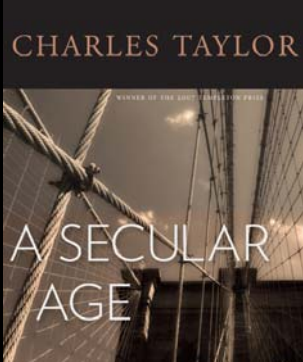


## The Secular

- Secularity cf. Secularization cf. Secularism
- Ordering society on principles taken from this world
- Separation of religion and state
- Room for all belief
- The fading of the orthodox theory of secularization
- A change in belief rather than simple unbelief



CHARLES TAYLOR  
WINNER OF THE 2007 JEREMY BENTHAM PRIZE  
A SECULAR AGE

“Why is it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?”

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## Spiritual Boom or Bust?

**Boom:**

**Gary Bouma** *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

**David Tacey** *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* (Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004)

**Bust:**

**Christian Smith & Melinda Denton**  
*Soul Searching: the Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

**Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton, and Ruth Webber**  
*The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia* (Mulgrave: John Garratt Publishing, 2007)





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## Research – *Faith Amid Secularity*

- Religious identity
- 18-28 yr old (Gen Y)
- NZ Pakeha Catholics

### A Catholic Worldview

- Exploring YA's sense of :
  - Ecclesial faith
  - Sacramental imagination
  - Theology (faith & reason)
  - Community
- The sample included:
  - ⅓ active
  - ⅓ occasionally involved
  - ⅓ disconnected
  - rural/urban
  - male/female



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## Research – *Faith Amid Secularity*

### Findings:

- religious uncertainty
- unable to describe own tradition
- sense of God's presence
- Sacraments important...
  - ... but beyond 7 sacraments... everyday sacramentality?
- tension between faith & science
- comfortable with mystery
- salvation not understood
- wrongdoing understood
- importance of social justice
- gathering as community essential
- proud to be Catholic



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## Individualism

- Disenchanted society – the 'buffered self' and a decreasingly connected society
- Individual consumption & targeted marketing
- Technological full immersion
- Individual rights emphasised
- Resistance to authority and institutional commitment
- Moral Therapeutic Deism
- Age of Authenticity



Charles Taylor  
*A Secular Age*  
(Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2007)



CHARLES TAYLOR  
*A SECULAR AGE*

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## Moral Therapeutic Deism



Christian Smith  
*Soul Searching: the Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*  
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Melinda Denton

Default system of transcendent belief marked by:

- a God who simply expects us to be good / nice / fair;
- a life goal to be happy (and feel good about oneself);
- little need for God (unless problems arise);
- conviction that good people (like us) go to heaven;
- a God who distantly watches over us.

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## Age of Authenticity (Taylor)




- Powerful moral ideal lying behind apparent self-centredness
- Honest desire for the 'higher', the 'better'
- Being lost in a 'soft relativism'
- Mass expressive individualism



- Determination to pursue what is important to me
- Religious/spiritual expression reflects this


[Still](#) [Individualism](#) [Menu](#)

## Vicarious Religion



- 'Believing without belonging' – now rejected
- Vicariousness:
  - “The notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing.”
- Religion (faith) at a distance?

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Grace Davie  
Is Europe an  
Exceptional Case?  
*The Hedgehog*  
Review  
Spring & Summer  
(2006): 24-7.

## Seeking / Dwelling

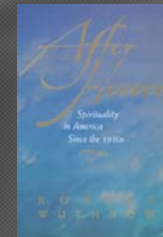
- Dweller – favours authority: security but restrictions
- Seeker – open-ended spiritual quest
- Not necessarily polar opposites



- Dweller voice is heard
- Seeker voice is absent
- Are most of us in the middle ground today? (Taylor)



Robert Wuthnow  
*After Heaven:  
Spirituality in  
America since the  
1950s*  
(Berkeley: University  
of California Press,  
1998).



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## Postponing the Ideal

- I am Catholic, and I do want to live it, but...
- 'Lord make me pure, but not yet...' ???  
- St Augustine (of Hippo) & Robbie Williams
- Life events / 'moments of fusion' ... beyond
- Transformation – admired in others
- But for me personally...

...not yet.



Charles Taylor  
*A Secular Age*  
(Cambridge,  
Massachusetts:  
Belknap Press,  
2007)



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## Faith and Young People *What can the Church do?*

- Facilitate the encounter with God.
- Foster each person's personal relationship with Jesus – God incarnate.
- Recover the theology of sacrament.
- Be a companion on the journey of life.
- Be optimistic toward secularity.
- Constructively critique contemporary secular society.

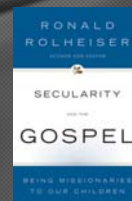
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## Faith and Young People *What can I do?*

- Be non-proselytising & non-combative.
- Walk with – supporting, guiding, cajoling.
- Remain focused on the poor, the vulnerable, the powerless.
- Incarnate a fuller maturity, a new inner-directedness & a wider inclusivity.
- Witness to fidelity & stability.
- Trust in God's Spirit – at work in our world!



Ronald Rolheiser  
*Secularity and the Gospel:  
Being Missionaries to  
Our Children*  
(New York:  
Crossroad, 2006)



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