

Schools of Spirituality and Their Heresies

1. Apostolic Spirituality (upper left quadrant)

- a. **Speculative / Apophatic** = focus on the mind and on direct, unmediated relationship with God
- b. Aim: To obey God's will completely
- c. Witness: To bring in the Kingdom of God on earth in social settings
- d. Prayer life: Dominated by prayer leading to witness
- e. Examples: John Wesley, The Social Activists, both "liberal" and "conservative", "the Religious Right" and "Religious Left"
- f. Spiritual Activities: Tend to focus on being with the poor, needy and oppressed for leftists, and focusing on tribal relationships for rightists
- g. Heresy: When it spills over into moralism and excess concern with right behavior

2. Mystical Spirituality (lower left quadrant)

- a. **Affective / Apophatic** = focus on the heart and on direct, unmediated relationship with God
- b. Aim: To Be United with God
- c. Witness: To enter into the presence of God's future reign
- d. Prayer life: Dominated by contemplative prayer leading to unity with God
- e. Examples: Eastern Orthodox; medieval mystics; New Age/Christian combinations
- f. Spiritual Activities: Retreats with much individual time in the desert or wilderness
- g. Heresy: When it spills over into quietism and escapism

3. Sacramental Spirituality (upper right quadrant)

- a. **Speculative / Kataphatic** = focus on mind and on indirect, mediated relationship with God (mediation includes Bible and other third party products)
- b. Aim: To fulfill vocation in the world as part of God's present and future Kingdom
- c. Witness: Discerning life in God's reign now
- d. Prayer life: Mental prayer leading to discernment
- e. Examples: John Wesley, Martin Luther, most people in academia, modern day fundamentalists, traditional worship
- f. Spiritual Activities: Tend to be guided retreats and meditations using the mental expansion and direction to seek God's will and change actions and attitudes
- g. Heresy: When it spills over into dogmatism and the excessive concern with right thinking

4. Charismatic Spirituality (lower right quadrant)

- a. **Affective / Kataphatic** = focus on the heart and on mediated relationship with God (mediated by events and stimuli that affect the emotions)
- b. Aim: To achieve holiness of life
- c. Witness: To provide signs of God's present reign
- d. Prayer life: Meditative prayer leading to emotional response indicating the presence of God
- e. Examples: John Wesley, Charismatic movement in U.S., Contemporary Worship
- f. Spiritual Activities: Life in fellowship and small groups
- g. Heresy: Excessive concern with right feeling; emotionalism