

# Some women's perspectives on the ministry of spiritual direction

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## INTRODUCTION

**W**HAT ARE CHRISTIAN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES? Christian feminist perspectives on the ministry of spiritual direction describe an approach that is holistic, relational, mutual and interconnected. It advocates the liberation of all people from patriarchal structures of hierarchy and of domination of women by men.<sup>1</sup> By 'Christian feminist perspectives', I mean to signal an underlying belief in Christ as human and divine, as well as redemptive, and a vision of inclusive mutuality, all one in Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Christian feminist spirituality fosters the autonomy, self-actualization and self-transcendence of all peoples, women and men.<sup>3</sup> Feminist spiritual directors include women and men who believe that the liberation of all for mutual equality is a gospel value.

As I propose in the next part of this article, these feminist perspectives provide at times the actual content for spiritual direction, especially regarding the issue of sexuality, personal identity and growth for women, together with society's expectations of them, cultural customs, the political context in which women find themselves, and the impact on women of violence, ageing and grief. Many of these are men's issues, too, because they are human issues, differing not in kind, but in degree of intensity from Christian perspectives on spiritual direction in general. They reflect concerns that are important for good spiritual direction that can be dealt with in feminist ways.<sup>4</sup> A presentation of these concerns makes up the final part of this article.

### *Gender differences in the spiritual direction relationship*

Feminist perspectives demonstrate the impact that gender differences can make on the process of spiritual direction. The spiritual director's lack of awareness of or discomfort with feminine and feminist concerns can imperil a spiritual direction relationship.<sup>5</sup> Narrowly male models and styles of direction have at times disre-

garded or discounted the lived experience of women. Today, women are claiming their symbols of God based on their own experience and less hierarchical models are being used in spiritual accompaniment. Many women directors and directees are more aware of physical and emotional issues connected with the process of spiritual direction and the dynamics of the relationship. However, it is important to acknowledge the grey area surrounding this topic and not draw too fine a point between the feminine and the masculine. We know that many men offer a nurturing, receptive presence. The following remarks, then, include both women and men as spiritual directees and as spiritual directors.

### PROBLEMATIC WOMEN'S ISSUES IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In this section, I focus on five problematic issues particular to women in spiritual direction.

#### *Women's subordinate roles and function in Church and society*

It is difficult to know whether differences between women and men are gender-specific or culturally conditioned.<sup>6</sup> Women's subordination needs to be approached in the context of men's own experience of oppression, their oppression of women, and the structures in society that foster the subordination of women.<sup>7</sup> Feminist spiritual directors encourage the woman directee to grow in a positive sense of herself; co-creating with God her own destiny; a sense of her sexuality as God-given and relational; and a realistic sense of her own ability to collaborate with others in renewing the earth.

#### *Women's need for self-actualization*

The Christian tradition has not encouraged women to have a positive and mature sense of self or right sense of sin. Women have been socialized to want nothing for themselves, to develop the virtue of selflessness, and to view the care of themselves as a form of selfishness.<sup>8</sup> Feminist spiritual directors can help women to be more realistic about balancing their care of others with their own self-care. The ideal of self-sacrifice needs to be tempered with the value of mutual giving and receiving.<sup>9</sup>

Another issue around self-esteem is a woman's predisposition to be a victim of 'niceness'. Such a directee may need to learn to persist, even nag, in her prayers of petition.<sup>10</sup> She may also have a

tendency to rely on external authorities. For this reason, the myth of the spiritual director as an expert can be more harmful to women than to men.<sup>11</sup>

These issues illustrate how one of women's sins may be lack of self-actualization, focus and ambition. Instead of exploring instances of pride, a feminist spiritual director might encourage a woman to take on roles of responsibility and decision-making. The Christian ideal of self-sacrificing love may be definitely harmful when held out to women who have sacrificed too much of themselves already.<sup>12</sup>

### *Women's grief for a stillborn, unborn or illegitimate child*

All bereaved mothers grieve, even with a loss early in pregnancy. Longstanding and secret grief for a lost child has the added dimension of guilt if a child was given for adoption or lost by abortion.

A director may be able to help the woman see her love for her baby, not her guilt. An invitation to consider celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation or a women's ritual may free her to go in peace, confident that God has wiped away her offences.<sup>13</sup> In addition to grieving over a lost child a woman may be longing for another child but be unable to conceive; she may need help to sort out ethical and practical implications of alternative ways to create a family.

### *Women's survival of abuse, shame and violence*

The abuse women suffer may be physical, sexual and/or psychological, and leave lifetime scars. Survivors of abuse may wonder about how the spiritual director will respond to them – whether they will be accepted or shamed. At times, too, spiritual direction is not enough in itself but can be a valuable support to people receiving therapeutic treatment for healing and growth. Survivors of abuse who are willing to deal consciously with their own experiences often have compassion for other victims of similar situations, and become powerful intercessors as others work through their own issues.<sup>14</sup>

Feminist spirituality is incarnational, encouraging women to realize the beauty and wonder of their bodies.<sup>15</sup> It is also relational and empowering. In addition to helping a women who has been ashamed to develop her self-esteem, a spiritual director can encourage her to trust her body, her heart and the people in her life, moving toward a more peaceful openness to the Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

***Women's transitions to mid-life and ageing***

Ideally, these transitions are based on the knowledge that a woman's body is sacred and shares in the rhythms of all creation. This incarnational approach conveys a positive attitude toward bodily diminishment and dying. A deep sense that God is always bestowing the gift of new life can help a woman pass gently in faith through seasons of mourning the loss of loved ones, youth, the ability to bear children, good health and physical strength; or of opportunities missed, choices not made, expectations not met, and desires unsatisfied. Spiritual directors can help women of faith live their 'autumn gospel' by inviting them to forgive themselves and others, to claim the events of their lives, and to be open to the ongoing process of redemption, creating with God their future.<sup>17</sup>

Women in mid-life may be wrestling with issues of role and vocation. They feel the need to risk moving beyond traditional roles in their search for intimacy, and this risk only increases their loneliness. The spiritual director needs to honour the distinctive quality of a woman's spiritual search.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, the feminist spiritual director needs to recognize the social and political context in which women experience these issues.<sup>19</sup> In that way, we can help a women move beyond individual issues to gain insight into the relationship of her story to a larger cultural story, to help her situate her problem within the context of systemically caused problems that need structural reform. Feminist spiritual directors need to be committed to ending violence against women, working for inclusive language, and opening all ministries to women, since such exclusion harms the spiritual lives of women.<sup>20</sup>

**POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION BASED ON  
SOME WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE**

In this section, I name and explore ten points which both women and men with a feminist perspective might take.

***Experience, in particular, women's experience***

First, feminist spiritual directors value experience as the point of departure for exploring God's action in a person's life. The content of spiritual direction is the person's life experienced in faith as recounted to the director.

Drawing on the past, the director honours women's experience in Scripture, in the history of the Church and in the lives of individual women.<sup>21</sup> In particular, feminist spiritual directors may cite women in the Judaeo-Christian tradition whose lives of faith speak to our world today. Women may find role models of spiritual mentoring in women in the Judaeo-Christian tradition who were receptive and assertive, in relationship with men but also in collaborative relationship with other women, for example Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Clare of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Jane de Chantal, Evelyn Underhill and Dorothy Day.<sup>22</sup>

### *Inclusive images of the person*

The very process of spiritual direction itself, for example, can be described in terms of pregnancy and giving birth.<sup>23</sup> The spiritual director can be called a midwife to the soul. This feminine image of the spiritual director as midwife applies to men as well as to women. Such a person is willing to sit down and establish a comfortable rapport, answering all sorts of questions, setting up sympathetic human contact, knowing that a transition time can be a breakthrough, knowing when and how to confront, and rejoicing in the baby.<sup>24</sup>

Or the directee may be invited to explore positive self-images such as the birthgiver or the disciple. In time, she may realize she is the potential teacher of others, bringing them good news and leading them to self-knowledge.

Often a woman's images of her spiritual director are based on her relationship with her mother, grandmothers and daughters. If she comes to spiritual direction angry at her negative mother, she may project her need to be criticized on to her spiritual director. If her grandmother was a wisdom figure, she may be drawn to a woman spiritual director a good deal older than herself. If her experiences of motherhood enable her to learn what it means to bond and nurture, to let go and take risks, then she is likely to consider her spiritual director a positive mother figure.<sup>25</sup>

A spiritual director can mediate positive feminine qualities to a directee and bring about the slow healing of an image of God as a stern, even violent, father-figure exacting justice and retribution.<sup>26</sup>

### *Inclusive images of God*

In addition to God as father, king and lord, Christianity experiences God also as mother, lover, friend and the power of relation-

ship.<sup>27</sup> Women are discovering the inclusive way Jesus related to women and redeemed us all.<sup>28</sup> Jesus as the wisdom, the *sophia*, of God is a feminine image that appeals to growing numbers of women, especially ecofeminists.<sup>29</sup>

Feminine images of the divine as spiritual guide are that of birth-helper: 'It was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast' (Ps 22:9), and as the women knitting together the new life in the mother's womb.<sup>30</sup>

One feminine image of God for me is that of my dream-maker, the one who invites me playfully yet persistently to be more authentic and more responsible in Church and society. This wise and compassionate mentor challenges me to let go of false selves without chiding and reveals the truth without exposing my weakness. Another image to which I have been drawn in recent years is that of womb-heart, God as the one whose tender compassion protects and supports us as intimately as a mother's womb.

### *Active receptivity*

Active receptivity here is not as embodied exclusively by feminists but as characteristic of a feminist stance. It is an attitude of heart fostered by a mirror experience that helps one know oneself as unique, a knowing through identification that begins with the child and its mother looking at each other. Whenever we find ourselves mirrored, whether in Christ, in our lover, in our real self mediated by a psychotherapist, we are able to break out of our separate egos and taste the communion of I and thou. Active receptivity allows us to receive our inner authority, freeing us to be open to spontaneous intuitions. Another aspect is that women receive their animus, our focused masculine principle, and men receive their anima, our receptive feminine principle.

Still another aspect is our receptivity to presence. The integration of the feminine element convinces us that receptivity has more to do with presence and response than with action and accomplishment.<sup>31</sup> This may be a listening presence that draws others out as a form of care and empowerment. In so doing women and men often affirm and listen to their own minds and voices as well.<sup>32</sup>

The receptive spiritual director invites directees to listen to their inner wisdom instead of relying on external authorities, even including the director. The inner wisdom they discover may be instinctive and intuitive rather than rational and conceptual.

The empathetic spiritual director helps directees by compassionately entering into their pain and holding it with them. Listening to the directees' stories, the spiritual director values silence as a form of receptivity. We are sensitive to silence when it signals that our directee is feeling deaf and dumb, disconnected, depressed, seen but not heard. Then we may offer a gentle question or invitation to talk about these feelings in an atmosphere that is safe and supportive of stumbling growth-steps brought to speech.<sup>33</sup>

### *Mind/heart/body connection*

The feminist insight into the mind/heart/body connection is key to understanding the relatedness of all creation: mind, heart, body, other people, the earth and the universe. On the human level it generates personal relatedness in spheres of work, play and prayer as opposed to the disconnectedness which fosters compartmentalization and confusion.<sup>34</sup>

Competent spiritual directors commit themselves to know and respond to the whole person who seeks them out. They recognize the connectedness of mind, heart and body in prayer. If a woman is wondering if she is in the dark night, it is important to inquire about habits of sleep, diet and social contact before assuring her that her situation is truly a dark night. If she is feeling tired, underfed and isolated, she may be physically and nervously exhausted. I am convinced that stress is often due to a staleness of image. Part of a supposed 'dark night' may be negative thoughts about family, friends and work. A movie, novel, museum or nature walk may enable us to discover some fresh images and provide us with a new outlook on life.

We need to underline the embodied aspect of spirituality by reintegrating body-mediated knowledge, the emotion and the imagination into the context of spiritual direction. Our bodies help to tell us what we are feeling. Our emotions include powerful passions that beg to be transformed in our experience of the divine. Our imaginations teach us how matter can be revelatory of God. An example is the use of ritual in spiritual direction, such as a blessing, candles, the use of letters and readings.<sup>35</sup>

### *Oneness with the earth and the universe*

Ecofeminism extends the understanding of human integrity to the whole cosmos. As critique it claims that the way humankind has treated the earth is the consequence of the way some men have mis-

treated women. Its positive understanding is that we are interrelated participants in the cosmos, co-creating our future with God. This insight is captured in mystical experiences of oneness with nature, creation and our Creator. It affirms a sense of energy flowing through the great chain of being; it contradicts an isolated individualism that focuses only on interiority. It recognizes that the historical neglect of the feminine principle is the root of alienation from the earth.<sup>36</sup> This insight also invites the spiritual guide to encourage connections with all beings and involvement with the whole of life, the 'web of life', not just some of its parts.<sup>37</sup>

### *Symbolic language*

In the use of symbolic language our intuitive way of knowing connects experiences, images and feelings. Many people find it helpful to sketch images from dreams, nature or daily life in mandalas, for example, and then bring these sketches to spiritual direction.

Storytelling is another use of symbolic language. While at first it may seem that a woman or man is rambling by telling various stories, the astute feminist spiritual director can help directees pick up threads that connect the stories one to another, uncovering the stories of faith.<sup>38</sup> Feminist spiritual direction is careful to listen for the context of a story in a directee's family or community, work environment or political life.

### *Caregiving*

Caregiving in this context is 'an exchange of gifts, a mutual sharing of frailty and strengths'.<sup>39</sup> As spiritual directors we may share another's pain and acknowledge our own helplessness instead of rescuing, giving advice or explaining away the pain.<sup>40</sup> A mutual sharing has to do with a common celebration of the source of love and admission of our need for a saviour; it does not mean that both people share the same kind of material to the same degree of intensity and detail. For a spiritual director to admit simply their own struggle with a need to be perfect, for example, is very different from recounting episodes from their personal life that could invite a role-reversal in the relationship.

The responsible spiritual director supports aspects of giftedness and challenges areas of brokenness that are keeping the directee from communion and community. Such caregiving is not caretaking whereby we protect people from exercising their freedom. Widening



the circle of support for someone frees that person to tap a variety of resources and to avoid a dependent relationship.<sup>41</sup>

Recognizing the limitations of our caregiving as directors, receiving the care of others, and taking time for ourselves may enable us to help others in their pain. Caring for ourselves is one of the best ways to care for others.

### *Progress as staying with the process*

Process rather than progress is the underlying dynamic. Instead of assessing whether a person is in a spiritual awakening, purgation, illumination, the dark night or union, this approach is more interested in the flow of a person's life Godward, more like a river than a staircase, more like a spiral than an ascent. Directees are encouraged to recognize, enter upon, and stay with their inner process and move forward in the reality of the here and now. Our life with God moves in and out of phases but not knowing with certitude in what stage we are is a realistic acknowledgement of the creative and elusive action of the Spirit in our lives.<sup>42</sup>

### *Compassionate solidarity*

'Compassion' can be an English rendering of the Hebrew word *hesed*, meaning mercy, solidarity, motherliness and steadfast love. The root of compassion, *rachamim*, is the word *rechem* which means womb. God's compassion is God's womb-love, God's mercy.<sup>43</sup> Compassionate solidarity is both active and passive. It tends to redress injuries and injustices, and is essentially non-violent since it tends to communion and community.<sup>44</sup>

An increasingly important aspect of compassionate solidarity is the openness to multicultural psycho-spiritual processes and inculturation. A sensitive spiritual director needs to be aware of both Christian and non-Christian traditions in a directee's history and culture, as well as of symbols, myths and images that shape that person's consciousness and identity.<sup>45</sup> Working with women religious in South Korea in the 1970s, I realized how much of their religious memory was coloured by the Korean War and its aftermath. Grief for loved ones and fear of another invasion were still real. Training in cross-cultural counselling can help us develop a special skill called 'interpathy' whereby we envision and affectively enter into another's thoughts, values and feelings, even though they may come from a different process of knowing, frame of moral reasoning and basis of assumptions.<sup>46</sup>

### Conclusion

Spiritual direction is a ministry that nourishes not only the person being accompanied but the companion or guide too. Feminist insights enrich this nourishment by adding the feminine dimension of experiencing God, especially in ways of being, knowing and caring. If we disregard the feminine dimension in our imaging of our selves and of God we are neglecting aspects of the experience of the Spirit in our lives and that of the Church. In the article I have highlighted some of the issues which arise from taking into account the feminine dimension of experiencing God. Some issues are particular to women, others flow from women's experience but are characteristic of men too, and acknowledging them liberates both men and women to live their lives more fully.

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### NOTES

1 For a description of feminism, see Florence Howe, 'Feminist scholarship: the extent of the revolution', *Change: A Magazine of Higher Learning* 14/3 (April 1982), p 19; Anne E. Carr, *Transforming grace: Christian tradition and women's experience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p 75.

2 See Carolyn Osiek, *Beyond anger: on being a feminist in the Church* (New York: Paulist, 1986).

3 See Carr, *Transforming grace*, p 209.

4 See, for example, Janet Ruffing, *Uncovering stories of faith: spiritual direction and narrative* (New York: Paulist, 1989).

5 See Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's ways of knowing: the development of self, voice and mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986). Cf George Schner, 'The appeal to experience', *Theological Studies* 52/1 (1992), pp 1-29.

6 For example, see Anne E. Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (eds), *The special nature of women?* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991); Carr, *Transforming grace*, esp pp 43-94, for a discussion of these issues regarding in particular the ordination of women and the scholarship of gender. Cf Mary Aquin O'Neill, 'Toward a renewed anthropology', *Theological Studies* 36/4 (December 1975), pp 725-736.

7 Issues such as the marginalization of women, the feminization of poverty, women's access to education, and the status of the girl child are part of the Platform for Action adopted by the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. See 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action', Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development

and Peace, Beijing, 15 September 1995, unedited advance text. See also Joan Chittister, *Beyond Beijing: the next step for women* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1996).

8 See Carol Gilligan, *In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

9 Kathleen Fischer, 'Spiritual direction with women' in Robert J. Wicks (ed), *Handbook of spirituality for ministers* (New York: Paulist, 1995), pp. 103–106.

10 See Margaret Guenther, *Holy listening: the art of spiritual direction* (Cambridge MA: Cowley, 1992), pp 25–26. Cf Mt 15: 25–28 and Lk 18: 4–5.

11 Belenky, *Women's ways*, pp 19–20.

12 See Valerie Saiving Goldstein, 'The human situation: a feminine view', *Journal of Religion* 40 (1960), pp 100–112; and Judith Plaskow, *Sex, sin and grace: women's experience and the theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1980). Cf Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, 'Women and the Exercises: sin, standards and New Testament texts', *The Way Supplement* 70 (Spring 1991), pp 16–32.

13 On sacramental ritual, see Guenther, *Holy listening*, p 31. On women's ritual, see, for example, Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-church: theology and practice of feminist liturgical community* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

14 Guenther, *Holy listening*, pp 132–133, 139.

15 Regina A. Coll, 'Feminist spirituality' in *Christianity and feminism in conversation* (Mystic CT: Twenty-Third, 1994), p 175.

16 See Carolyn Gratton, 'Facilitating freedom to trust' in *Trusting: theory and practice* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp 69–79.

17 See Kathleen Fischer, *Autumn gospel: women in the second half of life* (New York: Paulist, 1995), esp pp 86–139. Cf Anne Brennan and Janice Brewi, *Mid-life: psychological and spiritual perspectives* (New York: Crossroad, 1987); L. Patrick Carroll and Katherine Marie Dyckman, *Chaos or creation: spirituality in mid-life* (New York: Paulist, 1986); and Margaret Guenther, *Toward holy ground: spiritual directions for the second half of life* (Cambridge MA: Cowley, 1995).

18 Guenther, *Holy listening*, pp 119–120.

19 On survival, empowering and pluralism as three transitions shaping the feminist experience, see Ellen Leonard, 'Experience as a source for theology: a Canadian and feminist perspective', *Studies in Religion* 19/2 (1990), pp 143–162.

20 See Fischer, 'Spiritual direction with women', pp 110–111.

21 For example, see Margaret Brennan, 'Women and theology: singing of God in an alien land', *The Way Supplement* 53 (1985), pp 93–103. As a resource for music and prayer based on Christian feminist perspectives, see, for example, Barbara Bowe, Kathleen Hughes, Sharon Karam and Carolyn Osiek (eds), *Silent voices, sacred lives: women's readings for the liturgical year* (New York: Paulist, 1992).

22 See, for example, Joann Wolski Conn, 'Dancing in the dark: women's spirituality and ministry' in Wicks (ed), *Handbook of spirituality for ministers*, pp 77–95. Cf Michael Barry Wicks, 'Teresa of Jesus: model and mentor for ministry' in *Handbook of spirituality for ministers*, pp 115–128. See also Annice Callahan (ed), *Spiritualities of the heart* (New York: Paulist, 1990), and *Spiritual guides for today* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

23 For the following discussion of the director and God as midwives of the soul, I am indebted to Guenther, *Holy listening*, esp ch 3: 'Midwife to the soul'. Cf Joyce Diltz, 'A metaphorical look at spiritual development and direction. Part 2: The spiritual director as midwife', *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* 2/1 (January 1996), pp 18–22.

24 Guenther, *Holy listening*, pp 82–88. Sandra Schneiders, 'The effects of women's experience on their spirituality' in Joann Wolski Conn, *Women's spirituality: resources for Christian development* (New York: Paulist, 1986), pp 34–35.

25 Belenky, *Women's ways*, pp 195–210.

26 Sandra Schneiders, *op. cit.*, pp 34–35.

27 On God as mother, lover and friend, see Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). On God as the power of relationship, see Carter Heyward, *The redemption of God: a theology of mutual relation* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1982). On God as the verb, see Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp 33–34.

28 Women ask whether a male saviour can help women: feminist theologians clarify that sexuality does not have anything to do with saviourhood, even though the social symbolic significance of the maleness of Jesus has been used to depreciate women. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: toward a feminist theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983). and Carr, *Transforming grace*, pp 158–179. The scandal of Jesus' option for the poor and marginalized in the Spirit of his compassionate, liberating Sophia-God shifts the focus away from his historical sex: 'That is the scandal of particularity that really matters, aimed as it is toward the creation of a new order of wholeness in justice'. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Jesus-Sophia' in *She who is: the mystery of God in feminist theological discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p 167. Cf Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Feminist theology and spirituality' in Judith Weisman (ed), *Christian feminism: vision of a new humanity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p 21.

29 See Dennis Edwards, *Jesus the wisdom of God: an ecological theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1995).

30 Psalm 139:13. On female cosmic and biblical symbols of Creator Spirit, see Johnson, *She who is*, pp 86–100; and *Women, earth, and creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist, 1993), esp pp 41–60.

31 Ann Belford Ulanov, *Receiving woman: studies in the psychology and theology of the feminine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), pp 77–80, 131, 151–152, 162.

32 Belenky et al., *Women's ways*, p 48. As Abraham Maslow, Rollo May and Carl Rogers attest, respectful, attentive, non-judgemental listening is not coming from the feminist perspective but is rather the ideal of those ministering to others.

33 On received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge, see Belenky et al., *Women's ways*. Cf Gilligan, *In a different voice*.

34 Ulanov, *Receiving woman*, p 119.

35 Fischer, 'Spiritual direction with women', pp 107–109.

36 On this point, see, for example, Margaret Brennan, 'Patriarchy: The Root of Alienation from the Earth?', *Thomas Berry and the new cosmology*, (eds) Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards (Mystic, Ct: Twenty-Third, 1987), pp 57–63.

37 See, for example, Carolyn Gratton, 'Spiritual Guidance in Today's World', *Handbook of spirituality for ministers*, (ed) Robert J. Wicks (New York: Paulist, 1995), pp 45–49; Mary Heather MacKinnon and Moni McIntyre (eds), *Readings in ecology and feminist theology* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995); Sallie McFague, *The body of God: an ecological theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993).

38 See Janet Ruffing, *Uncovering stories of faith: spiritual direction and narrative* (New York: Paulist, 1989).

39 Fischer, *Autumn gospel*, p 141.

40 Caregiving speaks of a motherhood in ministry: an ability to put oneself aside and pay attention to another, an ability to enter into another's pain without being consumed by it, and an ability to go on hoping when a situation seems hopeless. The physical and psychological experience of motherhood, either myself as mother or God as mother, can nourish a spiritual director's capacity for caregiving, although it is not a prerequisite. See Margaret Guenther, 'Have Some More, Darlings! There's Plenty!' in *Rattling those dry bones: women changing the Church*, ed June Steffensen Hagen (San Diego, CA.: LuraMedia Inc., 1995), p 134.

41 Fischer, *Autumn gospel*, pp 140–153.

42 On the ways or stages of spiritual progress, see, for example, Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961), esp pp 165–451. Cf Thomas McGonigle, 'Three Ways', *The*

*new dictionary of Catholic spirituality*, ed Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, a Michael Glazier Book, 1993), pp 963–965.

On the approach to spiritual progress as stages, see, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux, *The twelve degrees of humility and pride*, trans Barton R. V. Mills (New York: Macmillan, 1929); and John of the Cross, *The ascent of Mount Carmel* in *The collected works of St John of the Cross*, trans Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), pp 65–292. For an emphasis in spiritual direction on process rather than progress, see Marcel G. Neels, 'A Metaphorical Look at Spiritual Development and Direction. Part 1: Process or Progress?' *Presence* 1/3 (Sept. 1995), pp 5–11.

43 Phyllis Tribble, *God and the rhetoric of sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p 33.

44 Monika Hellwig, *Jesus the compassion of God: new perspectives on the tradition of Christianity* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985), p 121.

45 See Judette A. Gallares, 'Toward a Multicultural Approach to Spiritual Direction' in *Common journey, different paths: spiritual direction in cross-cultural perspectives*, ed Susan Rakoczy (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), pp 156–171.

46 See David Augsburg, *Pastoral counselling across cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), pp 13–14, quoted in Gallares, 'Toward a Multicultural Approach', *Common Journey*, pp 165–166.