convey a sense of mutuality - mutual trust, respect and love - between two people. They also convey the feeling of a certain amount of equality. Spiritual direction has a long tradition of nonordained guides who have been able to engender feelings of trust and mutuality. Rice (1991:137) says that the Reformation did not completely eliminate the role of the nonordained spiritual guide, and this is fortunate, since even today people sometimes feel intimidated by the clergy. The practice of ordained ministers wearing black robes and "dog-collars," working in full-time ministry and preaching a whole lot more than the laity creates a distinction between laity and clergy that does little to strengthen the Reformed insistence on the priesthood of all believers. Perhaps we need to once again take seriously Calvin's own insistence on the need for mutuality in confession:

We should lay our infirmities on one another's breasts, to receive among ourselves spiritual counsel... and mutual compassion (in Rice 1991:137).

Kathleen Fischer (1988:20) gives four useful guidelines to help directors and directees find greater mutuality in direction:

- The creation of an informal, nonhierarchical atmosphere in which to explore the directee's experiences and concerns.
- A disclaiming of spiritual expertise and giving the directee access to primary spiritual resources ie. books on prayer, theories of spiritual growth etc. so that directors become a resource themselves, not an authority.
- Pointing out the limitations of direction, which is not for everyone.
- The avoidance of modelling spiritual direction on scientific models that hold that distance and objectivity are more important than heartfelt intercommunication and participation.

The emphasis on mutuality between director and directee has the all-important function of showing that the real director is the Holy Spirit. No human being can take the place of God in another's life. Only God knows exactly where the other person is in their journey, and the best way to foster their growth. Effective directors will be only too aware of their own inadequacy in this area and so give full reign to the Spirit in the directee's life. Nevertheless, I think that the direction relationship is something more than merely two friends getting together for a chat. There should be a clear distinction between the person being directed and the person giving the direction. One might say that there should always exist between the two parties a *qualified mutuality*. Let me elaborate.

7.2 A Qualified Mutuality

One might say that the relationship between director and directee is not one of full mutuality.

Certainly no director is so spiritually advanced that God stops speaking to him through the directee. Directors need to be continually open to God moving in their own lives through directees. But is it helpful for the director to use the directee as a confessor whilst being a director? I am not suggesting that the directors need keep their own weaknesses and shortcomings unacknowledged in the relationship. Nevertheless, it would be a somewhat questionable practice for the director to use the directee as a sounding board for his own problems. Lonsdale (1986:568) warns that this kind of mutuality would lead to a confusion of roles and a "complexity of relations" that would confound most people. Directors are well advised to seek out their own confessor and guide to help them come to terms with their own spiritual journey.

7.3 Openness to God

It is far too easy for directors to forget their proper place as they enter into the dynamic of direction. This ministry is, through grace, both human and divine. But God is always the only true Director, and as such spiritual direction is often characterised by surprises as God does something new in the life of the directee. Problems will arise, however, if directors unconsciously begin to impose their prayer styles or project their own distortions on to the directee. As the latter begins to advance in his spiritual life and enter into deeper forms of prayer, the director may feel threatened. Directors are human beings and so subject to these very human responses. St John of the Cross writes:

These directors (who do not understand souls that tread the path of quiet and solitary contemplation) do not know what spirit is. They do great injury to God and show disrespect toward Him by intruding with a rough hand where He is working. It costs God a great deal to bring these souls to this stage, and He highly values His work of having introduced them to this solitude and emptiness regarding their faculties and activity so that He might speak to their heart, which is what He always desires (in Morneau 1992:90)

How, one may ask, is the director to avoid these pitfalls? The answer is simply that s/he remain open to the Holy Spirit. Spiritual direction is concerned with God's communication in God's relationship with the directee. But this cannot happen unless the director's attention is focused on God, especially during the direction session. When this happens, the session itself becomes an example of the attentiveness that needs to be developed by the directee.

The session is a privileged moment in which God speaks. It becomes a prayer inasmuch as prayer is defined as a time in which one realises that one is being encountered by God and changed. It is critical for directors to encourage within themselves the moment-by-moment attention towards God during this prayer time, or risk being blinded to God's work in the directee's life. They may then begin to substitute their own knowledge for God's will, and this would no longer be direction, but some other form of therapy. When it comes to the care of souls, there is no psychological method, no theological treatise, no amount of private or collective wisdom that can inform the director of God's desire for a particular person at their specific stage in life (May 1992:123).

Spiritual direction differs from other relationships in which one person seeks to assist another (pastoral counselling, psychotherapy, or just giving advice) in that the director, during the session, gives his attention and awareness primarily to *God* for the sake of the directee, not to the directee first and foremost. Thus, concentrating on the directee's problems instead of on God might actually interfere with direction. The quality of awareness that should characterise the direction session resembles that awareness achieved in contemplative prayer. Gerald May (1992:122) explains:

In the quiet of contemplative prayer, it is sometimes possible to break out of ...limits of perception. More accurately, perhaps, these limitations are broken *for* us. At such times we experience an opening of attention. The blinders around our eyes fall away, and we are granted a panoramic view that is inclusive rather than selective....At the most open point, we no longer can even identify

ourselves as the seers. Instead, it all becomes oneness, a co-inherence that excludes nothing, yet is fascinated by nothing (at which point) God is vitally and comprehensively present.

The capacity to experience God in this way differs from person to person. But it is deepened as one learns to recognise and respond to the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit by means of graced spiritual direction.

Direction and prayer are inextricably linked since it is through prayer that the Spirit communicates. Thus one of the key areas of concern in the relationship between director and directee is the prayer life of the latter.

7.4 Direction in Prayer

I believe that it is imperative that Presbyterians begin to learn about the great variety of prayer forms that are available to Christians. In practice I have found that generally Presbyterians are fairly limited in the prayer forms that they are taught and in turn teach. There are constantly reports about a lack of enthusiasm in prayer life, leading to boredom and a certain dryness in prayer. I will briefly touch on kataphatic and apophatic prayer forms as possible ways for Presbyterians to rediscover the depth of prayer enjoyed by many saints and mystics in the Christian tradition.

7.4.1 What is Prayer?

Prayer is first and foremost not something that we do but that is done through us - and as such it should primarily be an act of *listening*. To pray is to listen and then respond to our self as it cries out, usually with all the human emotions of joy and sorrow to that which is beyond self. Prayer might be thought of as the honest *confession of who we really are* - not who we should, or want, to be (Ulanov 1982:1). Thus

prayer is both the active or passive encounter with our own spiritual depths, which is ultimately rooted in the indwelling Spirit of God. This encounter is "active" when we consciously choose to enter into ourselves (for example, through meditation and the examination of consciousness). It is "passive" when our depth - rooted in God, reaches into our conscious world to encounter us (in dreams, visions, and inspiration).

Prayer is inspired by our daily lives, by the images that surround us; images from our world of both beauty and suffering. But prayer is also an opening up of the door to our unconscious, inner images. Prayer awakens us to the terrors and fears that so often we have tried to deny exists within us. As such, prayer is not an escape into illusion, but the recognising of the reality of who we really are with all our faults, fantasies and failings. Prayer is ultimately a seeking after that which is beyond ourselves, a directing of our attention towards that which we perceive by grace to be the source of our beings. Often, prayer can be no more than being present in utter silence before the Unknown source of all being. But there are times when prayer is richly symbolic and even emotional.

Prayer to God, as the source of our beings, gives us more of ourselves, for we collect all the parts of ourselves into our awareness and our self gets bigger (Ulanov 1982:8). Prayer takes us into the centre of ourselves and beyond to the source of everything. Prayer is so much more than merely beseeching some celestial "Santa Claus" to ensure that we are constantly comforted and cared for. Rather, it is the turning, in trust, of our whole being viz.- mind, will, knowledge, body, spirit and love - towards the Love from which we came.

Christian prayer is perfected when it is no longer one's own dialogue with God, but Christ's prayer to God, Jesus crying, "Abba, Father!" through the person praying. At the point at which prayer touches the deepest ground of one's being, there is no longer any separation between who we are and who God is. And one discovers that all previous separation was only ever illusory. There never was any split, there is only ever the I Am. William Johnston comments on this point in his book *Christian Zen* (1991:44):

[T]his cry does not issue from the empirical ego (which has been lost). It is the cry of Christ to his Father, the Son offering himself to the Father in Trinitarian love, the Son who is within as in the Pauline "I live, now not I; but Christ lives in me". So prayer ends in Trinitarian context. It ends in the frightening paradox that there is dialogue within a being that is totally one.

In Trinitarian terms, then, prayer *originates* in the eternal love of the Father, it is *held in being* in the lordship of Christ, and is *impelled* through the mysterious working of the Spirit (Abhishiktananda 1967:11). Seen as such, prayer might be thought of as the orienting of our whole being away from self towards God. The Trinitarian nature of prayer ensures that prayer is not oriented towards some cosmic Superbeing with little relevance to those around us. As prayer becomes progressively purified of self-interest, our false projections of self are "surrendered so that one's determining task in life becomes the upbuilding of the community" (Studzinski 1985:15).

In the Christian mystical tradition, prayer has found expression in the two classic approaches which together incorporate the entire spectrum of prayer discussed so far: These are the *kataphatic* and *apophatic* forms of prayer.

7.4.2 Kataphatic Prayer

The *via affirmativa*, or kataphatic way, is prayer that finds God in all things. In terms of the doctrine of *kenosis*, God has emptied Godself in order to create all things through Jesus Christ (Col 1:16). By taking on flesh, God has sanctified the whole of creation by taking it into the Godhead through Christ (Col 1:20). This means that all created things are a *revelation* of, a means of *discovering*, and a means of *drawing closer* to, God. The Incarnation allows Christians to find Christ - the sign or symbol of God's presence - in every aspect of "life, the universe and everything."

The Anglican writer Morton Kelsey suggests various kataphatic approaches which enable one to enter

deeper into one's prayer life. These include the use of dreams and images in meditation. His wish is to help remove the obstacles which tend to separate a person's rational activity from a person's depths, the physical world from the spiritual world by focusing on the spontaneous images from the depths of our being (Kelsey 1976:37). This is no easy task and competent direction becomes important as one enters into the realms of imaginative prayer.

7.4.3 Apophatic Prayer

The *via negativa*, or the apophatic way of prayer, differs in its stress on the radical difference between God and creature. It suggests that God is best known by negation, unknowing, forgetting and darkness, since all our conceptions of God are created and therefore insufficient and illusory. Thomas Merton (1973:98) says

In meditation we do not seek to know *about* God as though he were an object like other objects which submit to our scrutiny and can be expressed in clear scientific ideas. We seek to know God himself, beyond the level of all objects... The infinite God has no boundaries and our minds cannot set limits to him or his love.

St. John of the Cross (in Egan 1978:403), a great proponent of apophatic prayer, says that nothing which could possibly be imagined or comprehended in this life can be even an approximation of true union with God. The prayer that leads to this union is thus a prayer of unknowing and darkness. All created things (which would include our carefully formulated and dogmatized concepts of God) are laid aside, or put into a "cloud of unknowing" says the unknown author of the book by the same name.

This method of prayer has its parallels in the Eastern mystical tradition which sees ultimate union as a *zero experience*. In other words, it is imageless, totally beyond all human symbols, where the person who enters into "God realization" where the distinction between God and self are overcome. There are obviously

subtle differences between this Eastern understanding of the mystical experience and the apophatic stance of Christian prayer, the primary and most telling difference being the latter's very Christocentric emphasis. The *Cloud of Unknowing*, which epitomises the Christian apophatic tradition, is written for those "resolved to follow Christ...into the inmost depths of contemplation" (Egan 1978:411). There is never any question of the Christian contemplative not being fully reliant on Christ's help and support through the journey into the darkness which is, more accurately, a blinding light. Christ is seen as the door into this light, and not an obstacle to it. Christian apophatic prayer remains the way of silence and darkness, but it is always radically Christocentric.

The Reformed tradition is not without its proponents of finding God in the darkness that is impenetrable. Karl Barth is well known for his insistence that God comes to humanity from above through the Word which is Christ. Humanity is in itself unable to know this otherwise unknowable God. Thus Barth speaks in paradoxical fashion of really *knowing* the God who is in fact "above us" and who has a "hidden nature" (in Leech 1974.157)...in other words, knowing a God who is unknowable.

Both the apophatic and kataphatic approaches to prayer have been and are legitimately used by Christians. Egan (1978: 421ff) presents a strong case for ensuring that any Christian approach to prayer should maintain a balance between the two. Apophatic prayer helps to overcome many of our rigid ideas and dogmas concerning God - our conceptual golden calves - and allows God to be God. But the kataphatic tradition, with its emphasis on the incarnate Christ, allows God to be relevant to people in a tangible and immediate way. Christians need to be able to express, in prayer, both the mystery and the revelation of God in their understanding of God incarnate in Christ. But why should spiritual direction be necessary in prayer?

7.5 Spiritual Direction in Prayer

Why should we even concern ourselves with spiritual direction for those who wish to deepen their prayer life through the use of kataphatic and apophatic prayer forms? The obvious answer is that the inner realms which one encounters in prayer hold many dangers. It is a world that consists of contrasting and often conflicting realities, and it would be naïve to think that everything that is spiritual is necessarily good. Jesus cautioned his disciples to be alert during prayer: Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41) Zen recognises the dangers inherent in the descent into the psyche and teaches that the stage in which images assail is called *makyo* (literally, the world of the devil - see Johnston 1994:38f). In the spiritual realm, evil is to be found in its naked form and often we enter directly into battle against these forces when entering into the spirit. We are often forced to come face to face with the reality of our own degeneracy, our own evil and shortcomings. It may happen that the things we do not like about ourselves which have been repressed into our shadow suddenly confront and challenge us in the spiritual realms.

Kelsey (1976:39) points out that many people are wary of opening themselves to the idea of an inner world because they see it as merely a world of illusion and psychosis. In fact, a person who suffers from psychosis may be described as someone who has had an experience of the unconscious world without being able to integrate these experiences into her/his ordinary worldview. Often this is due to poor ego development, that is, when the person's sense of self is inadequately formed for a variety of reasons that cannot be dealt with now. But if this results in an inability to distinguish between the conscious and unconscious worlds, the person would then suffer from some form of neurosis or psychosis. One might say that psychosis is the inability to hold back the inflow of images and information that arises from the depths of the soul. The psychotic is thus swayed by every current, good or evil.

This inner world is frightening, and dangers abound. Hence, one can understand the trepidation of many to voluntarily embark on this journey through kataphatic and apophatic prayer. There is certainly

always the danger of being lost to the world of *makyo*, but one questions whether fear should be allowed to prevent an awakening into a new understanding of self and God. This new awareness of God is what Paul meant when he told the Romans to be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rm 12:3). Abraham Heschel (in Fox 1988:35) says

Normal consciousness is a state of stupor, in which sensibility to the wholly real and responsiveness to the stimuli of the spirit are reduced. The mystics, knowing that man is involved in a hidden history of the cosmos, endeavour to awake from the drowsiness and apathy and to regain the state of wakefulness for their enchanted souls.

Jesus still asks the question today: "Why do you sleep?" and exhorts us to "rise and pray" (Lk 22:46).

Studies in depth psychology merely confirm what the Christian mystics in the kataphatic tradition, such as Ignatius, knew all along: The images which arise from the deepest parts of our being are able to tell us much about where we are spiritually, where we need to go and how to get there. In classic Ignatian terminology (see Puhl 1951:147), the entering into the depth and contemplating the images that arise from within bring either *consolation* or *desolation*. Through experience, one begins to discern those inner movements that are from God and how to act on them.

However, in order to safely enter into the world of the spirit, one often requires someone who has travelled the road before and has returned safely. Theophan the Recluse (in Leech 1994:42) warned that it was potentially harmful to try to guide and direct oneself. He knew that it was during the time of inner prayer that those people who did not have access to skilled direction were most likely to go astray. Persons really desiring to progress in their life of prayer were counselled by him to seek the help and advice of a spiritual director. Francis de Sales (in Foster 1990:37) writes;

Do you seriously wish to travel the road to devotion? If so, look for a good person to guide and lead you. This is the most important of all words of advice...(Therefore) insistently

beseech God to provide you with one after his own heart. Have no misgivings in this regard for he... will give you a good and faithful guide.

Spiritual direction, then, is an essential part of entering into the kataphatic and apophatic prayer forms. Directors need to be experienced in these forms of prayer to ensure that the directee does not get caught up in *makyo* - non-essential ecstasies and visions. Dangers should not be a deterrent in one's decision to go forward into a deeper relationship with God. We have already been raised to life in Christ. For this reason Paul's encouragement is to "set your hearts on the things that are in heaven" and to "keep your minds fixed on things there" (Col 3:1-3). Then the Helper, the Holy Spirit, will "teach you everything and make you remember everything that Jesus has taught" (Jn 14:26).

Through the years of my involvement with the Presbyterian church in South Africa I have not encountered many people whose prayer life can be described as apophatic. The prayer generally tends to be kataphatic in some sense of the word. By this I mean that Presbyterian corporate and personal prayer tends to be mostly verbal but almost never imaginative, and very seldom is it silent.⁶ But the importance of these prayer forms in the history of spirituality in the Christian church would suggest that those Presbyterians who desire to make their prayer life more effective ought to be introduced to these prayer forms as a matter of some urgency. Direction is one ministry which seeks to help people to progress beyond the Christian teachings on prayer that Paul (Heb 5:11 - 6:3) calls "milk," suitable for spiritual infants, and move folk on to more solid fare, better suited to those who aspire to greater spiritual maturity.

8 Introducing Spiritual Direction into the P.C.S.A

I wish to deal with some of the areas of concern that may arise with regard to the process of introducing direction into the P.C.S.A. I do not intend giving a methodologically precise and complete

overview of *how* spiritual direction ought to be introduced, for this would take far more space than I have available here. Nevertheless, there are a few things Presbyterians might wish to take into account:

Awareness - It seems almost superfluous to say that the first step in getting spiritual direction off the ground within the P.C.S.A. is to ensure that people actually know about it. Once an awareness of direction's history, aims and potential benefits for people seeking to deepen their relationship with God is inculcated, I believe that the demand for directors would spur those who feel called to this ministry into gaining the necessary skills for direction.

Education - Because of the growing popularity of direction today, there are any number of workshops, retreats, courses and university degrees which offer people the opportunity of learning about direction. However, it would be unwise for people to attempt to become directors without having been in direction themselves for a fair period of time.

I would also suggest that one approach to the question of educating Presbyterians about direction is to do it the typically Presbyterian way viz. form a committee whose task it is to conscientise others about direction and then submit reports for publication in the *Papers for General Assembly*. Prayer and the path leading to deeper prayer has always been vital to the Christian faith. As people in the Presbyterian church begin to feel the need to deepen their own prayer life in this day and age, it is conceivable, even probable, that a committee on prayer will be formed quite naturally.

I emphasise again that educating people about spiritual direction does not mean people automatically *become* directors like getting a degree after three or four years of tertiary education. Spiritual direction remains, in a sense, enigmatic in that one relies completely on the call of the Spirit, not unlike the "secret call" or "inner call" that Calvin (Institutes IV,iii,11) speaks about in reference to the calling of ministers to the

Word and Sacrament. Calvin realises that this call is open to all and that it is accompanied by gifts given by the Spirit. He says lay persons

...are called to the ministry when they...(have) learning joined with piety and the other gifts.... Those whom the Lord has destined for such high office, he first supplies with the arms required to fulfill it, that they may not come empty-handed and unprepared (IV,iii,11:1063)

Practice - From what has gone before, it should be quite obvious that the practice of being a spiritual director is not at all limited to the clergy of the P.C.S.A. But at the same time those who are directed should not be thought of as being limited to Presbyterians, or even Christians, for that matter. The very ability of direction to touch the deepest centre of people's lives moves both the director and directee beyond dogmatic considerations into the realm of faith and Spirit which cannot be captured by any one particular tradition of belief or practice.

The most sensitive, most vulnerable, and at the same time the most distinguishing traits of Reformed folk do not lie in the more objective sphere of dogmatics or ethics, but in what follows from the practice of faith. Consequently the work of the Holy Spirit has a great and wholesome emphasis in Calvin and the Reformed pietists (in Osterhaven 1971:140).

To what extent this is still true of the P.C.S.A. needs careful consideration. Directors in the P.C.S.A. will find that they too will need to recapture the art of being constantly open to the guidance of the Spirit. This vulnerability to the Spirit's prompting will mean that an openness will naturally occur within directors to all people, no matter what their denomination and even religious persuasion happens to be. Because of the lack of competent directors within the P.C.S.A. Presbyterians should be encouraged to find experienced directors who are Catholic and Anglican, perhaps even Hindu or Buddhist, provided that they all are able to respect the central and archetypal role played by the *Word* as Jesus Christ in Reformed thinking and belief. Having

said that, I sincerely doubt that there are many directors who are competent in the area of *trans-religious* direction at this time. But certainly directors in the P.C.S.A. will have to begin to develop skills in *cross-cultural* direction given the multi-cultural nature of the denomination.

8.1 Cross-Cultural Spiritual Direction

The P.C.S.A. seeks to encourage the interaction of the various cultural groupings found within its ranks. In a report submitted by the committee for *Justice and Social Responsibility*, the P.C.S.A. has recognised that the denomination is multilingual and multicultural, yet

...despite all the positive changes happening in the country, there are many injustices and structural imbalances that remain within our own churches... We felt that it was important...to focus on building solid relationships within the P.C.S.A., to heal old wounds and to learn new and better ways of relating to one another (Papers for General Assembly 1995:128).

The report recognises that the legacy left by apartheid has resulted in many church communities who tend to cater only for the cultural group in which it exists. This means that on any given Sunday morning, most church service are attended almost exclusively by black or white worshippers. Nevertheless, it is almost beyond doubt that in the near future this situation will change. Both ministers and "laity" will be increasingly faced with the challenges of cross-cultural ministry - including liturgy, preaching, pastoral work and spiritual direction.

More and more spiritual directors in the Presbyterian church are going to find themselves being invited to direct people whose culture differs from their own. But cross-cultural direction becomes viable only when directors become more sensitised to their directees' distinctive cultural heritage. The critical question is how Presbyterian directors are to learn new and better ways of relating to others as they prepare

themselves to engage in cross-cultural direction relationships that are meaningful and mutually edifying.

There are two fundamental principles that directors need to observe in these situations.

8.1.1 Respect for uniqueness

History shows quite clearly that cross-cultural contact in South Africa's past has on the whole been destructive. One needs only think of those missionaries who unthinkingly condemned indigenous religious practices as irredeemably demonic. The starting point of reversing this trend - especially if one is to be a director for a person of a different culture - is to inculcate within oneself a sincere respect and love for the other's uniqueness. Theologically speaking, this respect should be based on an awareness of the freedom of God that is reflected in each person. No director can fully know another human being as God does, nor can s/he fully know the path along which God leads the directee. This means that the director's "spiritual itinerary" can never be made normative for others (Maruca 1992:34).

Ignatius (in Puhl 1951:7) knew that his *Spiritual Exercises* had to be adapted to suit the "condition of the one engage(d) in them" if they were to be at all effective. St. Therese of the Child Jesus knew that each person had to wage the same spiritual battle but in different ways, so refrained from trying to direct all her novices in the same way (Maruca 1992:35). But too often there is a lack of respect for different cultures, generally because of an ignorance of the values, traditions and norms by the director. This may well mean that a cross-cultural encounter jars the director's sense of normality; "Why are they doing these strange things?" s/he might be tempted to ask!

An important part in overcoming this ignorance in the context of the P.C.S.A. is to realise that blacks and whites start out with very different worldviews. The challenge facing directors is to become acquainted

with the paradigms of the unknown worldview. For example, one might begin by considering the different perceptions of self that blacks and whites have respectively. In spite of western values affecting traditional African concepts of self, the African sense of identity flows from the communal experience. It is always the community that defines whom the African is to become. For the black African the universe is alive with power that generates awe and approaches life with the desire to live in harmony with it, not apart from it (Rakoczy 1992:15). This differs markedly from the western perception of self, the universe and reality which are all seen as compartmentalised, affecting each other mechanically, but not intrinsically. Susan Rakoczy (1992:17) comments

In the situation of spiritual direction, the African person brings her or his desire that experience of God be found in every facet of life without exception. Western directors or directees, formed in the pattern of religion as one part of life, can be disconcerted by the wholistic view presented by their African brothers and sisters, but they have much to gain from it.

Of course, in the P.C.S.A. this problem of differing worldviews is compounded by the fact that South Africa, as a multicultural society, finds itself with more than just two views of reality. But by patiently and sincerely seeking to know the other cultures within this country, the director will "gain from it", and this gain is the topic of the next step in the director's preparation for cross-cultural direction.

8.1.2 Practising interpathy

The phenomenologists speak of the importance of the practice of *epoché* in any attempt at meaningful dialogue: In order to avoid taking anything for granted, the director needs to suspend his previous assumptions, pre-conceived ideas and judgements by attempting to bracket them as far as possible (see Krüger 1982:18). This requires a great deal of courage, for one has to face up to one's own biases and

attitudes, such as racism, feelings of intellectual, theological, religious and cultural superiority in order to prevent these from interfering with one's ability to truly listen.

But as important as *epoche* may be, it is in itself not enough. Augsburg (in Rakoczy 1992:17) describes three responses that allows one to enter into the world of another. These include *sympathy*, which is a more or less spontaneous response to another's emotional experience. *Empathy* is an active sharing in compassion through "compassionate active imagination", but although one pays attention to the other person's experience, one's own experience is the frame of reference for contemplating the new information. But the most important response for the director in a cross-cultural situation is *interpathy*. This occurs when the director enters wholly into the world of the directee in all its uniqueness. This means an experience of "feeling with" and "thinking with" in which the other person's experience becomes both the frame of reference and picture created within the director (Rakoczy 1992:18). Thus, interpathy allows the director to be fully present as s/he relives the experience of the directee. This demands an openness from both director and directee, with both touching base at their deepest centre which is God. Interpathy allows both to enter on to the "holy ground" which frees both from agendas tarnished by selfish concerns. It allows the Spirit to be heard and obeyed.

At a *Post Academic Training* conference for probationer ministers which I attended quite recently, the dynamic benefits of interpathy became much clearer for me. One particular black student reacted strongly to being told to join another group of people (mainly black) by a white student. By entering into his world of experience, it was found that the black student had been threatened with torture and death at the hands of white soldiers as a young boy. This experience had resulted in deep feelings of fear, anger, pain and humiliation. The attitude of the white student had sparked memories of this incident. By carefully entering into, and living through his experience of fear, the entire group of students was able to come to a much deeper understanding of his ordeal and even share in the healing that occurred in his life right then.

This shift into the world of the other is thus not unidirectional, but accompanied by a simultaneous movement back towards one's own world. This return can be an opportunity for healing, forgiveness and great joy in the life of the director. Like the prodigal child returning home, the person has grown in insight, maturity and knowledge and is able to utilise his new-found knowledge with others. Just as the group of students were able to share in the healing of the black student, so too the director is able to apply the experiences of the directee to his own life as a means of allowing God to speak into his own life.

As one comes to an awareness of the extent to which culture shapes the life of individuals, one is able to appreciate the challenge facing ministers of the P.C.S.A. who wish to embark upon cross-cultural direction. Nevertheless, by taking into consideration the uniqueness of each person and then putting into practice one's interpathic skills, one will find that not only does one become a better director to people of different culture, but a better director for people of one's own culture.

9 Conclusion

The concrete South African experience of passing from one sociohistorical epoch to another, an experience fraught with not only anxiety but also possibilities, invites the discovery of the joy and peace that exists in the human existence which is in harmony with God and itself. This means the formation of an attitude to life that fosters what Krüger (1995:252) calls a "radical self-less reciprocity". That is to say, there needs to develop within all humanity a love that is utterly selfless and detached. It is a love that is entirely directed towards others and God. This love is then returned in a selfless way to the original lover. Eventually there exists only the love that so utterly penetrates lover and beloved that both transcend their separateness. Both are caught up in the same expression of Trinitarian love that unites Father and Son through the Spirit of Love. Spiritual direction serves as a particular means of achieving this kenotic relationship, first between director and directee, and from this foundation extending to all beings.

Presbyterians in South Africa have much to offer their compatriots because of the depth of spirituality that they are heir to. Their collective Celtic and African tradition is rich with the wisdom that comes from thousands of years of experiencing God in everyday life. Both African and Celtic traditions lie close to the surface in the unconscious of the collective Presbyterian psyche. Yet currently, these seem to exert too little influence on present Presbyterian ecclesial and spiritual practices. Nevertheless, it is hoped that as Presbyterians with their different spiritual roots begin to rediscover their own particular spiritual heritages, they will find that, whether it be it Celtic or African, these do not differ significantly from each other. This discovery will in turn lead to a deeper sense of unity within the P.C.S.A.

Through spiritual direction, Presbyterians can then begin to express the treasures of their collective spiritual inheritance through their lives. As they learn from their traditions, they can integrate it into their everyday life, then begin to transcend it in order to find new and exciting expressions of their spirituality.

Once this happens, Presbyterians will find that they have something special to offer a South Africa whose peoples are also in search of new ways of expressing their own unique spiritualities.

The time is coming, or indeed has come, for the church of Jesus Christ to move beyond the historically conditioned separation of denominations and even religions. The simple reality is that before people are black or white, Christian or atheist, they are human beings who are defined by being loved and in turn loving. The separation of peoples into denominations and religions has at times shown itself to be conducive to creative thinking and mutual edification. But it has also led to tensions, conflicts and wars. This quest for peace and unity both within and without calls for the healing of relationships through the deepening of self-awareness.

Spiritual direction is only one of several ways of fostering this self-awareness and in turn leading to a profound unity within the individual. But most importantly, direction allows a person to become increasingly conscious of his own capacity for love expressed within his own religious, cultural and social constraints. Direction also has the ability to enable the person to transcend those constraints as s/he finds evidence of God's love and grace outside of his immediate experience of God. For Christians, this love and grace is expressed primarily through a deeply personal relation with the loving and caring God-man Jesus Christ. But this love need not be limited to being expressed in Christian terms, or even theistic terms.

As one's love for God matures, it moves beyond all efforts at conceptualisation. This love is then intuitively realised within the experience of an emptying of self, leading to self transcendence. Words do not adequately capture this experience, so it is expressed in and through that person's relation with God, self, community and environment. Spiritual direction, then, focusses on these relations in order to actively seek their growth and maturation. And it does so by assisting the spiritual searcher to simply pay attention to the working of the Spirit in his everyday life. For the Spirit of God is in continuous communion with everyone all of the time, leading to ever increasing love and the overcoming of all separateness. This we would know

if only we would learn to be aware and to love.

To what extent this essay will contribute to promoting spiritual direction within the P.C.S.A. remains to be seen. But of this I am certain: This denomination will only find the way to the radical and immediate presence of God in self, others and the world if it has the courage to do three things; take from its past that which unites, leave behind in its past that which divides, and, if so led, embrace spiritual direction as a new (but really quite old) way of discerning *how* to more fully enter into the Presence of an Awesome God.

Endnotes

1. I recently conducted a short survey among P.C.S.A. members to try to determine the level of awareness of the ministry of spiritual direction. I do not suggest that the small sample of people interviewed are necessarily representative of the whole denomination, but I was able to get a feel for the level of knowledge of and interest in spiritual direction, as well as roughly determine the number of ministers who were themselves in direction. Not surprisingly for a Reformed church, the general level of awareness of direction was low, especially among the ministers with evangelical leanings. Very few had ever been in a formal direction relationship. Only one of my respondents had had any experience of formal spiritual direction.

2. I have tried to use non-sexist language in this essay. For example, "hes" has been substituted for "his" or "her". Note that all quotes have been left as found.

3. For those who are sceptical about my statement here, a quick glance in the subject index of Calvin's *Institutes*, (1960:1685/6) under the heading of *Papacy*, *Papist*, *Pope* and *Popery* should dispel doubt about the extreme anti-Catholic feeling. Calvin has topics such as *abuse of church jurisdiction*, *corruption of doctrine*, *oppressor of church freedom*, *tyranny*, *idol worship*, *know not Christ* and *religion adulterated by...* etc !

4. I use the term "spiritual guidance" here advisedly as defined in my section on *Definitions*. I am not suggesting that Calvin was actually in a spiritual direction relationship (again, as I have defined the term) with Farel. Nevertheless, it should be clear that Calvin would have derived great benefit from a personal encounter with Farel, and in fact desired the direction that would have resulted from this encounter.

5. *Shaktipat* (Hindu) and *baraka* (Sufi) can be described as dynamic and sometimes frightening sensible experiences of being filled with a numinous and powerful presence or light. Both are phenomenologically fairly similar to the Christian experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, visions, prophecies and being "slain" in the Spirit. John Travolta's movie *Phenomenon* describes this type of experience very well indeed.

6. I say this based on my talks with various people in the P.C.S.A. as well as the questionnaire that was filled in for me. Having said this, there are no doubt people in the denomination who do utilise both kataphatic and apophatic prayer forms in their devotions, even if they do not explicitly know the theological terms for these.

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Appendix 1

The following questionnaire was filled in by 20 members of the P.C.S.A. most of whom were either ministers or students for the ministry. I felt that these would have been the most likely people in the denomination to have heard of, and experienced, spiritual direction in the sense described in this essay. I was disappointed to find that a large percentage (about eighty percent) of even this admittedly biased cross-section of P.C.S.A. members had never heard of spiritual direction. Only one person had actually been involved in formal direction sessions (and that was with a Jesuit priest, not a Presbyterian).

Questionnaire

Dear Respondent

I am doing an essay on spiritual direction and the P.C.S.A. Please would you fill this in and return it to me as soon as possible. Kindly take note of the following important points:

- 1) Please give me an intuitive response as opposed to a theologically correct one, ie. I would prefer it if you did not consult works on spiritual direction before answering these questions. This would give a better indication of the present awareness and understanding of the subject amongst us.
- 2) Feel free to discuss these questions with whomever you please, but only once you have already answered and submitted this questionnaire.
- 3) Your answers will remain confidential, as such you are not required to write your name on this paper.

1) Briefly describe your relationship with God at present.

- 2) How do you pray? (please be as open as possible).
- 3) Have you heard about Spiritual Direction? If yes, how/where?
- 4) In your understanding, what is Spiritual Direction ?
- 5) Are you/ have you been in a "formal" Direction relationship? If yes, how often do you attend, for how long and with whom? (you do not have to give names, just whether the person is male/female, lay/ordained, and their denomination).
- 6) For those who have answered "yes" to Q. 4, what are the benefits you have derived from the relationship? Drawbacks? Would you recommend Spiritual Direction to a colleague? Congregant?
- 7) Have you been on a directed retreat? If yes, give details.
- 8) Have you heard of Iona? Could we benefit by a contemplative retreat centre in the P.C.S.A.? Why?
- 9) We all want to deepen our relationship with God. Would you consider doing so from a position that took into consideration wisdom gleaned from 1) the Catholic tradition (e.g. the Ignatian exercises)?
2) non-Christian sources (e.g. Judaic sources, Zen)?

