

Spiritualism

“I’m spiritual, but not religious!”

At one time “spiritual” and “religious” were synonymous

Idea of separate concepts may trace back to the 1960s

- In 2000 book published by the title “Spiritual but not Religious”

Who in America identifies themselves at SBNR?

- 2012 Pew Research Study:
 - 20% of adults report being “unaffiliated, but spiritual”
- Of those in this category:
 - 18-29 25%
 - 30-49 38%
 - 50-64 30%
 - 65+ 7%
- Men: 53%; Women 47%
- White: 67%; African-American: 10%
- 69% seldom or never attend a religious service

A segment say they “love Jesus, but hate the church”

One researcher categorizes SBNR into five categories:

1. Dissenters (*been turned off by churches – don’t cramp my style*)
2. Casuals (*only on an as-needed basis*)
3. Explorers (*unsatisfied curiosity*)
4. Seekers (*want a new religious/spiritual identity*)
5. Immigrants (*trying on new identity, but not quite comfortable yet*)

How many types of spiritualism are there? Is it “the Force”?

“Much of modern American spirituality is rather **impersonal** and **technique-oriented** – a curious mix of pseudoscience and technology, mechanistic routines and Eastern philosophical monism¹. We are told that pyramids distill the quantum energy of the universe, that certain crystals enable our souls to resonate with cosmic harmonic frequencies, that heavenly bliss comes as we discover our oneness with all that is, that the droning repetition of certain syllables opens the center of our being to the universal mind.” *The Holy Spirit, by Mateen Elass*

Power Beads

American spiritualism is privatized and individualistic without morals

¹ monism: the view that reality is one unitary organic whole with no independent parts (Merriam-Webster)

How does Biblical spiritualism differ?

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” –Galatians 5:25

“For those who follow Jesus, the life of the Spirit presents a more compelling model. God is indeed concerned with the individual and his or her salvation, so much so that the physical body of a believer is understood as a temple that the Holy Spirit inhabits.” – *Elass*

“However, God is equally concerned with the establishment of a redeemed community of people, one in which love and righteousness are displayed through unity and harmony. It is the community or family of God into which each believer is incorporated when baptized in the name of the Trinity. So this fellowship, the church, is also spoken as a temple, a building of living stones, inhabited corporately by the Holy Spirit. To grow spiritually is to become more interconnected through the Spirit of Christ with the larger community of those who have given their allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth.” – *Elass*

“Since the nature of God and of the created world determine what constitutes authentic spirituality, we cannot simply decide for ourselves ‘how to be spiritual,’ especially based on our own feelings or desires. Rather, we must learn who this God is who stands at the center of life, and respond accordingly.” – *Elass*

“...even among God’s people the link between holy and Spirit has been severed in day-to-day life. To experience God is one thing; to live according to the will of God is quite another. The two have no necessary connection for many who call themselves Christian.” – *Elass*

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY (*from Christian Doctrine by Shirley Guthrie Jr.*)

- Begins by looking outside, not inside, ourselves (John Calvin said we need to “get out of ourselves”)
- Is this-worldly, not otherworldly²
- Recognizes the presence and work of the Holy Spirit as much in ordinary as in extraordinary events
- Recognizes the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in bad and well as in good times

NEXT TIME: What is this “Trinity” thing?

² “The Holy Spirit of this God enables people not to *escape* from the world but to live *in* it in such a way that not only their personal lives but also the world around them begins to be made new.”