

For the 18 Mar 79 Kirkridge lectionary, I chose this quote from my writings: "Spirituality' is breaking out all over the world, an irruption of repressed transcendence. We know it when we see and feel it, but we can't define it. It can't be mysticized or politicized, molded or pressured to our will. It appears, and we say *More than we are is here, inviting us to become more than we have been.*"

*Clearly, that quote uses "spirituality" only positively, even elatively. But this thinksheet invites to critical thinking about the term and the current claims for it, East and West and old and new.*

1. The A-S equivalent of the Lat. "spirit" is "ghost," which KJV OT uses often but only as something one gives up, viz. life. "Ghost" in KJV NT is something that can cause pregnancy (in the single case of Mary); something you can be baptized with and blaspheme; something [somebody] speaking in/through you; something that can come upon you and fill you; something/somebody God sends to you, promised and received; somebody you can lie to; a witness to Jesus and the church; someone you can resist; a comforter (=strengthener); a commander of the Mission; a forbidders; an ordainer of "overseers"; inspirer of OT and NT prophets; teacher, empowerer, sanctifier; the one who enables you to say "Jesus is Lord"; the one with whom, in heart and church, one has "communion"; bringer of joy; renewer; giver of gifts [charisms]; one whom you can be a "partaker" of; one who "moves" us inwardly; "the truth"; one of the three witnesses, the other two being water and blood; one you can pray "in." That's it, for the whole Bible (KJV, which does not use the adj. "ghostly"). "Ghost" or "spirit" is something God has and we, made in God's image, also have. In the Bible, the main thing (quantatively, in number of reff.) we do with ours is to give it up, i.e. die; and the main thing God does with "Holy Ghost" is to act benevolently toward us to fulfil God's will and our need.

2. One taxonomy of spirituality is that of locus: where does the spirituality center? In Spiritual Masters transcendent? In Spiritual Masters immanent (e.g., Iran's Khomeini)? In God become Man (Christianity)? In Torah (Judaism)? In nature ("primitive" religion, Stoicism, Taoism)? In the human body (much of the Human Potential Movement)? In humanity (myriad forms of humanism)? In history (Marxism)? In "holy" community (tribism, racism, chauvinism)? In a sex? In the attending individual (Vedanta, Buddhism, narcissism)? In a particular geography (e.g., China or Delphi as "navel")? In a particular time (*in illud tempore* or the past or future Golden Age)? In a caste (e.g., Brahminism)? In economic or political power? In achieved knowledge and/or wisdom and the powers thereof (Magi, scientism)? In achieved goodness (ethicism, moralism, legalism)? In creativity (estheticism)? In value-devotion (e.g., truth, justice, love)? In self-sacrifice (altruism)?...Whether the locus question is or is not separable from the question of the Holy depends on one's cosmology; in the three Western religions, it is--for the God of Judaism-Christianity-Islam is, as Source/Destiny, within but beyond all loci above [Christianity alone being in both categories--cf. its worldly holiness or holy worldliness, "spiritual politics," which the Pope in Mexico (winter/79) struggled with; and see Bob Raines' RIDGELEAF #118 translation of the monastic "poverty-chastity-obedience" into, for now, "simplicity-fidelity-responsibility"].

3. NT spirituality is bipedal, its Jewish grounding in history and thus economic-social-political responsibility forbidding copouts into naturalism and gnosticism and its Greek grounding in nature and mystery forbidding copouts into tribalism and legalism. This spirituality cannot consist in getting (materialism), in controlling (authoritarianism), in getting a high (ecstatisism, sociogenetic or chemo-genetic or autogenetic), or getting rid of oneself (advaita mysticism). Its origin is not seeking-finding (spiritual achievement), but being sought-found ("grace"). While it brings joy, its aim is not bliss but service: the C.S.Lewis of TILL WE HAVE FACES says, "God likes matter; he invented it." So Donald M. Baillie's THE THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS (Faber & Faber/57) is to be regarded as a classic on Christian spirituality. Nonsacramental spirituality leads away both from nature and from community ("churchless Christians"). Thus, biblically, the opposite of

spirituality is not physicality but selfishness, including self-centered "spiritual development."