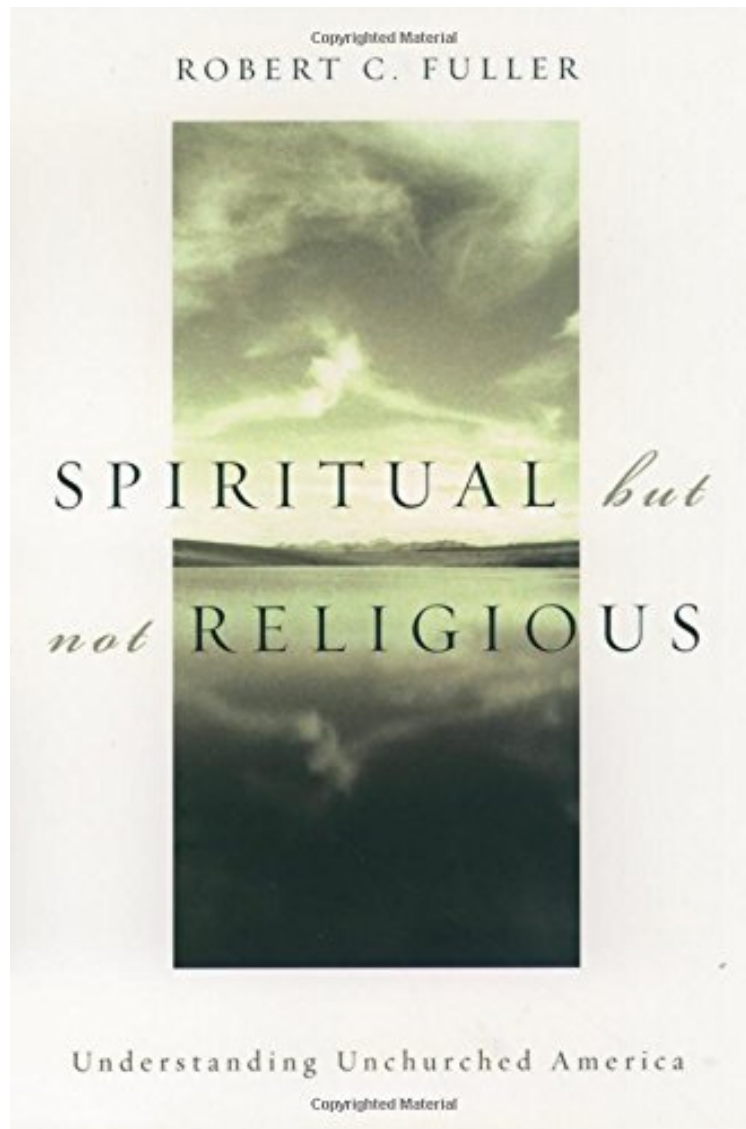


[FREE] Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America

## Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America

*Robert C. Fuller*

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#454425 in Books Robert C Fuller 2001-12-20Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.10 x 1.00 x 9.10l, 1.17 #File Name: 0195146808224 pagesSpiritual but Not Religious Understanding Unchurched America | File size: 68.Mb

**Robert C. Fuller : Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America:

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Do Americans Still Believe in Religion?By Bryan CareyQuite frequently, when someone talks about religious life in America, it is common to hear news that sounds somewhat

negative. "America is not quite as religious as was in the past", experts say. "They don't have the commitment to religious places of worship like they once did and they don't follow the strict moral code of their ancestors". Author Robert Fuller is a professor of Religious Studies at Bradley University and he has studied extensively about this "flight" away from traditional religion. But what Fuller has found is that Americans are still believers in a higher being and they still consider themselves moral beings. The difference between now and then is that today, Americans tend to express their religious feelings in a more inward way, and they don't participate actively in organized religion. This is the new face of religion in America, and it is examined in this book, "Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding unchurched America". Fuller points out some revealing statistics that shows the movement of Americans away from tradition houses of worship and over to a more personal relationship with God. Americans don't like the standardized formula that is so prevalent in most churches. They want to express themselves in their own, unique way. And they want to rely more on the power of their own minds to get in touch with spiritual feelings. Fuller writes mostly about the history of spirituality in America and the trends of the past two centuries that have gotten us where we are today. He doesn't dwell much on the present state of spirituality and why Americans are increasingly attracted to this as an alternative to traditional religion. This is one of the drawbacks of the book, in my opinion. It's good to know about the history and how we got where we are. But I would like to know more about the present-day spiritualists and why they feel so strongly about their mode of practice. Fuller presents some good, thought-provoking material on the history of spirituality in America and what we can expect in the future. The nation is becoming more and more diverse all the time, and that includes diversity in religious beliefs as well as in cultural backgrounds. Churches will need to find more and more ways to accommodate these "drifters" who prefer their own method of religious practice to that of customary churches. If churches ignore this, Fuller predicts that they will continue to lose more and more members. Something must be done if American churches hope to grow and thrive in the new century.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting history - Enjoyable flow from past to present  
By Midwest Mike  
There is a very well done review here by Bryan Carey which outlines Fuller's main focus with this book so I won't do the same thing. I am far from an American history scholar, but this is my second read of Fuller's and I find his style to be helpful to someone wanting to learn but not extremely well versed in this field. Plenty of historical background information is provided while supporting his thesis throughout the book. I have seen Dr. Fuller interviewed several times on various shows on The History Channel and that is what initially drawn to his books. I found his detailing of the popularity and role of magic in colonial times to be especially fascinating. I have recommended this book several times to friends.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Finally an inclusive spiritual history of the US  
By Eric Jennings  
The book was my introduction to the research and thinking of Robert C. Fuller. The confident and competent scholarly writing was very helpful to my research as a clergy seeking an advanced seminary degree. Being an unaffiliated clergy, I seek to have interfaith organizations acknowledge the "unchurched" as part of the total spiritual population. It was refreshing to read a book at last, that seems to also count the unchurched, one written with scholarship, clarity and neutrality. The author has consummate knowledge of his topic, yet writes with the requisite emotional distance few religious scholars enjoy. I believe this book could figure prominently in any seminary program which investigates the spiritual and religious history of America without judgment of each unchurched school of spirituality. Non clergy who lead a spiritually independent (unchurched or nearly unchurched) life, would benefit from reading about the extraordinary and often unsung clergy and spiritually gifted who have added so much to the spiritual landscape of America since colonial times.

Nearly 40% of all Americans have no connection with organized religion. Yet many of these people, even though they might never step inside a house of worship, live profoundly spiritual lives. But what is the nature and value of unchurched spirituality in America? Is it a recent phenomenon, a New Age fad that will soon fade, or a long-standing and essential aspect of the American experience? In *Spiritual But Not Religious*, Robert Fuller offers fascinating answers to these questions. He shows that alternative spiritual practices have a long and rich history in America, dating back to the colonial period, when church membership rarely exceeded 17% and interest in astrology, numerology, magic, and witchcraft ran high. Fuller traces such unchurched traditions into the mid-nineteenth century, when Americans responded enthusiastically to new philosophies such as Swedenborgianism, Transcendentalism, and mesmerism, right up to the current interest in meditation, channeling, divination, and a host of other unconventional spiritual practices. Throughout, Fuller argues that far from the flighty and narcissistic dilettantes they are often made out to be, unchurched spiritual seekers embrace a mature and dynamic set of basic beliefs. They focus on inner sources of spirituality and on this world rather than the afterlife; they believe in the accessibility of God and in the mind's untapped powers; they see a fundamental unity between science and religion and an equality between genders and races; and they are more willing to test their beliefs and change them when they prove untenable. Timely, sweeping in its scope, and informed by a clear historical understanding, *Spiritual But Not Religious* offers fresh perspective on the growing numbers of Americans who find their spirituality outside the church.

From Publishers Weekly  
Over the past 30 years, sociologists of religion have coined the phrase "spiritual seeker" to

describe those who are unaffiliated with organized religion but who are nonetheless looking for ways to enhance their understanding of religious questions. Fuller (*Alternative Medicine in American Religious Life*) observes that these seekers differentiate between spirituality and religion, connecting the former with a privately expressed faith and the latter with the creeds and rituals publicly expressed in religious institutions. These "spiritual but not religious" individuals, Fuller writes, pick and choose elements from a variety of beliefs and practices as they construct an individualized spirituality. While many scholars regard this as a recent phenomenon, Fuller provides a historical survey of America's "nonecclesial religious history" to demonstrate that the impulse toward creating a uniquely personal spirituality has pervaded American religion since colonial times. He ranges over divination, astrology, witchcraft, angelology, Swedenborgianism, Emersonian transcendentalism, mesmerism, Elizabeth Clare Prophet's I AM movement, New Thought and New Age in order to show the historical roots of the fascination with the spiritual apart from the religious. Finally, he contends that the spirituality of the "unchurched" is slowly reshaping the faith of many members of mainstream religious organizations. While there are interesting moments here, notably his lively historical overviews, Fuller's thesis is old news, and he fails to address the growing number of seekers who are returning to religious organizations in search of tradition-oriented faith. Since Fuller's book describes an outdated religious scene, his main point is almost obsolete. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

In a work emblematic of the uniquely syncretic American psyche, Fuller (religious studies, Bradley Univ.) surveys the history and development of alternative spirituality in America. Making important distinctions between religion and spirituality and between religious thinking and biblical theology, Fuller quotes Paul Tillich, who also found that most of what happens in church isn't distinctively spiritual. Thus, spiritual Americans have always been those who seek "to find a language suitable for describing their encounters with the sacred." Offering a primer on alternative American religious history, Fuller focuses on mystical spiritualities, such as theosophy, alternative healing, channeling, 12-step programs, and Asian meditative practices. He finds some to be superficial and some to contain a more polished cultural vision, but nearly all speak to a single truth: American churches and religious institutions hold less and less authority in a time when so many avenues for personal spiritual renewal are available to everyday folk. In this readable text, which guides the reader to further research, Fuller views American religiosity as a "seeker spirituality," an argument borne out by our country's history of eclectic spiritual journeying. Recommended for American history and religion collections. Sandra Collins, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary Lib. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A well-written, engaging survey of the myriad forms of alternative spiritualities available to Americans, from the inception of the nation of the present, with many pertinent and illuminating forays along the way into deeper social and cultural roots from which these movements grew."--*Christian Century* "Highly informative.... A valuable guide for those eager to understand the origins and characteristics of 'unchurched spirituality.'"--Jane Lampman, *Christian Science Monitor*