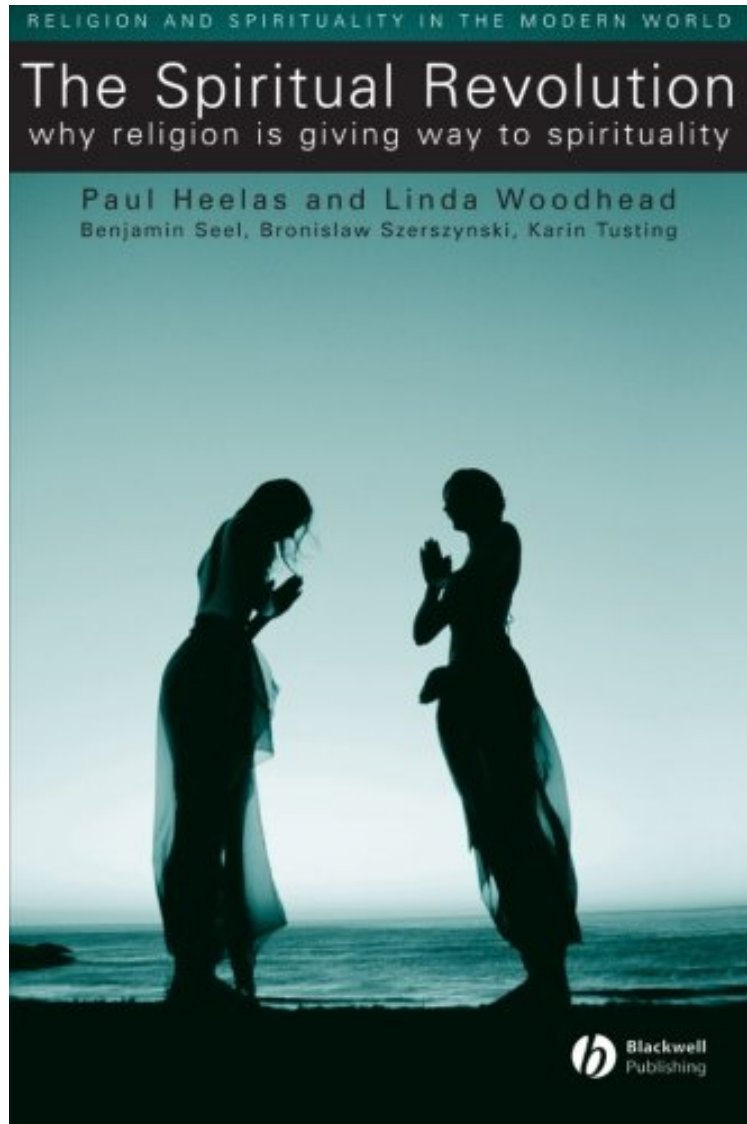


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# The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality

*Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead*

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**Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead : The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Aimed at the StatisticianBy Dr. C. H. RobertsThis book was a bit of a disappointment to me since it is long on reporting research statistics and analyzing survey results and short on

philosophical or cultural discussion. It fairly well chronicles the shift in some demographic groups from "religion" to "spirituality" but it does so from a rather detached, clinical standpoint. If you are on board with the new spirituality and are looking to read an apology for your change or, if you are deeply opposed to such a transition and consider yourself an unbending traditionalist in religion, you probably won't find what you're looking for in this book. North American readers should be advised also that the focus of the study is a demographic survey of an English town in the U.K.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. How a Small British Town Informs Us About the Future of Religious Activity By Jeremy Garber Don't let the title fool you. This volume provides a well-researched and sophisticated inquiry into the everyday life of a small British town that provides an illustration of the religious and spiritual future. Heelas, Woodhead, and the rest of their research team investigated attendance in what they call the congregational domain (traditional churches) and the holistic milieu (yoga, acupuncture, etc.) of a 27,000-person area from 2000-2002. The argument of their work is that due to the massive subjective turn of modern culture, a turn away from defining oneself in terms of external or objective roles toward one's own subjective experiences, 21st century persons are moving from life-as to subjective-life, from defining oneself in terms of the transcendent or supra-self order toward subjectivities and relationships. They thus predict that traditional congregational life and investment in alternative forms of the holistic milieu (the unfortunately named spirituality of the title) will roughly equal each other at 3-4% each of the British population in thirty years. Heelas and Woodhead provide a helpful typology of congregational life and how it differs from the holistic orientation. Congregational domain involves directing one's attention away from one's self toward something greater, while subjective-life invites attention toward the self. Their typology describes congregations of difference, congregations of humanity, congregations of experiential difference, and congregations of experiential humanity (17). Congregations of humanity emphasize connection between God and humanity, but emphasize moral behavior toward others rather than individual sensation (e.g. mainline liberal churches such as Anglicans and Methodists). Congregations of difference (and especially experiential difference) pay more attention to the self and the inner-life, but through external relations. Finally, there are congregations of experiential humanity such as Unitarian Universalists and Friends, which go the furthest in authorizing subjective-life, but are still oriented toward the humanitarian. The description of the holistic milieu essentially describes seeing spirit/energy/spirituality as dwelling within the human subject, using connective/flow language. Participants in the holistic milieu rejection life-as understandings in favor of relationality and participant-centered activities. Their ultimate goal, based on surveys, is the enhancement of their individual personality rather than other goals such as release from the ego or bonding with the universe. The most valuable chapter is Chapter Four, Bringing the Sacred to Life: Explaining Sacralization and Secularization. The authors' subjectivization thesis states that the massive subjective turn of modern culture favors and reinforces those (subjective-life) forms of spirituality which resource unique subjectivities and treat them as a primary source of significance, and undermines those (life-as) forms of religion which do not. (78) They support the Durkheimian principle that people are more likely to be involved with forms of the sacred that are consistent with their existing values and beliefs. In turn, the values of subjective-life are catered for when the sacred is experienced as dwelling within the unique. (82) The holistic milieu thus offers an extra niche to those interested in more than the subjective wellbeing culture. Conversely, the decline of life-as expectations in culture means a corresponding decline of life-as congregational roles. In their most intriguing observation and call for further research, the authors suggest that the postmodern workplace provides compelling life-as control systems which make it less likely that people will seek life-as in their spare time. In other words, we are so over-monitored and pigeon-holed at work that we need to escape it when we look for the sacred. Finally, in a tentative look at the future, the authors argue that the future of associational forms of the sacred in Britain depends on the future of the massive subjective turn of modern culture, and the ways in which religions and spiritualities relate to it so long as value continues to be attached to the development, cultivation and exploration of subjective-life, and so long as subjectivized culture extols the virtues of wellbeing, there is every reason to suppose that the future of subjective-life spiritualities is secure. Heelas, Woodward, and their team provide a well-researched deep reading of a small British town. In some ways, both their research and their conclusions are unique to Great Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century, and cannot be applied either to the context of the USA or more radically to developing worlds. Some of their predictions are based solely on book sales in major British book chains, which begs the question whether their forecast about the holistic milieu is accurately supported by the evidence. However, their typology of congregations and the holistic milieu are extremely helpful in analyzing the dynamics of participants in contemporary religious culture. This book is recommended for religious studies instructors and students, particularly those interested in a successful model of sociological research, as well as religious leaders looking for the ways that their particular communities work and how those ways might impact the future.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating, but too much research for the general reader. By Customer The book attempts to study the rise of spirituality through the in depth study of one community, its different "religious" and "spiritual" practices and their change over time. For those who are just interested in the general theory-- that "subjectivism" has caused the attractiveness of new practices -- the detailed information about the specific community is a bit cumbersome, but probably necessary for specialists who need to be convinced that the thesis is true.

Comparing existing evidence from the USA and Europe, with a UK-based study of religion and spirituality, this fascinating book addresses the most pressing question in the study of religion today: are new forms of spirituality overtaking traditional forms of religion? Based on the detailed study of religion and spirituality in Kendal, UK Compares pioneering findings from Kendal with existing evidence from the USA and Europe Provides a theoretical perspective which explains both secularization and sacralization Offers some startling predictions about the future of religion and spirituality in the west Is written in an accessible and lively style, and will appeal to a broad range of readers interested in the future direction of belief in the western world.

"This is an important book that should be read by anyone concerned with the future of religion in this country. I say this for two reasons: first, because it tells us new things about the nature of religious activity in Britain; and second, because the authors offer an interesting interpretation of their data, drawing from innovative theoretical insights." Church Times It is clear that this book, with the distinctions it introduces and its daring central thesis, is a major contribution to the current debate. The careful way in which the authors develop their argument step by step, taking into account possible objections, is admirable. Journal of Contemporary Religion "Is Britain undergoing a seismic cultural shift with New Age forms of spirituality set to overtake traditional Christian expressions? That's the fundamental question explored in depth by two leading researchers into religious life in Britain today. Their landmark book ... sets out their findings with back-up evidence from studies worldwide. It raises key issues for all concerned for the future of Christianity in Britain." The Baptist Times "Clearly, this book written by leading sociologists of religion, is a must for anyone interested in sociology, alternative spirituality and Christian studies, and will be made reference to in many forthcoming researches. I strongly recommend anyone with an interest in this field of study to read the book as it highlights current research findings as well as breaks new ground in sociology of religion." Australian Religious Studies "This book explores the significance for contemporary religion and spirituality of the subjective turn in modern culture. To understand this, we need both careful empirical research and constant reflection on our categories. Heelas and Woodhead supply both in generous measure." Charles Taylor, McGill University "This well-researched and cogently argued study offers a challenging diagnosis of the spiritual condition of present-day Britain. It will be hotly debated by sociologists, theologians, and all those interested in the future of religion and spirituality." Hugh McLeod, University of Birmingham "The Spiritual Revolution provides a much-needed survey and theoretical synthesis of research on religious involvement, particularly in Great Britain and the United States The result is a much more nuanced and productive account of religious change than the usual secularization versus sacralization approach." Penny Marler, Samford University "A book such as this, whose contributors understand the shades of grey and are able to provide a critique of the religious fanaticism and extremism (on all sides) that has given the rise to so much of the controversy surrounding The Passion, should be essential reading in schools and universities everywhere." Chris Deacy, University of Kent

From the Back Cover Are we living through a spiritual revolution in which traditional forms of religion are giving way to new forms of spirituality? Are yoga, reiki and other forms of holistic practice set to become more popular than churchgoing? This book addresses these questions by presenting findings from a major research project designed to chart the state of religion and spirituality today. Though it finds little to support more extreme claims of change, it discovers that spiritualities which engage with the depths of personal experience are faring far better than religions that demand conformity to higher truth. These developments are explained by drawing attention to the significance of a subjective turn in the wider culture whereby conformity to external obligations becomes less important than sensitivity to inner life and wellbeing.

About the Author Paul Heelas is Professor in Religion and Modernity and Linda Woodhead is Senior Lecturer in Christian Studies, both in the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University, UK. They have written extensively on religion and spirituality in the modern world.