

New Aspects of Spiritual Direction

The object of this paper is to examine certain practices of spiritual direction in the Catholic charismatic renewal in the light of the history of spiritual direction in the Church. The paper will be tentative because practices in the renewal are not uniform, and the tradition of spiritual direction is both rich and protean.¹

The very concept of spiritual direction varies with authors so that contradictory affirmations abound on the subject. Frequently, for example, it is said that the role of the director is to make himself superfluous, to train his client to be self-directing. Yet St. Bernard writes, "He who makes himself his own director becomes the disciple of a fool."² An Italian Salesian, E. Valentini, writing in 1950, asserts that spiritual direction is necessary for most religious because they remain in the purgative way.³ James Walsh, S.J. agrees with the premise that most religious are beginners, but he draws an opposite conclusion, namely, that they do not need spiritual direction; spiritual direction presupposes a "special call," a "gripping drive" and "ache" for divine union, an advanced disposition far down the road.⁴

If "direction" means psychological counseling or educational guidance, then surely the director has a temporary role, and his primary thrust will be the novices in the spiritual life. James Walsh and perhaps St. Bernard have something else in mind.

Kinds of Spiritual Direction

Any helping relationship that has the spiritual development of a person as the consciously willed object can be called spiritual direction. I would attempt to clarify the meaning of the term by distinguishing between general and special spiritual direction.

General spiritual direction is an introduction into the life in the Spirit. It sets the stage and secures the necessary conditions for spiritual growth. It thus includes education and formation, pastoring and spiritual government; as well as guidance and counseling insofar as these are informational and psychological functions respectively.

Special spiritual direction is more personalized, more grace-oriented, more explicitly spiritual. It deals directly with the individual, and precisely with that person's relationship with God. Its focus is the particular will of God: how this individual is being moved and touched by God. The general relationships look to the human conditions; spiritual direction as such tunes into the God-dimension, uncovering, identifying, and helping the person to appropriate the action of God in his soul. It is best understood as the correlative of the manifestation of conscience, and without such manifestation it does not exist.

"Manifestation of conscience" needs clarification. It is self-revelation, not so much in terms of sins or virtues or deliberate acts, but as an accounting of the impulses, ideas, attractions, and repulsions that precede judgment or deliberation. It is the necessary input for discernment of spirits. Schaefer describes manifestation of conscience as the revelation of one's "state of soul, outside of confession, namely of those matters which are proximately connected with virtues and vices. It is the revealing of one's *mores*, affections, inclinations, propensities, temptations, dangers and passions."⁵ The restriction, "outside of confession," serves to distinguish confessional matters, which are deliberate sins, from non-deliberate interior movements, which may be from God or the evil spirit and which are properly the terrain of the spiritual director as such.⁶

This paper is concerned with both general and special direction. For purposes of clarity, however, I will use the term “spiritual direction” only in the special sense.

General Spiritual Direction

General spiritual direction can be summed up in three forms: guidance, government, and counseling. It may be helpful to identify each form more clearly.

Guidance. Guidance is basically, though not exclusively, intellectual. The spiritual guide teaches the truth with every instrumentality available: good example, a loving, “enabling” relationship, communication, and teaching techniques. A truer designation would be “education,” whether moral or spiritual, or “formation,” either initial or continuing. “Spiritual guidance” is the term more frequently found in the literature, though not always in the precise sense used here.

Whatever the term, the function is clear: Spiritual guidance, education, or formation is the process that has in view changes in behavioral patterns, attitudes, value systems, and ways of thinking and acting. A living community or fellowship is rightly considered to be the chief agent of this change,⁷ but a “director” or educator guides the process. In one formulation, formation is described as “a process involving four major variables common to all instructional settings: learner, subject matter, environment, and teacher. A formation director is a teacher who orchestrates the four variables to produce specific outcomes.”⁸

Government. Guidance is closely aligned to spiritual government, or what charismatics call pastoral direction or “shepherding” (Eph 4,11).⁹ The superior of a religious community, the pastor of a parish, and the leader of a prayer group give pastoral direction to their particular groupings. Their exercise of authority or leadership in their communities ultimately has in view the

spiritual advancement of each member. The role coincides with teaching insofar as the leader promotes good discipline, morality, and spiritual living by speaking “to men for their upbuilding, their encouragement, their consolation ... [and] upbuilding of the church” (1Cor 14,3,5).

But the pastor is more than a teacher; he looks to all the spiritual needs of the group. In developing the role of pastor or shepherd, scripture draws upon the rich background of Israel’s nomadic and agrarian experience, delineating the care and concern, the loving commitment even to the laying down of one’s life, the patience, courage, wisdom, and inventiveness that mark the good shepherd.

Some institutionalized forms of pastoral direction are more closely identified with guidance or formation than with leadership as such. There are, for example, the roles of novice master or seminary spiritual director. They illustrate the “institutionalized” model of spiritual direction, having as their chief function the handing on of an objective spirituality appropriate for those being initiated or renewed in a certain life style.¹⁰ Such indoctrination must leave room for personal response and personalized growth, but this factor is secondary to the foundational work of attitudinal and value changes.

Beginners are generally better served by learning to integrate and internalize objective norms and patterns. They are not as yet spiritually mature, nor are they at that point of profound openness to God’s will that John of the Cross calls detachment, Ignatius Loyola names indifference, and Hans Urs von Balthasar identifies as biblical faith.¹¹ This spiritual maturity is the prerequisite for the delicate discernment of God’s particular concrete will. All that Ignatius proposed for beginners was “some instruction and attainment of a certain peace of Soul.”¹² The achievement of that peace of soul has found an effective instrument in the modern discipline of psychological counseling, the

third and final form of general spiritual direction.

Counseling. Psychological counseling helps an individual sort out his feelings and recognize conflicts, and make decisions toward their resolution. The core of a therapeutic counseling relationship is a healthy interpersonal relationship, or more specifically, a set of positive attitudes of understanding, acceptance, insight, and communication. Even in its technically “directive” forms it is nondirective. The relationship itself is the source of therapy, and for this reason (among others) a great deal of good counseling occurs in informal settings among friends or between a respected significant other and one’s self. The same good effects occur in group interaction.

Psychological counseling applied to religious areas is called pastoral counseling. It is the most popular of the spiritual helping relationships today. In the minds of some, pastoral counseling has replaced spiritual direction either in its form of group process¹³ or in a modified form of a one-to-one counseling relationship.¹⁴ No doubt the dynamics of counseling can contribute a great deal to good spiritual direction, but they will not replace it. The source of healing and growth in spiritual direction is the power of God mediated through the directive functioning of his minister. Henri Nouwen catches the uniqueness of the skilled counselor who is at the same time an experienced spiritual director when he describes the abbot of the Abbey of the Genesee:

Father John Eudes Bamberger... listened to me with care and interest, but also with a deep conviction and a clear vision; he gave me much time and attention but did not allow me to waste a minute; he left me fully free to express my feelings and thoughts but did not hesitate to present his own; he offered me space to deliberate about choices and to make decisions but did not withhold his opinion that some choices and decisions were better than others; he let me find my own way but did not hide the map that showed the right direction. In our

conversation, John Eudes emerged not only as a listener but also as a guide, not only as a counselor but also as a director.¹⁵

Special Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction in the strict sense is partly a derivative and partly an addition to the three functions considered thus far. It participates in all three, and has often been identified with one or other of them, but is reducible to none of these categories. At various times in history the spiritual director was an educator or a superior, and today as often as not he is a counselor. In the beginning, for example, among hermits of the desert such as Anthony, the spiritual father was a teacher who eventually liberated his charge and sent him off to live his own solitary life as a monk. With Pachomian cenobitism and the development of monasticism in the Middle Ages, the spiritual director became the superior, the abbot of the monastery. In both cases, however, he was a “father,” a transmitter of life, and not a mere instructor or enforcer of rules and practices.

Superior and spiritual director were united in the one office during the middle years of the Church, and there was then no distinction in practice between the internal and external forum. The two forums were separated by the Irish monks in the seventh century when they connected spiritual direction with confession. In the ages of casuistry, when rules of thumb and moral systems of probabilism replaced the exercise of the virtue of prudence, the “director of conscience” exercised an almost unilateral power as the exponent of God’s will and the decision maker for his penitent. This style of spiritual direction predominated in the recent past and has given spiritual direction a questionable reputation. Many of our contemporaries tend to think of spiritual direction as arbitrary, manipulative, moralistic, and imperialistic.

The Ideal Role of the Spiritual Director. A spiritual director helps a person to understand his spiritual state, to discern which decisions are appropriate to make, and to distinguish authentic movements of the Spirit from impulses that are counterfeit. His central task, therefore, is in the area of discernment of spirits.

To perform the task of confirming the direction of the Spirit in his client's life, certain preliminaries are necessary. Friedrich Wulf indicates these preliminaries when he lists the objectives for the client: 1) self-knowledge; 2) self-acceptance; 3) detachment from self; 4) specifically recognizing and accepting God's will.¹⁶

In this process the director is a teacher and a counselor; he also exercises an authority of recognized competence. He receives not obedience, since he is not a superior, but docility and submission from his client.¹⁷ This concept of spiritual direction tends to consign the direction of beginners to general direction. The more advanced the client, the more there is room for special spiritual direction.

The spiritual director in the Christian tradition is another John the Baptizer, a friend of the Bridegroom and friend to the client, who points out the one Teacher who is the way, the truth, and the life. He is mentor as well as friend, not a mere occasional consultant, but a confidant who shares the other's life on a regular basis. He is the delegate and voice of the Christian community, who objectifies, clarifies, and evaluates the inner experience of the action of the Spirit in the personal life of the client, and approves and confirms the inner truth of this action as well. He is not necessarily a superior, nor need he have an office in the institutional Church. But he should exercise his charismatic office in collaboration with hierarchical authority. This relationship to the official Church has led commentators in the past to urge lay people who exercise a ministry of spiritual direction to submit their

ministry on a regular basis to a priest, who serves as a representative of the total Church. In this way he leaves the final judgment, the last word, to ecclesiastical authority.

Qualifications of the Spiritual Director. Today, as through the centuries, the spiritual director is a spiritual father who communicates the life of Christ as he has experienced it in his own personal life. For this reason, personal experience of the way to the Father is the first requisite of a spiritual director. Knowledge, whether spiritual, theological, psychological, or methodological, takes second place among the qualifications. Contrary to popular belief, this is true even in the mind of St. Teresa of Avila, at least in her major texts.¹⁸ Direction, therefore, is less an action than a human relationship animated by the Spirit of God.

A person submits to an experienced man of God, not as to one who will make decisions for him, but as to one who enables him to see clearly and choose wisely. The two parties to the dialogue share their life in the Spirit in a two-way communication that has as its goal God's word for the client in the here and now. Full responsibility for decisions taken remains with the client. Practitioners of spiritual direction believe that the Lord himself uses this faith relationship to allow his word to be heard and his direction followed. The Father speaks through the spiritual father, the true Shepherd calls his sheep by name through human voices that are his instrument, and the real director of souls is the Spirit himself. It is obvious that no mere mechanical medium, such as books or tapes or even computers, will ever be able to replace the living relationship that is spiritual direction.

One final question remains: Is a group able to fulfill the function of spiritual direction? Some have developed models of formal direction in which the whole group, particularly a peer group, searches out together the will of the Father.¹⁹ Others describe the informal give-and-take of

everyday life as one way of direction.²⁰ This second type is exemplified by the human interaction that goes on in groups or among friends bent on the same goal.

Both formal and informal group direction are like spiritual friendships. They are humanistic forms of spiritual direction very suitable to our anthropocentric times. No doubt the major part of the spiritual direction taking place in the world is of this variety. But in my opinion, neither formal group direction nor the informal interaction of good community life gets beyond the boundaries of general spiritual direction. It is a beginning, a help toward establishing personal norms and a spiritual discipline, but it fails to draw out the implications and unpack the deep encounter of God that mystically reveals God's special leading.

Spiritual Direction in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

The Catholic charismatic renewal is both continuous and discontinuous with traditional spirituality. As a spiritual revival it is experiencing new leadings of the Spirit. The effects are the recovery of old truths and the evolution of new forms of Christian life. The ongoing action of the Spirit, and the interdependence of the members of the Body of Christ are two central principles in the renewal. A spirituality organized around these two principles will give crucial importance to discernment, in order that self-deception and illuminism be avoided. It will also offer a new appreciation of mutual submission (Phil 2,34), and it will highlight the complementarity of the charisms (1Cor 12, 27) and the corporate nature of the Christian enterprise. These factors have led to a rebirth of interest in general and special spiritual direction and have affected the forms that this direction is taking.

Spiritual formation, pastoral care, individual counseling, and spiritual direction are thriving in the renewal. Instruction and

counseling abound.²¹ The mammoth book and tape ministries, teaching conferences and sharing sessions of many varieties, endless hours of "talking through" problems or praying for healing in families, in households, or over the telephone are witnesses to this fact. Leaders take their shepherding role seriously, searching scripture to understand the meaning of pastoral care and spending long hours each week in core meetings and individual counseling.

Structures to handle all this interaction have been developing as needs are recognized. Charismatics are as innocent as are others of the formal distinctions drawn in the first part of this paper. The difference, however, is that all these functions for personal and community growth are key concerns and major involvements for them. They rush to the task without a great deal of understanding about how teaching, ruling, counseling, and spiritual direction are best carried out. Nor are they concerned about the interrelationships of these ministries or their specific differences. They proceed, trusting in the leading of the Spirit and the goodwill of their brothers and sisters more than in the checks and balances of a well-coordinated religious regimen such as has evolved over the centuries in religious life. Structures like strong leadership, headship, life in the Spirit and foundation seminars, core groups, and prayer rooms have emerged to teach, guide, and direct. Our purpose here is to look at this kind of activity in the light of history and the systematic considerations developed in the first part of this paper.

Lay Directed

One obvious aspect of the general and special spiritual direction ministries in the charismatic renewal is their lay character. The Catholic charismatic renewal has broken out of the clerical mold. It does not look to priests or religious as such for direction, but to persons with charismatic experience. If these be priests or religious, or trained in theology

or counseling, so much the better. But the real qualification for a service role is experience.

This is perfectly in accord with tradition. “Experience” in this context does not mean “experiences,” but rather the total effect of conversion on all levels of the personality with the consequent spiritual maturity of an “adept.” “No one gives what he doesn’t have” is as true in spiritual matters as in material ones. By its very nature, this Christian maturity includes a certain understanding of life in Christ. Often, however, this knowledge is not objectified, reflected on, or evaluated. It is subject to all the vagaries of subjectivity without the control of the community experience past and present. It is not integrated into the tradition.

Failure to undertake this theological reflection indicates a defect in the requisite knowledge of the spiritual life, the second qualification for direction. Without such knowledge, teaching and formation are impossible, and spiritual government and counseling are severely handicapped. The quality of prudence which must guide the relationships is hardly possible without a knowledge that goes beyond the confines of one’s individual experience. All three qualities—experience, knowledge, and prudence—are necessary for engaging in direction. An imprudent administrator or an ignorant teacher or a disturbed counselor does more harm than good, even if he claims to have a call from God to perform these tasks. The lack of qualification proves that there is no such call.

This does not mean that only persons with degrees in theology or a long in-service apprenticeship are equipped to teach, lead, counsel, or direct. It does, however, mean that spiritual directors must get the training and preparation somewhere. The Lord gives charisms where he wills and he chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong (1Cor 1,27). But good fruits are necessary validations for the presence of a

charism. These will be absent if incompetent persons are attempting the work. Charisms function in concrete persons, not in a vacuum. If a person is unable to carry out the task, he does not have the charism. A charism may well supply for the lack of natural qualities in an extraordinary case; it is only prudent, however, to expect educated persons to be recipients of a teaching charism, emotionally balanced persons to be selected for counseling, and holy persons to be spiritual directors.

Unqualified persons should be dissuaded from giving direction. Overseeing is important here, and guidelines, perhaps from the National Service Committee or from the Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee, are long overdue to help prayer groups and communities identify those persons who are candidates for directive roles.²² The question here is knowledge and prudence, not any particular form of training. Training in the religious disciplines, however, is not to be disdained; and one wonders why older, established charismatic communities do not seem to be thinking of sending their future leaders to school. The Catholic charismatic renewal is hardly being accountable to its own membership and to the Church when it takes no thought about obtaining proper certification for its educators, guides, counselors, and directors, in accord with the practice of other religious societies and as this kind of training becomes possible.

Official Status

General and special spiritual direction practiced in prayer groups and communities are charisms and ministries, but they are not offices in the Church. The Catholic charismatic renewal is not an ecclesiastical organization, a Church institution. It originates in the action of the Spirit and relates to the institution of the Church, but it is not part of the institution.²³ Thus it has its own loosely structured hierarchy of leadership, selected

through various kinds of leaders' discernment. It might be considered a domestic Church, an *ecclesiola* or living unit of the *Ecclesia*, but as of now it has not been structured into the Church. Canonically, it has the status of "a good work"; practically, it enjoys a healthy relationship with ecclesiastical authority.

The ministries of direction within the renewal are thus private matters. Spiritual direction within the Church has never been tied into ordination; lay persons exercise spiritual direction and allied functions as well as do ordained ministers. In the past such ministry was frequently connected with the office of superior, and it was always considered as being necessarily charismatic, that is, it had to be under the influence of charisms in order to be valid ministry in the Church.²⁴ From Paul's time onward the Church oversaw the exercise of these functions (1Cor 14,37; 1Cor 1,10). The Church is the final arbiter of the validity of the charism (*Lumen Gentium* 12). It must "protect the genuine charisms against pseudo-charisms and unhealthy phenomena, and maintain the community in the good order which the charisms themselves are meant to serve (1Cor 14,33)."²⁵

Prayer groups and communities do well to work in close contact with the hierarchy in order to maintain and foster their informal identification with the Church. They do this by relating to the bishop of the place, either personally or through his liaison or the local pastors. These nonofficial tie-ins are prudent safeguards against divisiveness, fragmentation, and unhealthy separation from the total Body of Christ.

Obedience and Submission

Both those who give and those who receive direction are subject to the higher authority of the Church. Their relation to the Church is properly one of obedience to the proper authority. The relationship of spiritual

direction, therefore, is one that should remain within appropriate limits.

Within the renewal itself, do those in submission to designated heads owe a similar obedience to these leaders? Must the members obey the coordinators of the community? Do members of a prayer group owe obedience to the group itself or to its recognized leaders? What is the proper relationship between shepherd and sheep in the Catholic charismatic renewal?

I submit that obedience in the proper sense does not enter this picture. Submission and docility are the qualities called forth from those who voluntarily choose to belong to a prayer group or a covenant community. This means that members willingly submit to the group and its organizational structures, and that they are docile, that is, teachable. But *per se* they undertake no obligation of obedience to the group or to its leadership.

Leaders of such groups do not belong to the chain of command in the Church which is the vertical line of authority that gives jurisdiction or dominative power. Leaders in the renewal and spiritual directors in general are receivers of God's word and grace, fellow searchers with their people for God's will. They stand in the center among their brothers and sisters and relate on the horizontal level to one another. Their leadership takes on a jurisdictional or dominative character by being inserted into the official structure of the Church, as happens in religious or secular institutes.

Religious subjects practice a similar horizontal submission. For them, though, it is obedience, since they are inserted into Church structure. This obedience is said to be dialogic, and the dialogue continues between superior and subject as long as the matter warrants. Subjects have their say, indeed they have the second to the last word, but the superior has the last word. Any legitimate (juridic) superior, such as a father in the family or a teacher in the classroom, enjoys

the same kind of right and duty. In the renewal the leaders and spiritual directors have the last word only in the sense that they can terminate the relationship in the presence of intractable or otherwise unreasonable opposition.

The “authority” of a spiritual director in both the general and special functions does not exceed that of a freely recognized competency. The director-directee relationship is not egalitarian. Neither is it master-disciple in an authoritarian sense, nor father-son in a juridic sense, nor superior-subject in a canonical sense. It is an informal, freely negotiated authority that is *sui generis*. This fact seems to have been questioned by one side in the recent shepherding-discipleship-submission controversy.²⁶ Spiritual directors, as well as guidance persons, pastoral leaders, and individual counselors, work in tacit submission to the authority of the teaching, ruling, and sanctifying power of the Church, an authority which is not likely to assert itself except in a crisis situation.

The authority given to leaders in the charismatic renewal is not jurisdiction in the Church, but authority in its etymological sense of “enabling to grow.” This power to serve is really given to the leaders by the members. It includes both the external ordering of the group and the personal lives of individuals to the extent that these areas are committed to the pastoral care and/or spiritual direction of the leadership. Such authority is as strong as the agreement, and binds in conscience according to the intentions of both parties to the contract.

Leaders should not exceed their competence or invade privacy. It would be well for all concerned to recognize the distinct areas or forums of the exercise of leadership in order to safeguard the rights of secrecy and confidentiality. The external forum has to do with the general or public good, the administration of the prayer group or community. The internal forum is the realm of conscience. Information that comes out of

personal counseling sessions, private guidance, or spiritual direction in the strict sense belongs to the internal forum and is an entrusted secret. In between these two areas is the paternal forum. Here the leader is acting as a father, not as a judge; his concern is the private interest of the individual, not the good order of the group. As a leader he receives privileged information that belongs to the private life of the individual, for example, his health or family situation. What he learns here is confidential and cannot be divulged or used for public decisions in the external forum in any way that would compromise the person.

The renewal tends to blur these three forums. An example is the preference for reducing both general and special spiritual direction to one overall, single relationship, that of the head or spiritual elder. Speaking of introducing the concept of headship and submission into religious life, Fr. George Kosicki writes:

In the past we had separated the roles of superior, confessor, and spiritual director so that the superior was not to involve himself in the spiritual life of the individual and the spiritual director or confessor was not to involve himself in the daily life of the individual. We need to recover the role of a ‘spiritual elder’ who would take responsibility for the whole welfare of the person. Each person needs such a ‘head’ to reflect his needs, to challenge him, to confront him with his agreements, to foster his total growth.²⁷

This is a return to an earlier historical pattern of the relationship between the public and private sectors of a person’s life.

This history is usually written in terms of the practice of manifestation of conscience.²⁸ From the beginning, manifestation of conscience to a spiritual father was strongly urged, and choosing an appropriate confidant with great care was wisely emphasized. Isaias the Abbot, who was active around the year 488, forbade self-revelation to an ignorant or imprudent person—this implies that Isaias had no magic concept of obedience or discernment.²⁹

Benedict legislated the practice of manifestation of conscience into his Rule (chapters seven and forty-six); the abbot was the “spiritual father.” St. Ignatius Loyola capped a long tradition when he made obligatory manifestation a key exercise, having in view both personal direction and the public administration of the Society of Jesus. His original group of nine rules to govern the Society contained this prescription:

They [the members of the Society] are to see in their Superiors the Image of God himself, assured that obedience is a guide which cannot be misled. They are to reveal all their thoughts as well as actions to those appointed over them, knowing that we must ever mistrust our own judgment.³⁰

Safeguards were taken by the Society and there was an awareness of possible abuses of the practice. The practice persisted, however, and spread to many religious institutes until the mid-nineteenth century, when the Church frowned upon the mandatory manifestation of conscience and directed religious institutes to delete the prescription from their constitutions. In 1890, the Church totally abrogated the practice for lay communities.³¹ The Code of Canon Law extended the abrogation to clerical institutions as well. In today’s religious groups the superior and the spiritual director are usually distinct persons, even though the Code allows and even encourages the free manifestation of conscience to the religious superior. The renewal must be careful not to demand manifestation of conscience. But in promoting such manifestation, as it seems to do in “full submission headship” or in looking to elders for overall concern over one’s life, the charismatic renewal should at least be aware of the history of this practice.

Communal Discernment

One feature that is truly a new form of spiritual direction in the renewal is the process of communal discernment at prayer meetings.³² The whole group discerns the truth

of a given proposed action, not by a process of majority vote, but by the group experience. The community is lifted up in praise, worship, and love of God. The pervading sense of presence and peace plus a deep solidarity in Jesus Christ is the backdrop on which the community senses the consonance or dissonance of a particular action: whether, for example, a speaker, a prophecy, or an announced decision is really “in the Lord.” This is charismatic communal discernment.

This kind of discernment presupposes a mature group that has achieved a sense of community through sharing and praying as a body. The gifts are then operative and the discernment takes place not by the one gift of discernment of spirits, but by a convergence of many gifts, as William Spohn explains:

In a charismatic prayer meeting, teachings, exhortations, prophecies and practical suggestions are advanced to seek the discernment which lies in the Body of Christ. No single individual possesses all the gifts of the Spirit, or has an infallible private index for his every inspiration. As in the Ignatian formula, the leading of one person should be expected to converge with the leadings of the Spirit expressed through others. One would be reluctant to accept one course of action, no matter how strongly proposed or received by the individual, if it failed to achieve congruence with the other gifts in the community.³³

Spohn rightly argues that this is no mere discernment in accord with the rules of the “First Week” of the *Spiritual Exercises*, wherein general teaching is elaborated and applied to specific cases. Ignatian indifference is demanded here, and the election is made on the principles of the “Second Week.” The dynamic of achieving group indifference is basically the same as that of the private disposition, namely the action of the Spirit of God. The group dynamic, however, is more dependent on the manifestation of complementary gifts.

George Montague corroborates this observation by describing a self-contained

experience of special spiritual direction in the Corinthian Church:

It is of great importance to note that in the Corinthian community, where a strong central authority had not yet been established (other than Paul's at a distance), the gifts provided complementary controls of one another; tongues solicited interpretation. Interpretation rendered tongues intelligible, prophecy brought a fresh meaning of the word, discernment checked the authenticity of prophecy and so on. To what else can be ascribed the miraculous survival of the headless enthusiastic community than to the complementary interaction of the gifts of the Spirit.³⁴

Is this group discernment a method which supplants individual, one-to-one spiritual direction? Is the method self-sufficient? The answer to both these questions, in my opinion, is no.

All discernment, whether individual or group, needs to be constantly open both to further discernment from the outside and to being checked from time to time.

Occasionally, at least, it is wise for a person's spiritual director (who may be an elder or a head in the community) to check out his practice of spiritual direction with his own mentor or even with an outside expert, or through study of the professional literature. Such corroboration is elementary wisdom and occurs in all the professions. Leaders do well, therefore, to compare notes at regional conferences and study weeks, or by consultation with other sources (including noncharismatic ones) to insure the truth and prudence of their groups' discernment.

Individual direction is still indicated for those who practice group discernment, and this for two reasons. First, groups that are able to rise to the level of the God-experience and that are involved in group discernment are spiritually mature. Such groups do exist, but realistically they are hard to find. Most groups leave some margin of possible error in this kind of group discernment because of their own immaturities.

Secondly, group discernment would seem to apply to group decisions and not to the concrete singulars for each individual. Individuals within the group still have their own spirits to objectify and judge their personal call and response in the context of the community judgment. The correct discernment of the group leaves room for each person's further election. Only individual discernment will uncover the special, personal aspects, and for this to happen, individual spiritual direction is necessary. A case in point would be someone who enthusiastically embarks on an otherwise good community program, but is carried away by immoderate zeal and lack of sufficient knowledge of himself and his project to such an extent that he may be harming the community program and other personal obligations. "Zeal without knowledge corrupts," and individual knowledge comes through individual discernment.

Charismatic Spiritual Directors

Need the individual personal director of charismatic persons be charismatic himself? Obviously, there is an advantage if the director is part of the renewal. But as long as he has experience and knowledge to understand the working of God in the charismatic renewal, he is qualified as a spiritual director. There are some advantages if he is a "loving critic" of the renewal because he thereby offers a sobering influence and perhaps greater objectivity. It is important that spiritual directors in the renewal have more than just the charismatic experience to recommend them. They best serve the renewal by being aware of the whole tradition of the Church and not just the slice of Christian history which began at the turn of the century in Kansas or in 1967 at Duquesne.

The validity of this observation may be illustrated by comparing the traditional attitude and the attitude of the renewal with regard to charismatic gifts. The renewal

thrives on the gifts; it welcomes them, seeks them out, loves to express them. This is because the charisms are visible manifestations of the Spirit of God for the building up of the Body of Christ. They are social and ministerial in nature.³⁵

The mystical tradition of the Church, on the other hand, seems to take a different view of the charisms. Here the viewpoint is personal union with God, and the charisms as such are peripheral to that union. They do disclose the action of the Spirit, but they are not the Spirit himself. Hence, they are not to be compared to faith, hope, and charity which are the proximate means of union with God. In case of danger to the purity of these theological virtues and within the context of personal sanctification, the charisms are pushed into the background. What they bear, according to John of the Cross, is already accomplished by the time they are consciously recognized.³⁶ They are a hazard in the unpurified person because he tends to latch on to them over and against the deeper reality of union with God. He is in danger of putting the gifts ahead of the Giver, preferring the visible manifestation of the Spirit to the Spirit himself.

At first sight there is a contradiction in these two approaches. But, as the Malines Document rightly observes, "One does not apply the norms of mystical theology in the same way to mystical experience as to charismatic experience."³⁷ Mystical experience is interior and personal; charismatic experience is social and ministerial. St. Paul lays down pastoral guidelines for the assembly exercising the charismatic or ministerial gifts; John of the Cross is concerned about the inexorable demands of the personal ascent of Mount Carmel. They are speaking in different contexts. When they move to the same

perspective, however, they agree. Paul's message in 1Cor 13 is a caveat for the exercise of the charismatic gifts; this message is the central theme of the teaching of John of the Cross. Both saints are pastoral and pragmatic, but they are addressing different situations. A knowledge of both teachings will temper the attitudes of the charismatic leader and the spiritual director in their respective roles.

Conclusion

Spiritual direction, both general and special, is basically the same in and outside the Catholic charismatic renewal. More spiritual direction is taking place (and by different agencies) in the renewal than in ordinary Catholic life, but the principles which elucidate it are the same for all. The experience of the direct action of the Spirit does not replace direction; rather, direction becomes more necessary, both in terms of a basic Christian indoctrination and human maturation, and in the actual work of discernment. The charismatic renewal is one spirituality in the Church at the present moment, often opting pragmatically for a particular approach to various issues in the Christian life. This is an acceptable course of action for any voluntary group. It must, however, endeavor to make the best choices. A knowledge of history may well moderate some judgments, and leaders at least should be as aware as possible of other viable options for living out the full Christian life. The Spirit has always used human instruments in his work, and the better equipped the spiritual teachers, counselors, leaders, and directors can be in experience, knowledge, and prudence, the more the renewal will flourish.

- ¹ The concept of spiritual direction is basically the same both in Eastern and Western Christian tradition. The delineation of the role, however, varies considerably from age to age and between Western and Eastern authors. Thomas Merton, in his *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville: 1960), and “The Spiritual Father in the Desert Tradition” in *The R.M. Bucke Memorial Society Newsletter-Review*, Vol. 3 (Spring, 1968), pp. 7-21, as well as Jean LaPlace, S.J., *The Direction of Conscience* (New York: 1967) expose the same tradition as Kallistos Ware, “The Spiritual Father in Orthodox Christianity,” *Cross Currents*, Vol. 24(Summer/Fall, 1974), pp. 296-313. But their points of emphasis, their language and literary style, the “Western” effort to “rationalize,” that is, render a reasonable account of the faith-process and integrate it with contemporary anthropology and psychology, as compared with K. Ware’s style of heightening the mystery and the transcendent quality of spiritual direction, lead to different “models” and even understandings of the same reality. Our bias in this article is the “Western” exposition of writers like Merton and LaPlace.
- ² Ep. 87, 7 in P.L. 182, 215, cited by P. Pourrat, “Direction spirituelle,” in the encyclopedia *Catholicisme* 4, pt. 1, p. 866.
- ³ In *Acte et documenta congressus generalis de statibus perfectionis*, Rome, 1950, (Rome: 1952) 2, 713, 714.
- ⁴ “The Need for Direction,” *The Way*, Vol. 2 (July, 1962), pp. 163-165. Walsh’s views stirred up a storm of disagreement among readers of *America* magazine, in the issues of 107 (12 October, 1962), pp. 877-879; 107(20 October, 1962), pp. 931-932; 107(10 November, 1962), pp. 1016-1018; and 108 (January, 1963), pp. 58-59.
- ⁵ T. Schaefer, O.F. M. Cap., *De Religiosis* (Rome: 1947), n. 684, cited by John C. Ford, S.J., “Religious Superiors, Subjects and Psychiatrists,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, Vol. 17(1962), p. 96.
- ⁶ Herbert F. Smith, S.J., “The Nature and Value of a Directed Retreat,” in *Review for Religious*, Vol. 32(1973), pp. 493-494.
- ⁷ Graham Pulkingham, “To Know and Be Known,” in *Pastoral Renewal*, Vol. 1(August, 1976), pp. 9-12.
- ⁸ John Welch, O. Carm., “Formation as Orchestration,” in *Review for Religious*, Vol. 34(1975), p. 925.
- ⁹ See Bert Ghezzi, *Build With the Lord* (Ann Arbor: Word of Life, 1976), p. 47.
- ¹⁰ David L. Fleming, S.J., “Models of Spiritual Direction,” *Review for Religious*, Vol. 34(1975), pp. 352-353.
- ¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Immediate Relationship with God,” *Concilium*, Vol. 29(New York: 1967), p. 51.
- ¹² *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, n. 18.
- ¹³ Jacques Leclercq, “The Priest Today,” *Review for Religious*, Vol. 22(1963), pp. 157-171.
- ¹⁴ E. E. Larkin, O. Carm., “Spiritual Direction Today,” *American Ecclesiastical Review* (September, 1969), pp. 204-210, especially pp. 206-209.
- ¹⁵ Henry J.M. Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary* (Garden City: 1976), pp. xii-xiii. Other recent authors intimate a preference for a less directive attitude on the part of the director. Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M., for example, will sustain the title “direction” only if it refers to the thrust or orientation of a life, the final cause of the relationship and not an activity of either party. “The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction,” *Chicago Studies*, Vol. 15(1976), p. 123.
- ¹⁶ Friedrich Wulf, “Spiritual Direction,” *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 6, p. 165. The word “specifically” is my own addition.
- ¹⁷ K. Truhlar, S.J., *Problemata theologica de vita spirituali* (Rome: 1960), pp. 108ff.
- ¹⁸ See *The Book of Her Life*, tr. K. Kavanaugh, O.C. D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: 1976), c. 13, nn. 16-20, pp. 94-96.
- ¹⁹ J.D. Futrell, S.J., “Communal Discernment,” *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*, Vol. 4 (November, 1972), n. 5; L. Orsy, S.J., “Towards a Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment,” *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*, Vol. 5 (October, 1973), n. 5.
- ²⁰ Fleming, op. cit., pp. 355-356. For example, “Direction...is seen in its ordinariness of one man helping another to clarify and objectify God’s will in his life” (p. 356).
- ²¹ R. Kiefer, book reviews of J. Fichter, Cardinal Suenens, K. McDonnell, and others, *Commonweal*, (March 26, 1976), p. 214: “The movement thrives on association among charismatics. Immense energy is devoted to instruction and counseling.”

- ²² One priest-psychiatrist arguing from an awareness of the harm that can be done due to an ignorance of psychology has recently suggested that “spiritual counselors should be required to undergo examination and have their knowledge and competence certified, the way pastoral counselors, teachers, psychologists, and psychiatrists are.” James J. Gill, S.J., “Psychiatry, Psychology and Spirituality Today,” *Chicago Studies*, Vol. 15 (1976), p. 37.
- ²³ A paradigm of a healthy relationship between the charismatic movement and the larger Church is the fourth century “ascetic movement,” in which there was recognition of “unordained elders” by both sides and the full integration of the ascetic movement into the whole Church by the ordination of one elder. See Stephen B. Clark, *Unordained Elders and Renewal Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).
- ²⁴ K. Rahner, S.J., “Charism,” *Encyclopedia of Theology, the Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: 1975), p. 184.
- ²⁵ O. Semmelroth, “Ecclesiastical Office: 11, Office and Charism,” *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 3, p. 172.
- ²⁶ Erling Jorstad, “Agenda for Charismatic Renewal,” *The Ecumenist*, Vol. 14 (January-February, 1976), pp. 29-30; Edward E. Plowman, “The Deepening Rift in the Charismatic Movement,” *Christianity Today* (October 10, 1975), pp. 52-54. A group of thirty-eight charismatic leaders representing the broad spectrum of the movement in the United States met at Oklahoma City, March 8-12, 1976, and ratified the “Ann Arbor Statement” (December 16-17, 1975), which affirmed a basic unity as well as recognized differences. The differences, it was stated, were “well within the bounds of ‘allowable variety’ in the body of Christ.”
- ²⁷ “Renewed Religious Communities: the Dynamics of Rediscovery,” *Review for Religious*, Vol. 35(1976), pp. 22-23.
- ²⁸ Dacian Dee, O.F.M. Cap., *The Manifestation of Conscience*, CU A Canon Law Studies, n. 4 10, (Washington, D. C.: 1960), pp. 1-30; Dacian Dee, O.F.M. Cap., “Manifestation of Conscience,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9, pp. 160-161; Francis N. Korth, S.J., *The Evolution of ‘Manifestation of Conscience’ in Religious Rules III-XVI Centuries* (Rome: 1949).
- ²⁹ Dee, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 24.
- ³¹ Decree *Quemadmodum*, issued in 1890 and cited in full in Dee, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-93. Canon 530 of the Code of Canon Law contains the present legislation.
- ³² For an excellent description and evaluation of this process, see William C. Spohn, “Charismatic Communal Discernment and Ignatian Communities,” *The Way Supplement*, n. 20 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 38-54.
- ³³ *Ibid*, p. 45.
- ³⁴ George Montague, S.M., *The Spirit and His Gifts* (New York: 1974), p. 38.
- ³⁵ *Theological and Pastoral Orientations on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* (Malines: 1974), pp. 4,12, and passim.
- ³⁶ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, pp. 2, 17, 7-9, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: 1973), pp. 158-159.
- ³⁷ Malines document, p. 24. See also Peter Hocken, “Pentecostals on Paper,” *Clergy Review*, (November, 1974), p. 767.