A Story of Christian Spiritual Direction:

Desert Mothers and Fathers & Dame Julian of Norwich Follow a Mystical Journey

For the avoidance of error, have someone to advise you – a spiritual father or confessor, a brother of like mind – and make known to him all that happens to you in the work of prayer.

Theopian the Recluse[1]

Spiritual Direction has its roots at the very beginning of Biblical history. In the Garden, God – our original spiritual director – instructs Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "Sin," in the form of a snake, makes a tempting argument how they could be equal with God if only they eat the forbidden fruit. Rather than the equality they seek, estrangement is the result. From that moment on, humankind has desired desperately, and sought intensely, to have a close and intimate relationship with God. This paper follows the development of Christian spiritual direction from the 4th century Desert Mothers and Fathers through 15th century Dame Julian of Norwich as a record of attempts to establish a more satisfying relationship with God.

The desire for God has been found in diverse forms in all cultures. In primitive societies, e.g., the witch doctor in South Africa or the shaman in other groups, certain figures perform the role of spiritual guidance and of healing. Such guides play key roles in Hindu, Yoga and in Buddhism. Of those, the Hindu *guru* is closest to the Christian concept of the spiritual director. In this spiritual tradition the guru is the light, a divine manifestation. The guru's role is said to be like that of the sun illuminating the way, a man of great virtue and enlightenment.[2]

Kenneth Leech cites Max Thurian's definition that "Spiritual direction, or the cure of souls, is a seeking after the leading of the Holy Spirit in a given psychological and spiritual situation."[3] A spiritual guide is concerned with the encounter with God, the process by which the human community and the individual human being are made one with the divine.

I. Desert Mothers and Fathers

Our exploration of spiritual direction begins with the Desert Fathers and Mothers in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine in the 4th and 5th centuries. This movement grew out of the writings of Origen of Alexandria (c.185-254), who insisted that the human spirit could ascend to the presence of God only if the turbulent desires of the body were brought into check. An ascetical thinker, he saw the body, mind, and soul as so intimately related that spiritual progress could only take place if the body was disciplined and the mind purified by study. His writings were instrumental in the development of an aesthetics' movement of men and women into the countryside of Egypt and Syria to seek places of solitude. There developed two forms of solitary life. In one, reclusive persons lived in complete seclusion as perhaps a hermit in a cave, sometimes being approached for wise spiritual advice but generally committing themselves in extreme simplicity of life and to dispossession, celibacy, and constant prayer. In the other a group of monks gathered in a loose form of community around a famous teacher. The renunciation of the world was elevated as a central principle of the ascetical movement. This spirituality of abandonment became a dominant aspect of Christianity from the 4th century to the present.[4]

Disciples would seek out the advice and guidance of these holy men and women, the *abbas* and *ammas* of the desert, who were looked to for holiness and purity of heart more than teaching. A central concept of early spiritual direction was to be a spiritual parent to these disciples. Spiritual directors were not simply mentors who taught a spiritual technique, but ones who helped shape the inner life of their children through prayer, concern, and pastoral care.[5] In this early period, the "discernment of spirits" was seen as a crucial element in spiritual direction. No less important, practitioners needed to maintain a balance between self-care and extremist, even dangerous, behavior. The desert was an intense environment where those who became sensorially deprived could become broken in spirit and in body. Thus, the eastern monks emphasized the hazards of desert living without a guide. There was no notion of blind obedience nor the domination of disciples, for the spiritual *abbas* and *ammas* were to teach by example first, and only secondarily by word.[6]

Evagrius Ponticus (345-99) has been called the father of our literature of spirituality. In the early days of his move to the desert he visited an old Desert Father and asked, "Tell me some piece of advice by which I might be able to save my soul." The reply was surprising: "If you wish to save your soul, do not speak before you are asked a question." This guidance was very much within the stream of desert spirituality and its emphasis on solitude and silence. Evagrius was the first important writer to emerge from the desert monastic movement and he was the first to present the desert teaching on prayer in a systematized form. It is in him that we find the eight categories of evil thoughts which later formed the basis of the "seven deadly sins" and the practice of Christian self-examination. In his

work also we find a detailed discussion of the conflict with evil thoughts and with demonic forces.

These holy men and women spoke of prayer out of the depths of their own life and experience. A formula for contemplation emerged which consisted of the constant use of “O God, make speed to save me; O Lord, make haste to help me.” The recommendation was to use it at all times and in all moods and conditions. Already we see the origins of spiritual exercises which were to play a central part in Ignatius’s and others development of spiritual guidance.[7]

A Desert Spirituality

In the religion and story-telling of the ancient Israelites, the desert was a place of encounter with God. It was natural then that the early Christian solitaries would seek God in the wastes of the desert, and “the desert” has been a widely used metaphor within Christian spirituality. The Desert Fathers and Mothers believed that the wilderness was supremely valuable to God precisely because it was value-less to human beings. There was nothing to exploit in the wasteland. It was the natural dwelling place of those who sought nothing but their own personal relationship with God. The desert was also the place where encounters with evil spiritual forces were most terrible and profound. In the desert the early solitaries lived lives of spiritual warfare in attention and silence. We encounter the first spiritual directors as people who sought wisdom and discipline of spirit from the hermit monks around the Nile valley. The desert here is seen as a place of purification, of self-knowledge and self-control, and of conflict and victory. Out of the struggle of the desert comes the full-grown spiritual person.[8]

Essentially the Desert Mothers and Fathers are not teachers so much as Spirit-filled figures in whom God is revealed. Today the desert tradition speaks to us in the need for solitude, for that inner purification which can only come from the experience of isolation in the wilderness. To many thousands the spiritual desert is a place of vulnerable exposure, terrible aloneness and of God’s mysterious revealing self.[9] The psychological combination of a desert vision-quest, spiritual retreat, and contemplative practices can deepen one’s connection to the inner self and to the triune God that resides there.

Toward the Jesus Prayer

Our continuing journey toward mystical knowledge of God leads us to the Jesus prayer. In the 6th century two hermits balanced the popularity of Evagrius and his spiritual tradition that looked back to Origen. The hermits Barsanuphius and John represent a mature stage of Egyptian monastic spirituality. During their lifetimes they had a high reputation as masters of spiritual guidance. After their deaths their works came to be regarded as one of the primary sources of desert spiritual wisdom. These two old men refused to interrupt their hermit lifestyle in the course of giving

instruction. The abbot of a nearby monastery saw to it that all questions for the hermits were gathered and submitted to them in writing, and they gave their replies back later, also in writing. Today about 850 of these papers survive.[10]

The recommended formulae were varied but based around a common theme of the invocation of the holy name of Jesus. In later years it was associated with yogic techniques of aligning the actual words with the rhythms of breathing and heartbeat which along with prayer beads were introduced to European Christians during the crusades. In this final form it came to be known as The Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."[11]

II. Development of Women's Asceticism

Cautious Acceptance

Even though the use of the Jesus prayer was widely accepted, women were seen as less worthy than men. Clerics were somewhat suspect of women's asceticism in that it was more kinesthetically based and intense than a male's. Women's transcendental experiences generally did include sensual feelings interpreted as spiritual encounters. "These experiences transported them to heights of religious fervor and endowed them with inner fulfillment. They saw, touched, heard, tasted, and smelled God. Doing so gave meaning to their lives. Visions gave them a foretaste of the life to come when all their senses would be filled with God."[12]

A pervasive societal attitude of distrust was present with both male clerics and women. Both believed evil spirits could subvert God's message. The mystical abilities of women were feared, leading to very stringent checks and controls by uneasy ecclesiastical authorities. *Discretio Spirituum*, the discernment of spirits, defined the visionary experience, dictated the virtue and deportment of the visionary, and established forms of expression and the criteria for assessment. It provided a means for visionaries themselves to examine their visions.[13] Nevertheless, visions and prophecy gave women a voice in an otherwise male-dominated realm. That voice could be effectively raised only if the speaker submitted to the guidance of the church and conformed to its precepts. Awareness of this requirement affected the ways in which women visionaries articulated their spiritual experiences. The doctrine of *discretio spirituum* became a discourse which provided both a vocabulary to articulate visionary experience and a set of criteria to evaluate the vision and the visionary.[14]

"Written accounts of these women's lives and their visions placed enormous emphasis on the humility, obedience, chastity, patience, and prudence of the visionary, as well as her willing submission to her spiritual director,

an older wiser man, usually a cleric. A rationalization that God sometimes chose seemingly inappropriate instruments such as fools and madmen, or women, to proclaim His word was evidence of God's absolute power and a reminder of the inscrutable ways of the Divine."[15] When viewed from this position women mystics held an acceptable and useful place in society.

Institutional religions have historically been wary of those claiming new revelations, fearful of a challenge to reigning orthodoxy and to established authority. Despite its function as a mechanism of control, *discretio spirituum* gave rise to a significant paradox. By conforming, medieval women visionaries not only gained acceptance for their divinely ordained vocation and influenced subsequent generations; in some cases, they were to wield real power. Those women who were most effective in fulfilling their divine mandate to communicate the word of God were those women who could articulate the ineffable according to the discourse of *discretio spirituum.*[16] Women, by using the accepted lexicon, were able to exert great control over their lives even to the determination of kind and amount of food they would eat.

Women and Food

As a psychotherapist it particularly interests me to recognize the connection between spirituality and dietary practice in the middle ages. Food was a fundamental economic and religious concern in medieval Europe. Many saw gluttony as the major form of lust, fasting as the most painful renunciation, and eating as the most basic and literal way of encountering God. Self-starvation – a deliberate and extreme renunciation of food and drink – seemed a most basic ascetic practice. To repress eating and hunger was to control the body in a discipline far more extreme than any achieved with celibacy or mondicantism.[17] Eating disorders in our own day, e.g., bulimia or anorexia nervosa, are likewise often connected to issues of control.

For certain late medieval women, fasting became an obsession so overwhelming that researchers see in their stories the earliest documentable cases of anorexia. Some women, later canonized, were reported to have eaten only the Eucharist host. Others would mix ashes with their food to deprive themselves the pleasure of taste, as an atonement for sin and to participate in Christ's passion. "*Eating* God in the host was both a sweet tasting that focused and transcended all hunger and an occasion for paramystical phenomena of the most bizarre and exuberant sort."[18] As with the Desert Mothers and Fathers who went to extreme pietistic measurers that endangered their health, some medieval women aesthetics lost a balance between meeting their bodily needs and obsessive behavior. There can be a dangerous attraction in obsessive practice as it serves to validate, even establish, the authenticity of one's faith and

self-perception.

To religious women, both laity and nuns, food was a way of controlling as well as renouncing both self and environment. With the refusal of ordinary food and the directing of their being toward the Host, which through transubstantiation became Christ, women moved closer to God. The abandonment of their own physicality gave purpose to aesthetics' lives.[19]

The experiencing of pain was a prominent aspect of the spirituality of both late medieval women and men. The central theme in women's visions, increasing from the thirteenth to the early 15th century, was fusion with the crucified body of Christ. In the frenzy of trance or ecstasy, pious women sometimes mutilated themselves with knives or drove themselves to what they and their companions saw as "insanity."[20]

Women saw all humanity as created in God's image. They were capable of imitating Christ through body as well as soul. Thus they gloried in the pain, the stigmata, and the somatic distortions that made their bodies alike, in their minds, to the image of Jesus on the cross. Religious women in the later Middle Ages saw in their own female bodies not only a symbol of the humanness of both genders but also a symbol of – and a means of approach to – the humanity of God.[21]

Women's Movements

Toward the end of the medieval period the continued second-class position of women began to fester. In the 10th and early 11th centuries – a grim period of war and hardship for Western Europe – few female monasteries were founded, and religious leaders showed little concern for encouraging women's religiosity. The major monastic reform at that time, Cluny, founded only one house for nuns before 1100, and its purpose was to provide a retreat for women whose husbands wished to become Cluniac monks.[22] A number of 12th century monastic leaders feared that celibate males would be contaminated by women and limited women's religious opportunities in order "to protect fragile male virtue." In the early 13th century there was a rapid growth of women's houses which strained clerical resources to provide clergy for the women's spiritual direction and sacramental needs.[23] In the 13th and early 14th centuries some women's monasteries formed influential spiritual networks among themselves and produced collections of the sisters' lives and visions that were often read in both female and male houses as a form of spiritual instruction.[24]

The development of the medieval church was closely related to the economic and social conditions of the Continent. The later Middle Ages have been described as a time of unrest and rebellion. Late medieval people

experienced death, suffering, confusion and depression beyond measure.[25] Religiously speaking, this was a period of spiritual *quest* in response to such malaise. There was widespread religious dissent among the laity. The moral corruption of the religious, the depravity of the papal system, frivolous preaching of the clerics and endless suffocating theological debates rendered great disappointment by the laity towards the Church. Pious lay women and men began to search for a personal and direct relationship with God.[26]

Perhaps in some similarity to medieval times, turmoil in our own society and loss of faith in its institutions has engendered the development of new religious expressions. Since the Sixty's we have experienced flower children, drugs, "sex and rock & roll," civil rights and antiwar movements, integration issues, Roe v. Wade and a women's right to choose to keep or terminate a pregnancy, and the survival need of nuclear families to have two incomes. Most recently greed and avarice have bloomed within the banking industry which caused a volatile recession. The Catholic Church has been particularly beset with evidence of sexual abuse alongside institutional obfuscation and cover-up. Over the past decades unrest and anxiety have simmered above and below the surface as different strata within the U.S. attempted to regain homeostasis with a sense of calmness and safety. Concurrently, people have searched for God away from mainstream denominations whose 1950's practices did not meet their needs. Christian believers have shown increased interest in different forms of religious expression, e.g., contemplative practices, charismatic movements, evangelicalism, fundamentalism, alternative worship styles, etc., to meet spiritual needs and gain comfort in this time of anxiety. Similar to the late-medieval period and congruent with our story of spiritual direction since the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the search is for a more personal and direct relationship with God.

Returning to women's movements in particular, the late-medieval period saw the development of new groups and practices. These form a bridge to Dame Julian of Norwich.

Beguines and Tertiaries

In the north of Europe we find women called *beguines*. These women set themselves apart from the world by living austere, poor, chaste lives in which manual labor and charitable service were joined to worship. They took no vows and had no complex organization and rules, no order linking the houses, no hierarchy of officials, nor any wealthy founders or leaders.[27] As groups of laywomen who gathered together for the single purpose of seeking a mystical union of the divine and human soul, they neither belonged to nor were subjected to any church's authority. In the late medieval period various kinds of devotional writings were developed for the laity who sought guidance for their spiritual practice. *Book of Hours*, translated into English, was frequently used by the laity in their private devotions. In addition to the *Book of Hours*, the Psalter and devotional beads were widely used in fostering a practice of meditation.

In Italy we find, paralleling the beguines, the *tertiaries* – women who lived in the world but were affiliated with one of the mendicant orders and followed a life of penitential asceticism, charitable activity, and prayer.[28] From the 13th to the 16th centuries, affective devotion was centered on the humanity of Christ and on the religious sentiment of the devotees. They believed that by meditating on Christ's humanity from his birth to death they could attain a unitive experience with God.[29]

Anchoritism

Religious groups in medieval England were diverse. An Englishwoman who wanted to live a monastic life could choose to vow as a nun, an anchoress, or a hermitess. Anchoritism became a flourishing institution. Since they were financially supported by the society, anchorites had their own patterns of organization and control. Female anchorites came from a variety of economic and social backgrounds. Their common goal was to seek a more intense and strict contemplative life. An anchoress lived in a cell attached to a church or monastery. Entrance into a cell meant almost complete isolation from the world, though her cell would have a small window giving a view of the high altar and a shuttered opening for confessional purposes. Since the anchoritic life was regarded as a more advanced form of holy life, medieval Christians paid high respect to anchorites. No one questioned their holiness. They were esteemed as the anchor of the Church. The book, *Ancrene Wisse*, cited in Wai Man Yuen's *Religious Experience and Interpretation*, states:

> *They (Anchoresses) dwell under the eaves of a church because they understand that they should be of so holy a life that the whole of Holy Church, that is, Christian people, can lean upon them and trust them.... This is why an anchoress is called an anchoress, and is anchored under a church like an anchor under the side of a ship, to hold that ship so that waves and storms do not overturn it.*[30]

The inner strength of anchorites, similar to that of the Desert Mothers, sustained their contemplative life. Most mystical and devotional writings for women in medieval England were written by male clerics. With the help of these devotional treatises, many recluses experienced ecstasy in their contemplation. Not only religious orders but also the writings of devotional treatises understated women's visionary experiences. This kind of personal experience was mainly prevalent in female anchorites and was explicitly mentioned in the writings of the 14th century anchoress, Julian of Norwich and her contemporary Margery Kempe. They gave account of their religious personal experience because they felt compelled by God. Their autobiographies shared that God was personal and the mystical life a reality. Julian's notable experience made her become a widely known and honored anchoress.[31]

III. Julian of Norwich

At the heart of our exploration of mystical paths, the women who wrote of encounters with God expressed spiritual experiences which had both practical and doctrinal implications. Julian had to integrate, in a unity far beyond mere human possibilities, the total experience of a bodily weakness, of an enlightened mind, and a loving grace of a mystical vision.[32]

The citing of God as Mother occurred as early as the OT prophet Isaiah (Isa 66:13, perhaps 5th century BCE). What made Julian's contribution original was the theological precision with which she applied this symbolism to Trinitarian interrelationships. Julian wanted to unite the idea of the motherhood of God with God's fatherhood. This theological synthesis was the result of her psychological, spiritual and mystical integration. Julian's doctrine unfolded in a tradition of Christian humanism, the art of expressing a divine love in human terms.[33]

Already an anchoress at the Church of St. Julian in Conisford at Norwich, Dame Julian wrote of having received her revelations on May 13, 1372 at the age of 30. The Long Text indicates she was still living in 1416 (hence, 74 years old). Had it not been that she was convinced that she was divinely commanded to have a scribe or her spiritual director write down a record of her visions, she might have been no more than one among hundreds who lived as solitaries for the love of God. It seems she had entered a religious order when still young; if so, it would have been there that she acquired her academic training. At the end of her Long Text Julian hinted that she intended to dedicate herself to a still more intense form of contemplative living, i.e., to retire from monastic life to the yet more severe rule of solitary enclosure.[34]

Julian's Spirituality

Living in an age of excessive consciousness of sin and emphasizing experience, young Julian asked of God for an illness. Infirmity was for her a prominent spiritual practice and a way of purifying the body, keeping it from sin and allowing the self to experience God.[35]

> *On the thirteenth day of May and before this creature had desired three graces by the gift of God. First was recollection of the Passion. The second was bodily sickness. The third was to have, of God's gift, three wounds. As to the first, it seemed to me that I had some feeling for the Passion of Christ, but still I desired to have more by the grace of God.... I never desired any other sight of God or revelation ... for I believed I should be saved by the mercy of God. As to the second grace, there came to my mind with contrition – a free gift which I did not seek – a desire of my will to have by God's gift a bodily sickness.... I intended this because I wanted to be purged by God's mercy, and afterwards live more to his glory because of that sickness.... When I was young I desired to have this sickness when I would be thirty years old.*[36]

The practice of Christocentric meditation was well established in Julian's daily life. Three foci of meditation form the three salient theological themes of her book: the concept of God, the nature of sin, and the judgment of Christ. At the heart of each of Julian's visions, compassion is intertwined with the wounds of contrition and a longing for God. By the means of these three themes, in the Long Text, Julian knits both the visions and their interpretations together. After committing herself to the exercise of contemplation, Julian not only experiences the mystical love of God, but also understands that God's love for us is beyond our comprehension.[37]

Submitting herself to God, Julian overcame the culturally-dictated inferiority of being a woman and wrote her experience, not as the simple and unlearned woman she called herself, but rather as a sophisticated thinker and theologian. It was God-consciousness, not social- consciousness, which affirmed her femininity.[38]

Julian's theology matured during her twenty years of contemplation on her visions. As an anchoress, she was encouraged to read as much as possible. Being a member of her community and benefiting from the knowledge of her spiritual mentors, Julian revised her *Showings* with a sound theological mind. Thus the longer version of her book fully revealed her intellectual competence.[39] Moreover, Julian was known as a mystic of tenderness and naturalness in the approach to God. The joy of one's experience of God by "simple intuition of truth" was, she claimed, "an experience common to us all." Prayer, natural for humankind, was created on the pattern of the Trinity. Not only humanity but also the universe itself was contained in God. Julian had an optimistic assessment of humanity and the cosmos, and a belief that sin was relatively unimportant. Through contrition, compassion and a longing for God, the wounds of sin were healed. Her central emphasis was one of cosmic optimism and of the victory of God's love. That love, she said, had never slackened nor ever shall. It was a theology of ultimate reconciliation which is expressed in her famous saying, "All shall be well."[40] It is reported that Julian generously shared her wisdom with any who visited her.

This passage from *Showings: Short text: Chapter xii* demonstrates the depth and tenderness of Julian's spirituality:

> *But I lay still awake, and then our Lord opened my spiritual eyes, and showed me my soul in the midst of my heart. I saw my soul as wide as if it were a kingdom, and from the state which I saw in it, it seemed to me as if it were a fine city. In the midst of this city sits our Lord Jesus, true God and true man, a handsome person and tall, honourable, the greatest lord.*
>
> *The place which Jesus takes in our soul he will nevermore vacate, for in us is his home of homes, and it is the greatest delight for him to dwell there.... And when I had contemplated this with great attention, our Lord very humbly revealed words to me, without voice and without opening of lips, as he had done before, and said very seriously: "Know it well, it was no hallucination which you saw today, but accept and believe it and hold firmly to it and you will not be overcome."*

And these words: "You will not be overcome," were said very insistently and strongly, for certainty and strength against every tribulation which may come. He did not say: "You will not be assailed, you will not be belaboured, you will not be disquieted," but he said: "You will not be overcome." God wants us to pay attention to his words, and always be strong in our certainty, in well-being and in woe, for he loves us and delights in us, and so he wishes us to love him and delight in him and trust greatly in him, and all will be well.[41]

Julian as Spiritual Director

Julian was not as isolated as many anchoresses. A main road passed outside her cell and through a small opening – her window to the world – Julian gave spiritual direction to many people. One of these was Margery Kempe, known for writing the first biography of a woman in English. Nor was Julian isolated from the learning of her time. An Augustinian friary was across the street from her house and it would have been natural for her to borrow books and engage in conversation with the friars. There were women's communities, Beguines, in the area as well.[42]

When Margery Kempe visited her, she was taught to discern the spirits on her own behalf. Margery's meeting with Julian had important implications in that it chronicled the teaching of the doctrine of *discretio spirituum* by a woman to a woman. Margery's text, *The Book of Margary Kempe,* identifies Julian as an expert in *discretio spirituum*. Julian was the only one of all the spiritual advisors whom Margery consulted who is represented as actually telling Margery how to recognize the provenance of her own visions, i.e., how to read the signs for herself. Julian acted within the limits of the injunction whereby women, though prohibited from teaching men, were permitted to teach other women and children.

In her instruction Julian told Margery that a true vision will not be against charity, the worship of God, or the merit of her fellow Christians. A true visionary will be moved to live chastely, will not doubt, and will steadfastly believe that the Holy Spirit resides in her soul. Kempe describes her encounter with Julian:

And then she was bidden by our Lord to go to an anchoress in the same city, who was called Dame Julian. And so she did and showed her the grace that God put in her soul of compunction, contrition, sweetness and devotion, compassion with holy meditation and high contemplation, and full many holy speeches and dalliances that our Lord spoke to her soul, and many wonderful revelations which she showed to the anchoress to learn if there were any deceit in them, for the anchoress was expert in such things and good counsel could give.

The anchoress, hearing the marvelous goodness of our Lord, highly thanked God with all her heart for his visitation, counseling this creature to be obedient to the will of our Lord God and fulfill with all her mights whatever he put in her soul if it were not against the worship of God and profit of her fellow Christians, for, if it were, then it were not the moving of a good spirit but rather of an evil spirit.[43]

Concluding View

Whether as found in 4th century Desert Fathers and Mothers or as seen in the writings of women mystics like Julian of

Norwich, the story of spiritual direction is a record of people's desire to know God intimately, and help Him be known by others. Each of the expressions I investigated emphasize the role of spiritual director as *guide*, as one who has journeyed the path (and continues to journey).

Throughout the period I surveyed, spiritual direction was intimately connected to elements of *physicality*, as were the practices of its adherents. Spiritual formation was not simply concerned with what goes on "in your head," i.e., what one thinks or believes. Even in expressions we today see as excessive, there were intimate connections between *place* and *persons* (e.g., in the desert), and between bodily function and spiritual formation (e.g., fasting). Theirs was an *integrative spirituality* we would do well to recover in our own day.[44]

As a final concluding view, I find it significant to note the ways spiritual direction existed within authoritative structures yet challenged those same structures and strictures. Women's movements are a particular case-in-point, at times both *conforming to* and *overcoming* the clerical and cultural boundaries of their day, even to the extent of becoming "anchors" of the Church. I find special inspiration in the figure of Julian of Norwich, whether the depth of her experience, her character of loving sacrifice, or the humanity and tenderness of her theological expression. She is a model of spirituality, courage, and excellence in the practice of spiritual direction whose relevance does not diminish in the passage of time.[45]

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[1] Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2001), 30.
[2] Ibid., 35.
[3] Ibid., 33.
[4] Gordon Mursell, *The Story of Christian Spirituality: Two Thousand Years, From East to West* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 57-60.
[5] Leech, 37-8.
[6] Ibid., 38.
[7] Ibid., 40.
[8] Ibid., 135.
[9] Ibid., 135-7.
[10] Gordon, 137.
[11] Ibid., 137.
[12] Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 1999), 17.
[13] Ibid., 40.
[14] Ibid., 40.
[15] Ibid., 71.
[16] Ibid., 154-7.

[17] Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1987), 2.

[18] Ibid., 4.

[19] Ibid., 5.

[20] Ibid., 209.

[21] Ibid., 296.

[22] Ibid., 14.

[23] Ibid., 15.

[24] Ibid., 16.

[25] Wai Man Yuen, *Religious Experience and Interpretation: Memory as the Path to the Knowledge of God in Julian of Norwich's Showings* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 54.

[26] Ibid., 55.

[27] Bynum, 18.

[28] Ibid., 18.

[29] Yuen, 55-7.

[30] Ibid., 83-4.

[31] Ibid., 85.

[32] Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *Julian of Norwich Showings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 3-6.

[33] Ibid., 9-12.

[34] Colledge and Walsh, 19-21.

[35] Yuen, 109.

[36] Colledge and Walsh, 177-8.

[37] Yuen, 113.

[38] Ibid., 116-7.

[39] Ibid., 118-9.

[40] Leech, 141-2

[41] Colledge and Walsh, 163-5.

[42] Richard Chilson, *All Will Be Well: Based on the Spirituality of Julian of Norwich* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1995), 2.

[43] Lynn Stakey, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 32.

[44] Perhaps the recent ecological interest within some Christian circles demonstrates a similar exploration of integrative spirituality. I believe it can … and should.

[45] As an introduction and resource to the spirituality of Julian I recommend Chilson's thirty-day devotional guide; Richard Chilson, *All Will Be Well: Based on the Spirituality of Julian of Norwich* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1995).