

Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 224 pp.

Some fifty years from now, when historians of religion (or spirituality) seek to identify a descriptive phrase for our era, they may well select the increasingly common mantra, "I am spiritual but not religious." At one time, the words seemed to be used interchangeably, and it did not seem to make much difference if someone described Pastor Jones as a "religious" person or a "spiritual" person, one adjective duplicated the other. On those occasions when comparisons were made, "spirituality" usually got the short end of the stick, with its practitioners being derided for their séances, attempts to predict the future, extrasensory perception studies, etc. Yet, times have changed. These days, spirituality appears to be garnering a greater share of recognition and respect, while religion seems to be receding into the shadows.

Robert Fuller provides an engaging historical account of the interplay between religion and spirituality within the United States, from the colonial era to the present. Spirituality, he informs us, has been a significant force in our history though often relegated to the sidelines, especially by the Christian historians. All the great religious revivals, Fuller points out, were not just within the Christian churches but within other spiritual groups and contexts as well. The influence of the Enlightenment on spirituality is evident in Jefferson's decision to publish his improved version of the New Testament, as well as Franklin's general dismissal of organized religion. The emphasis on individualism and reason is especially well developed in the compelling writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, an early leading figure in establishing Unitarianism (the one denomination today that appears to be experiencing a significant degree of growth). The combination of individualism and rationality leads to a third component which is a common factor in each of the spirituality movements: the recurring rejection of established religion for being too doctrinaire and restrictive. His survey is quite comprehensive and includes just about every movement and its seminal founders: Astrology, the Celestine Prophecy, the Emmanuel Movement, "I Am," Alcoholics Anonymous, Mesmerism, the New Thought Movement, Rosicrucianism, Shakerism, Swedenborgianism, etc. While Fuller rightly recognizes some of the foibles of the more narcissistic spiritual gurus, I suspect he would nominate William James, along with Emerson, as two of the most significant figures in the development of spirituality within the United States. In this regard, he provides a quote from James which well captures the essence of spirituality: "There are resources in us that naturalism with its literal and legal virtues never reckons of, possibilities that take our breath away, of another kind of happiness and power based upon giving up our own will and letting something higher work for us" (p. 133). My appreciation for this fascinating chronicle of the development of spirituality within the US soured somewhat in the final chapter. At first I thought, "Oh great, he is going to utilize the work of Gordon Allport (one of my favorites, but who Fuller mistakenly associates with Yale; when, in fact, Allport attended and then became a faculty member at Harvard) on the marks of "a mature religious outlook." Within every category, however, organized religion receives a lower score than spirituality. It felt like, *mirabile dictu*—Fuller the engrossing historian, morphed into an evangelist for spirituality. Even so, it is one of the best evangelical pamphlets (200 pages) I have seen on spirituality. I am surprised it is not more widely known. Perhaps when it was published in 2001, it was ahead of the curve, but I plan to recommend it to anyone who wants to understand the development of spirituality in the US. I have a feeling that the number of people who will be identifying themselves as "spiritual but not religious" will be increasing in the years to come. In time, we may discover whether spirituality enriches or eclipses religion.

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