



Journal of Religion & Society

The Kripke Center

Volume 4 (2002)

Wade Clark Roof. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 323 pages. \$16.95 (Paper); \$50.65 (Cloth).

[1] *Spiritual Marketplace* is a descriptive tapestry of the nation's changing spiritual makeup, and the influence Baby Boomers are having on this process of transformation. Wade Roof, perhaps the leading authority on Boomer religiosity and spirituality, creates his tapestry from the spiritual and religious narratives of the Boomers themselves. Through their narratives, he identifies themes that demonstrate this generation's strong, but very different kind of religious and spiritual orientation.

[2] *Spiritual Marketplace* is built on the foundation of Roof's popular 1993 book, *A Generation of Seekers*, which began a longitudinal charting of the generation born between 1946 and 1964. This latest work weaves decades of social science research and American theological opinion into the fabric of the author's more than ten years of largely qualitative research on a national sample of Boomers.

[3] Despite popular opinions and social science studies with contrary assertions, Roof maintains the vast majority of Boomers are deeply spiritual. Though it is true many of the 76 million women and men in this post-World War II generation do not share the stable religious identities and preferences of their parents' generation, a spiritual identity pervades their lives. It just exists in a more amorphous form, characterized by a restless spiritual search, a type of Arthurian "quest culture." Roof estimates about 75% of the women and men in the boomer generation are actively engaged in some form of this search-oriented posture toward spirituality and religion.

[4] It is no secret many Boomers have detached or decreased attachment to the moorings of traditional religious organizations that provided much of the cultural "meaning making" in the first two centuries of the American republic. Roof's work is unique, however, in its detailed description of the "spiritual marketplace" emerging over the past half-century and the culture's new suppliers of "meaning making." The author chronicles the Boomers demand for new spiritual and religious perspectives and resources, especially those that

address their hunger for self-authenticity and intimate relationships, the improvement of family life, and the solution to ecological problems.

[5] Through much of the book, Roof gives specific examples of how Boomer influence is shaping the new marketplace. For instance, their desire for authenticity in thought and feeling is transforming the role of doubt in the life of religious faith. Doubt is no longer an enemy of belief, as it was in previous generations more concerned with religious orthodoxy. For most Boomers, doubt is a companion in the personal search for spiritual truth, which is requiring religions to integrate the role of uncertainty more thoroughly into their belief systems.

[6] In a similar way, Boomers have shaken the American practice in previous generations of strong, unquestioning loyalty and obedience to specific religious traditions and institutions. Religious symbols, meanings and practices, traditions and institutions are seen by Boomers as tools for developing spiritual sensitivities and consciousness. The quest culture places a higher value on practical ways to live a religious or spiritual life "on the ground" than it does to paying fealty to religious leaders or traditions. This re-structuring of priorities allows greater room for both internal and external pluralism.

[7] One of the most useful dimensions of *Spiritual Marketplace* is Roof's identification of five Boomer religious subcultures. The subcultures offer a practical tool that religious organizations can use in planning ministerial outreaches and services directed toward Baby Boomers. But, these subcultures offer a unique prism for further research into the spirituality of this generation, and expose the simplicity and reductionism of many perceptions of Boomer religiosity.

[8] Roof maintains all five of his subcultures are in a constantly evolving process of identity formation, both influencing and reacting to the forces of the new spiritual marketplace. However, three subcultures are quietly and profoundly reconfiguring the nation's moral and religious values - Born Agains, Mainstream Believers, and Metaphysical Believers and Seekers. The other two subcultures, Dogmatists and Secularists, draw a great deal of attention, but they are more reactive and marginal.

[9] Born Agains, which are comprised of people identifying themselves as Born Agains, Evangelicals, Charismatics, and Pentecostals, are the largest Boomer subculture. Although they are often described erroneously as narrow-minded and exclusive, Roof believes this group will serve as the lead agent in transforming American religion in the next century, provided its religious leaders can prevent the subculture from sliding toward a conservative, reactionary stance against the forces of change in society. Also contrary to popular belief, this subculture has a great deal of internal pluralism, with much more openness and tolerance than generally assumed. The pluralism is easiest to see in the many competing voices in the subculture that are vying for control, such as television evangelists, Christian entertainers, and the growing number of voluntary associations like Promise Keepers. These voices create a perpetual state of confusion, disorder and instability in the subculture.

[10] Nonetheless, Born Agains remain connected to one another in a shared adherence to a traditional Christian theology, the experience of a very "personal God" or relationship with Jesus, and a redemptive experience of salvation. This mixture of forces, Roof believes, has

resulted in the Born Agains' major contribution to the new marketplace: a unique linkage between cognition, body sensation and religious experience.

[11] The second largest subculture of Boomer religiosity is a grouping Roof refers to as Mainstream Believers. The common dimensions of their spirituality deal with what Nancy Ammerman calls, "Golden Rule" religion, i.e., providing for their families, helping and caring for others, doing good deeds, being friendly and civic-minded and living a good life. Most Mainstream Believers perceive religious organizations as inadequate in matters of spiritual resources, and are more interested in self-help literature than religious orthodoxy. The narratives of their experience of faith are described primarily through memories of childhood, and the faith they saw mediated through their parents and grandparents. Mainstream Believers cannot articulate clearly what they believe, but they are contributing a more pluralistic approach in the new spiritual marketplace, since they often feel a closer affinity to non-Christians than zealous Christians and seek spiritual guidance outside of traditional sources.

[12] One of Roof's subcultures is making an even more dramatic break with traditional American religiosity. Metaphysical Believers and Seekers place a radical stress on bodily experiences in their spirituality, far beyond the emphasis of the Born Agains. Although the majority of the Metaphysical Believers and Seekers were raised as conservative Protestants, they have morphed into a grab bag of religious identities - neo-pagans, wiccans, goddess worshippers, Zen Buddhists, Theosophists, nature-lovers, and New Agers. Many have hyphenated identities, such as eco-spiritualists or vegetarian-Unitarians.

[13] This group bears the deepest wounds from their past religious experiences in organized religions. They also have the most impermanent religious identity. Half of these spiritual questers have switched religions or spiritual groups twice or more, making their subculture the standard-bearer in the new spiritual marketplace for the growing Boomer sense of fluidity in religious identity.

[14] Roof's final two subcultures share a strong reactivity to the forces of religious and spiritual change in the nation and world, and stand on the fringe of the quest culture. Dogmatists are fundamentalists and neo-traditionalists. Roof maintains that their narratives demonstrate a deeper concern for the forms than the spirit of religion. Meanwhile, the Secularists, the most inarticulate about what they believe and the least religious, have talked themselves out of any meaningful language about faith and spirituality.

[15] Although Roof's work is based on qualitative research and more interested in description than quantification, the author suggests the Dogmatists and Secularists comprise less than 30% of the Boomer culture. The media perception of a Boomer "culture war" is created from this thin slice of the generation's spiritual preferences. One of the goals of this latest book by Roof is to dispel this myth and substitute the primary metaphor of "culture war" for this generation's religiosity with "quest culture," which more accurately reflects the majority of these spiritual pilgrims.

[16] Understanding the "quest culture" of the Baby Boomers is critically important, because this generation matured during the nation's retreat from a close connection between religious faith and civic feeling and obligation, and their attitudes will shape whatever new

relationships the might emerge between religion and public life. Although many elements of growing estrangement preceded the 1940s, the beginning cultural effects of a higher and thicker wall between church-state occurred in the formative years of the children born after World War II. This is most clearly seen in the relationship of religion and public education. In the 1948 case of *McCollum v. Board of Education*, youths were denied guaranteed "release time" from school for religious education. The 1962 *Engle v. Vitale* case prohibited prayer in school, and the following year Bible reading was outlawed in *Abington School District v. Schempp*. The Boomers grew up as the nation moved away from the state-supported generalized Protestantism that so thoroughly undergirded America's peculiar brand of civil religion.

[17] The Dogmatists predict social, moral and political chaos if the nation's present course is not abated. The Secularists find the questions unworthy of serious attention. On the other hand, the Born Agains, Mainstream Believers and Metaphysical Believers and Seekers are trying to find their way to a new form of spiritual authenticity in this emerging spiritual marketplace, and Wade Roof finds a reserved hope in their questing nature. In these three subcultures he sees positive signs that the spiritual sensitivities of Baby Boomer's will strengthen American civic life.

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