

## Straw Poll Question 1

In comparison to other Christian theological concepts like “Christology” (beliefs about who Jesus was and is), “Ecclesiology” (beliefs about the Church and its purpose) or “Soteriology” (beliefs about sin and salvation), how familiar are you with “Pneumatology” (beliefs about the “Holy Spirit”)?

- A. Compared to some of these other theological ideas, I am less familiar with the Holy Spirit.
- B. The Holy Spirit is (or at times has been) a significant part of my faith and theological beliefs and I am familiar with at least a few of the major ideas.
- C. My community talks a lot about the Spirit (or has at some point) but I don't really understand what they mean.
- D. I don't feel like I know very much about any of the “-ologies” you've mentioned.
- E. None of these describe me.

## Straw Poll Question 2

In your faith and devotional life, how significant are “spiritual experiences” (broadly defined)?

- A. “Spiritual experiences” are a regular part of my faith life (or perhaps worship at my church) and they are something that I talk about openly with members of my community.
- B. I have had what you might call “spiritual experiences” but they were many years ago and are not a significant part of my faith today.
- C. I do have “spiritual experiences” but they are primarily private and I do not speak with others about them very often.
- D. I have never or very rarely had “spiritual experiences” and they are not a significant part of my faith life.
- E. None of these describe me.

## Straw Poll Question 3

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. The Spirit is primarily the domain of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and has a smaller role to play in Mainline Protestant traditions like the Episcopal Church.
2. Most of the popular beliefs about spirits among Christians today are post-biblical traditions.
3. "Spirit" language in the Bible and among some religions today is usually a non-scientific way of referring to phenomena like mental illness or emotional enthusiasm.
4. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament.
5. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit as part of the trinity is different from the various spirits that appear in the Bible.
6. The Holy Spirit is the animating force of the Church.
7. The Holy Spirit speaks today.

## Webinar technical notes

- ECF may need to mute all participants to limit background noise and audio interference
- If you have questions, please type them into the chat box on the right-hand side of the screen
- PDFs of the slides and resource list are available for download
- This webinar is being recorded and will be made public



# Spirits in Scripture and in Today's Church

The Rev. Reed Carlson  
2015 ECF Fellow

Doctoral Candidate in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament  
at Harvard University



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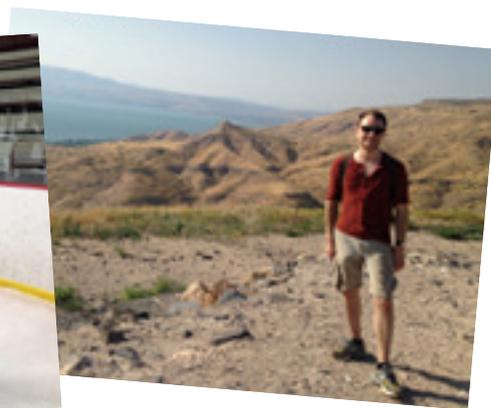
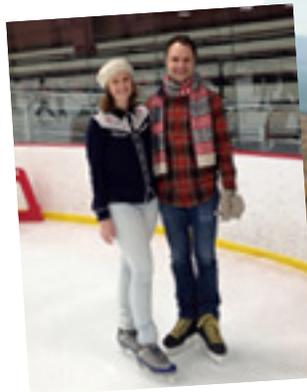


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## Your Instructor: The Rev. Reed Carlson

- Ordained Priest in the Episcopal Church in Minnesota
- Doctoral Candidate in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at Harvard University
- Christian Formation Associate at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Cambridge, MA
- Married to ELCA Pastor, Britta Meiers Carlson
- Enjoys unnecessarily fancy coffee and travelling



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# Prayer

## Webinar Outline

1. The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self
  - Questions
2. From Evil Without to Evil Within
  - Questions
3. The Spirit in Today’s Church
  - Questions



St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City  
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## Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self



Assyrian Lamassu Drawing, A. H. Layard  
www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de

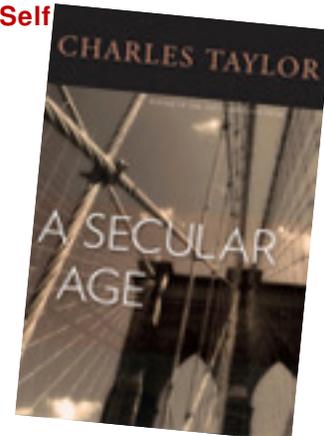


“Vitruvian Man” Leonardo Da Vinci, Venice  
www.Lucnix.be/LucViatour

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### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self

“[T]he [premodern] enchanted world, in contrast to our universe of buffered selves and ‘minds’, shows a perplexing absence of certain boundaries which seem to us essential.” pg. 33



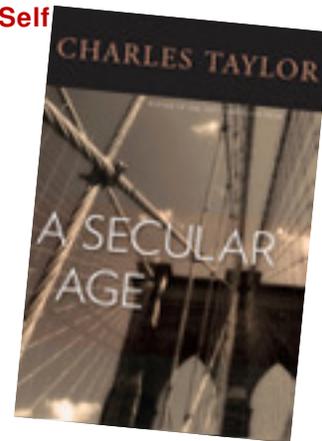
*A Secular Age*  
by Charles Taylor  
2007

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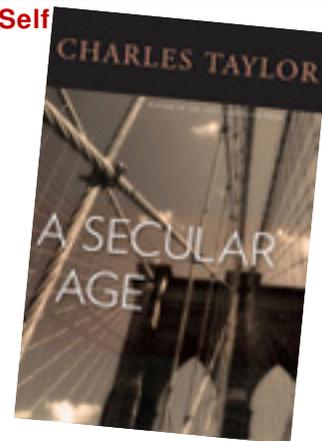
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“[T]he porous self is vulnerable, to spirits, demons, cosmic forces. And along with this go certain fears which can grip it in certain circumstances. The buffered self has been taken out of the world of this kind of fear.” pg. 38



*A Secular Age*  
by Charles Taylor  
2007

### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self



**Porous**

- Premodern/Non-Western



**Buffered**

- Modern/Western

### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self



**Porous**

- Premodern/Non-Western
- Forces of universe have volition



**Buffered**

- Modern/Western
- Forces of universe have properties

### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self



Porous

- Premodern/Non-Western
- Forces of universe have volition
- Outside forces affect us directly



Buffered

- Modern/Western
- Forces of universe have properties
- Outside forces can only affect us through our minds/bodies

### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self



Porous

- Premodern/Non-Western
- Forces of universe have volition
- Outside forces affect us directly
- Meaning exists outside the self



Buffered

- Modern/Western
- Forces of universe have properties
- Outside forces can only affect us through our minds/bodies
- We make meanings within ourselves

### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self



Porous

- Premodern/Non-Western
- Forces of universe have volition
- Outside forces affect us directly
- Meaning exists outside the self
- Dependent self



Buffered

- Modern/Western
- Forces of universe have properties
- Outside forces can only affect us through our minds/bodies
- We make meanings within ourselves
- Independent self

### Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self

“...if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife...”

Numbers 5:14a NRSV

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**Genesis 41:38 NRSV**

**Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self**

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**John 3:5 NRSV**

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**John 3:5 NRSV**

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

**1 Corinthians 2:12 NRSV**

## Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self

רוּחַ

rūah

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רוּחַ

rūah

πνεῦμα

pneuma

Section 1: The "Porous" and the "Buffered" Self



Getty/Richard Legner



Freemages.com/Clesio DaGama



Freemages.com/Marie Jeannelliescu

breath, wind, spirit

Section 1: The "Porous" and the "Buffered" Self



Narcissus, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio 1599  
York Project/DIRECTMEDIA

(an aspect of)  
the self

**Section 1: The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self**

“Remember that my life is a spirit.”

Job 7:7a



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1 Samuel 1:15



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Psalm 32:2 NRSV

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Ezekiel 13:3 NRSV

“One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty.  
One who rules his spirit is better than one who captures a city.”

Proverbs 16:32

## Conclusion of Section 1 The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self

### Summary: In biblical literature...

1. ... spirit-language is a way of talking about the self.
2. ... the border between the “self” and the “outside” world of spirits is much more porous.



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# Q&A

## Webinar Outline

1. The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self
  - Questions
2. From Evil Without to Evil Within
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## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

### Questions to Consider in this Section:

1. How did conceptions of “evil” change over the course of biblical literature?
2. What happens when the spirit/self is perceived as problematic or immoral?



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### Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Some of the oldest and most enduring depictions of what we might call “evil” in the Bible are associated with the sea.



Among the Waves, 1898  
Ivan Aivazovsky

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Some of the oldest and most enduring depictions of what we might call “evil” in the Bible are associated with the sea.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

**Exodus 15:1 NRSV**



Among the Waves, 1898  
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## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

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At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,  
the floods stood up in a heap;  
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

**Exodus 15:8 NRSV**



Among the Waves, 1898  
Ivan Aivazovsky

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within



Ugaritic Baal Cycle  
Tablet 1



Tiamat and Marduk

## Ancient Near Eastern “Chaoskampf” Myths

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Yet God my King is from of old,  
working salvation in the earth.  
You divided the sea by your might;  
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.  
You crushed the heads of Leviathan;  
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.  
You cut openings for springs and torrents;  
you dried up ever-flowing streams.  
Yours is the day, yours also the night;  
you established the luminaries and the sun.  
You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;  
you made summer and winter.



Among the Waves, 1898  
Ivan Aivazovsky

**Psalm 74:12–17**

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Awake, awake, put on strength,  
O arm of the LORD!  
Awake, as in days of old,  
the generations of long ago!  
Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,  
who pierced the dragon?

Was it not you who dried up the sea,  
the waters of the great deep;  
who made the depths of the sea a way  
for the redeemed to cross over?

So the ransomed of the LORD shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.



Among the Waves, 1898  
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Isaiah 51:9–11 NRSV

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Thus says the Lord GOD:  
I am against you,  
Pharaoh king of Egypt,  
the great dragon sprawling  
in the midst of its channels,  
saying, "My Nile is my own;  
I made it for myself."

Ezekiel 29:3 NRSV



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"King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has devoured me,  
he has crushed me;

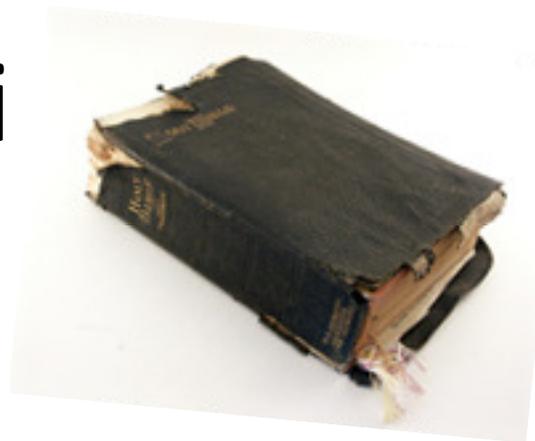
he has made me an empty vessel,  
he has swallowed me like [the dragon];  
he has filled his belly with my delicacies,  
he has spewed me out.

Jeremiah 51:34 NRSV

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## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

# From Malachi to Matthew

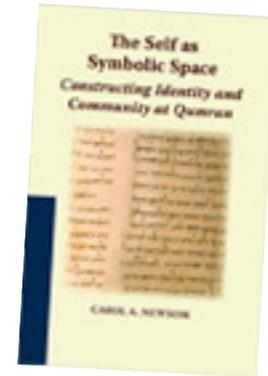


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## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

The exilic and post-exilic periods see more reflection on the self, both individually and in community.

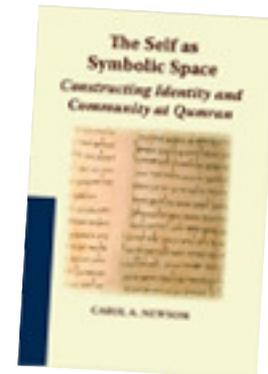


*The Self as Symbolic Space:  
Constructing Identity and  
Community at Qumran*  
Carol Newsom, 2004

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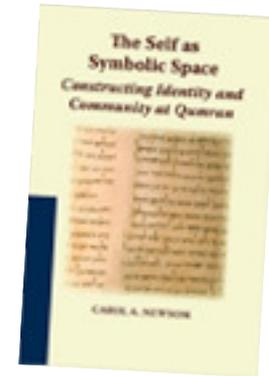
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## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

The exilic and post-exilic periods see more reflection on the self, both individually and in community.

This is the “introspective self.”

It is discovered that some aspects of the self are problematic, and perhaps irreparable.



*The Self as Symbolic Space:  
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## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

“Then the LORD said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh... The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

**Genesis 6:1–8 NRSV**

Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

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Genesis 6:1–8 NRSV

“For thus says the high and lofty one  
 who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
 ‘I dwell in the high and holy place,  
 and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit,  
 to revive the spirit of the humble,  
 and to revive the heart of the contrite.  
 For I will not continually accuse,  
 nor will I always be angry;  
 for then the spirits would grow faint before me,  
 even the souls that I have made.’”

Isaiah 57:15–17 NRSV

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Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within



*The Agnew Clinic, Thomas Eakins, 1889*

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**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

“I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

**Ezekiel 11:19–20 NRSV**

**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

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**Ezekiel 11:19–20 NRSV**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

**Psalms 51:10–12 (Heb. 12–14) NRSV**

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within



A portion of "The Great Isaiah Scroll"  
Israel Museum

# The Dead Sea Scrolls

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

[God] created humankind to rule over the world, appointing for them two spirits in which to walk until the time ordained for His visitation. These are the spirits of truth and falsehood. Upright character and fate originate with the Habitation of Light; perverse, with the Fountain of Darkness.

1QS "The Community Rule" 3:17–19  
(Wise, Abegg, Cook)

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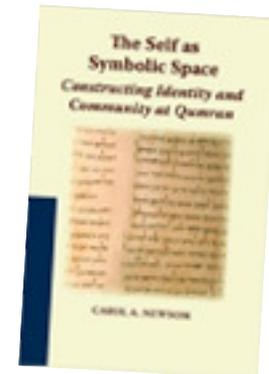
1QS "The Community Rule" 3:17–19  
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[the heart of stone] you have *exorcized* out of me, and have set a pure heart in its place. The evil inclination [you] have *exorcized* out of my innards.

4Q436 Barkhi Nafshi  
(Miryam T. Brand)

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

The problematic aspects of the self are rejected and feared and the new self is valorized.



*The Self as Symbolic Space:  
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Carol Newsom, 2004

**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Matthew 28:19–20 NRSV**

**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

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**Matthew 28:19–20 NRSV**

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?

**1 Corinthians 6:19 NRSV**

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Spirits become one of the principle ways that God works in the world.



Trinity Icon, 15<sup>th</sup> C.  
Andrei Rublev

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Spirits become one of the principle ways that God works in the world.

Conversely, spirits are also one of the principle ways that evil tampers with God's people.



Trinity Icon, 15<sup>th</sup> C.  
Andrei Rublev

**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

[God] has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.

**Exodus 35:31–33 NRSV**

**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

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**Exodus 35:31–33 NRSV**

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

**1 Corinthians 12:4–7**

**Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within**

Then the spirit of the LORD will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person.

**1 Samuel 10:6 NRSV**

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**1 Samuel 10:6 NRSV**

When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

**Acts 4:31 NRSV**

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

Biblical and other early Jewish myths become the frameworks for how God solves the problem of evil (both without and within)



"The Last Judgment", 16<sup>th</sup> C.  
Michelangelo

## Section 2: From Evil Without to Evil Within

On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.

Isaiah 27:1 NRSV

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Isaiah 27:1 NRSV

The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Revelation 12:9 NRSV

## Conclusion of Section 2 From Evil Without to Evil Within

### Summary:

1. The forces of chaotic evil make their way from the outside to the inside of the self in biblical literature (and bring their mythic imagery with them)
2. In early Christianity, the spirit/self of the Church becomes God's preferred vehicle for solving the problem of evil.



Early Christian Ikhthus found in Ephesus

# Q&A

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1. The “Porous” and the “Buffered” Self
  - Questions
2. From Evil Without to Evil Within
  - Questions
3. The Spirit in Today’s Church
  - Questions



St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City  
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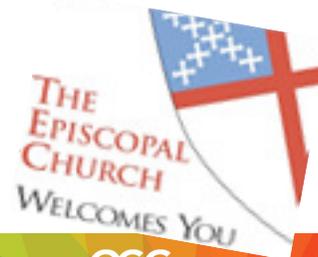
## Section 3: The Spirit in Today's Church

### Questions to Consider in this Section:

1. What utility does spirit-language have in the Church today?
2. How might the early Christian warnings about "discerning spirits" be applied today?



Anglican Church of Southern Africa



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### Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

## Reed's Six Recommendations for welcoming spirit-language into your Church

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## Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

# 1. Make Space for Spiritual People



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# 2. Recognize how spirit-ideas provide us with language and frameworks for things we already know intuitively as followers of Christ



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Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

3. Don't "explain away" spirit phenomena in the Bible by equating them with modern concepts

Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today



Mental  
Illness

Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

Mental  
Illness

Medicine

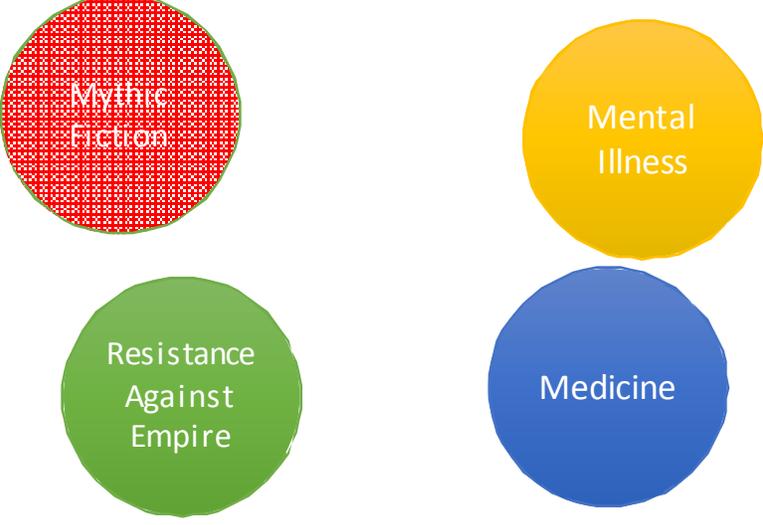
Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

Mental  
Illness

Medicine

Resistance  
Against  
Empire

Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today



Mythic Fiction

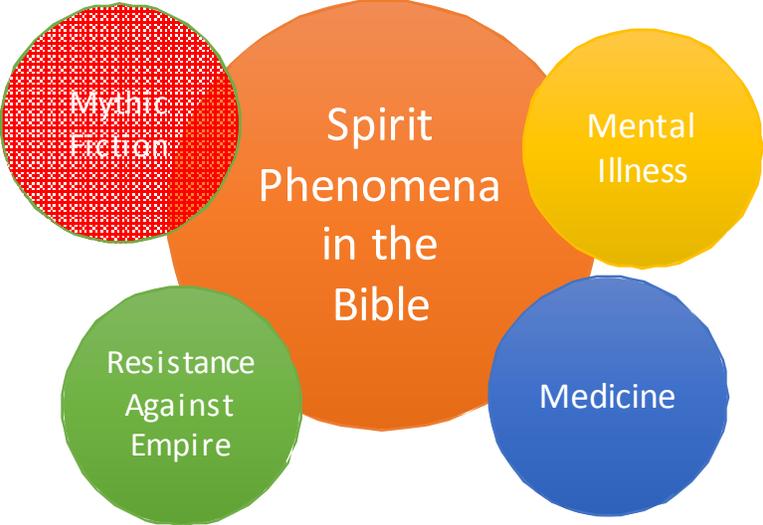
Mental Illness

Resistance Against Empire

Medicine

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Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today



Mythic Fiction

Mental Illness

Resistance Against Empire

Medicine

Spirit Phenomena in the Bible

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Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

4. Breakdown the wall between the “spiritual” and the “rational.”



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Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

5. Learn to “discern spirits”



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Section 3: The Spirit in the Church Today

6. Spirit as another authority.



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# Spirits in Scripture and in Today's Church

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