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The changing face of Australia: From secular to post-secular identity

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Chapter 7. Religion and Spirituality

Religion remains an important phenomenon in Australian society, albeit one that continues to change and evolve. The following section will revisit a number of key themes that require discussion when approaching the post-secular and its relationship to religion. Some important questions here include whether religion is really on the decline, or whether its modes of expression are continuing to evolve. These are very important threads in the discussion as they indicate a reconsideration of the role and place of religion in contemporary times.

I propose four central points in this chapter:

1. Secular and spirituality are co-dependent terms and exist in mutual relationship.
2. The division between religion and spirituality is a direct result of the influence of the secular.
3. Post-secular spirituality blends the secular with sacred ideas and experiences forming a continually evolving phenomenon.
4. There is renewed engagement with religion.

Critical Reflections on Religion and Spirituality

REFLECTION

Religion and spirituality indicate the existence of a relationship between the subject – the inner self, to an authority/entity greater than the self. The secular may realign this relationship to a default external power i.e., the state, and allows this to become the substitute authority, possibly without the individual realising this has happened.

15/7/2011

‘As wealth rises, religiosity declines’ is one of the most conspicuous axioms of the secularisation thesis.⁶⁷⁵ Although often discussed in secular contexts, there was very little discussion of this hypothesis in the interviews. From this I can conclude that, although material wealth has some correlation with decline in religious affiliation, it is not seen as being a decisive factor. The correlation between wealth and religious practices is a complex intersection – one underpinned by the idea that more fervent religious belief is found amongst the poor and disadvantaged (although this is contradicted by evangelical Anglican affiliation, which is always proportionally higher in high socio-economic local government areas, and by prosperity theology associated with new churches, e.g., Hillsong). Sociologists have argued that the social benefits of religion take on greater importance the fewer resources and the less control people have over their own lives.⁶⁷⁶ This perception fails to acknowledge the way that believers who are more materially wealthy or advantaged, are influenced by their wealth to esteem certain values and participate in religious practices based on these values.

Norris and Inglehart state: ‘Religion becomes less central as people’s lives become less vulnerable to the constant threat of death, disease and misfortune’.⁶⁷⁷ Even though this sentiment appears straightforward, a more comprehensive understanding will draw in more factors than wealth to explain changes to religion. Taylor does this well by exploring other issues such as the rise of humanism and changes to society as a whole.

Not all countries conform neatly to the correlation between rising secularism and prosperity, with numerous counter-examples, including the rise in ‘megachurches’ in many areas of

⁶⁷⁴Merlini, ‘A Post-Secular World?’, (p. 126).

⁶⁷⁵ L. Witham, *Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2010). p. 140

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*.p. 69.

world, particularly Brazil and China.⁶⁷⁸ These are often viewed as promoting the ‘health and wealth’⁶⁷⁹ gospel and offer a sense of belonging to middle class and younger business and professional people. Described by Connell as ‘cathedrals of suburbia’ and ‘spiritual shopping malls’, these churches provide members with a sense of ‘security and expected benefits’.⁶⁸⁰ These contemporary forms of spirituality and religion appears to address a need that modern secular life cannot, while encouraging their members to enjoy material success. This truce between materialism and religion is an interesting commentary on the adaptability of religion in contemporary times. Aside from being very popular with young people, they personify the primacy of personal experience alongside social functions.

Lisa Keister further examines the indirect effect religiosity has on wealth accumulation, and the direct effect religion has on wealth ownership. This manifests in education, fertility and employment rates as it shapes values in regard to these important areas.⁶⁸¹ Her examination shows that the relationship between wealth and religion is not as one-sided as may be widely thought. Although religious affiliation remains strong among poorer populations, how religion shapes the lives of the more wealthy is equally important, as raises the question of why wealthy people still believe. This brings Keister to the conclusion that it ‘has become clear that the relationship between religion and wealth is very strong’, citing American Mormons and white Catholics as examples of those who are wealthier due to education and family influences.⁶⁸² For her, the intersection of wealth and religion continues to be an influential marker of the relationship to religion in American society. Even so, she calls for a more nuanced approach that incorporates differences between denominations and their worldviews.

⁶⁷⁸ Tom Phillips, 'China on Course to Become 'World's Most Christian Nation' within 15 Years', *The Telegraph*, April 19 2014.

⁶⁷⁹ J. Connell, 'Hillsong: A Megachurch in the Sydney Suburbs', *AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHER*, 36/3 (2005), 315-32.p. 324.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 328.

⁶⁸¹ Lisa Keister, 'Religion and Wealth: The Role of Religious Affiliation and Participation in Early Adult Asset Accumulation', *Social Forces*, 82/1 (2003). pp. 173-205

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

RELIGIOSITY IS DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS ERAS⁶⁸³

The discussions of religion during the interviews touched on the changes to religion that characterise it in this contemporary age. This is the theme of Charles Taylor’s *Secular Age*, with its focus on changes in the experience of religion. According to Taylor, how religion is experienced is crucial to current discussions. While notoriously difficult to define, the understanding is that religion is no longer about a natural inclination, inner drive or something supposedly innate, but has instead been aligned with choice – an intellectual and cognitive process and assent.

As stated previously, religion has acquired negative connotations of obedience, rigor, creed and dogma. What has become apparent to me throughout the interview and research process is the influence that post-secular thought has on this secular perspective. As discussed by Courtney Bender, the impact of modernity, sociology and secularism on these concepts needs reconsideration in order to reframe religion in the light of post-secular thought.⁶⁸⁴

In Table 6.2, below, I compare how religion is understood within secular and post-secular framings.

Table 7.1: Secular and post-secular framing of religion.

Secular	Post-secular
Religion and spirituality are inherently independent – I can be spiritual without being religious	Spirituality and religion are historically embedded ideas constantly produced and reproduced; any opposition is due to a set of historically influential ideas – these are not ideas that will always remain influential but are contingent on a range of factors
Religion is an historical institution formed by cultural and social movements. Spirituality is	Questioning of whether these experiences are individual or always mediated through broader

⁶⁸³Aleksandr Morozov, 'The Fourth Secularisation', *Religion, State and Society*, 36/1 (2008), 33 - 38.

⁶⁸⁴Courtney Bender, 'Things in Their Entanglements', in Philip Gorski et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 43-76.

primarily experiential and offers an individualised experience linked to emotional and sensory characteristics	collective traditions. Post-secular recognises that religion and spirituality remain interconnected despite the turn to the individual experience
Religion is located within ideological histories and narratives in which issues of marginalisation and alienation are inherent	Issues of belonging are recognised as important factors that transcend time; there is a movement beyond these to re-articulations that are inclusivist and pluralist

The spirituality revolution

In this section I will explore spirituality as a historical concept and discuss its relationship to religion and the secular. I will refer to the changes to spirituality in Australia and the implications of these changes in the light of post-secular understandings. In Chapter 4, I outlined the interview participant’s perspectives on spirituality. This included considerations of the contemporary changes to spirituality and its extrication from religion. Particularly significant was Gary Bouma’s remark that ‘the whole notion that religion and spirituality are different in the twenty-first century in some palpable way I will argue yes’. This difference is the topic of this section.

As religion has taken on significant negative connotations, spirituality has grown in favour. Spirituality has come to be viewed as a generic term that can be attached to denominational and non-denominational movements, as well as to objects and experiences outside traditional religious beliefs and practices. This paradigm shift in the way spirituality is understood has had significant ramifications for ministry, ritual and individual identity. David Tacey proposes that the decline in mainstream churches has meant the rise of atypical spiritual practices and beliefs.⁶⁸⁵ Even so, there are a number of commentators who note that there appears to be a blind spot in this shift, with little recognition that these spiritual practices actually emerged from mainstream religions, including Christian and pre-Christian traditions.

⁶⁸⁵Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.

The acknowledgment that spiritual experiences can be had outside mainstream churches is also something that major denominations need to grapple with. People are experiencing noteworthy movements of the spirit not mediated by these churches, and there needs to be more discussion about this. Regardless, spirituality in a contemporary context is most often associated with an inner life or journey, experiences outside the everyday and mundane, and awareness and/or search for the sacred.

At the time of writing this, I have been reflecting on the recent death of my sister. It was during the time of her final illness and death that my own spirituality, and that of my family, was expressed in distinctive ways in the light of the final weeks of my sister's life and her funeral. A number of things I had previously thought were important became insignificant as I faced the impending moment of her passing. There are few moments in life that provide such clarity of purpose. The spirituality expressed in those last few weeks, and in the more formalised rituals of death, was a unique blend of ancient, traditional, contemporary and secular spirituality. My sister had outlined her funeral arrangements and indicated the readings, songs and actions that were to take place. It happened as she requested, and alongside the external symbols of religion such as water, words, candles and incense, there was a thread of spirituality running through the ceremonies – which themselves reflected my sister's spirituality, a blend of Aboriginal, person-centred, peace-seeking, personal and relaxed styles. This was no surprise to those who knew her, and it was a comfortable and comforting presence for me throughout the whole day and the ensuing weeks.

This spirituality, expressed in contemporary ways, draws on points outlined by Courtney Bender, including:⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁶Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.'

- spirituality as a part of a religious tradition or institution (in my and my sister's case, the Catholic tradition),
- seeker spirituality (someone who has no ties to any institutional religion, but who is nevertheless searching for meaning and spirituality),⁶⁸⁷
- spirituality as aiding personal development, and
- spirituality as individual.

Each of these elements was present in my sister's spiritual journey at some point: her youth in the Catholic Church, her search for deeper spiritual understandings and belonging in spiritual movements as an adult, and the blend of these as her own individual spiritual expression during her final illness.

For my sister, her life had been a search for peace and a place where she could express herself and her individuality. For her, spirituality was a fluid journey that formed and reformed in response to life circumstances. Spirituality as a fluid journey, responsive to life's circumstances and individual need was a commonly remarked upon contemporary idea expressed in the interviews.

This spirituality has a historical genesis, with what is now seen as an independent concept previously being seen as a co-dependent. Religion and spirituality were, until recently, inextricably entwined. The circumstances that have separated them will be discussed here, along with the question of how to define spirituality. According to Bender, the 'porous' nature of the term has seen it historically influenced and variable depending on theological understandings and social change.⁶⁸⁸ These two concerns, defining and dividing, are the most

⁶⁸⁷Anke Bisschops, 'The New Spirituality and Religious Transformation in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 19/1 (06// 2015), 24-39.p. 25.

⁶⁸⁸Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.'

frequent discussion points in the literature on spirituality. At the heart of this discussion is the tension between religion as a communal experience and spirituality as an individual one.⁶⁸⁹

I argue here, as does van der Veer, that spirituality in the modern, individualised, subjective sense has been produced simultaneously with the secular.⁶⁹⁰ As such, it is a relatively recent phenomenon tied to contemporary understandings of the secular as spaces emptied of God and the sacred. These changes in the concept of spirituality are matched by changes in the concept of religion. As discussed previously, conceptions of religion have changed significantly since the Enlightenment. There has been a gradual erosion of public authority, trust and belief in truth, with an accompanying drive towards private faith, the rise of science, rationalism and individualism in countries such as Australia. Religion needed to be demarcated in order for new philosophies and worldviews to emerge that did not encompass religious truth or doctrine,⁶⁹¹ yet these new ideas may be still be suggestive of spirituality in some way. In addition, religion was separated from the state to ensure the development of the secular worldview as a viable option in statecraft.⁶⁹² In more recent years, religion has become associated with violence, producing an even more problematic understanding. These circumstances have combined to assist in the rise of spirituality and the secular. In the next section, I consider a number of points raised in the interviews around spirituality.

SPIRITUALITY AS INDIVIDUALISED AND COMMODIFIED

Spirituality is a way people deal with personal and life challenges. Scott Stephens discussed how spirituality has become a therapeutic response to godlessness. The range of spiritual practices, or practices labelled as spiritual, continues to grow. As noted by Tracy Rowland,

⁶⁸⁹ Giordan and Pace, *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World* / Edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace. pp. 2–3.

⁶⁹⁰ Van Der Veer, 'Spirituality in Modern Society'. p. 1097–98.

⁶⁹¹ Jeremy R. Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality : The Silent Takeover of Religion* / Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (London : Routledge, 2005).

1st ed., 2005). pp. 13–14.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

these are often pseudo-spiritual, even pseudo-sacramental, practices designed to communicate deeper meaning and experience to individuals.

Reflecting some aspects of Eastern religions, and embraced by New Age movements, self-knowledge and a search for the true self are often viewed as a key part of the spiritual journey of an individual. Scott Stephens, echoing Žižek, remarked in the interviews that spirituality is nurtured in order to hold on to the truest and most authentic self, and then to divorce the true and authentic self from what one does. This split between who one is and what one does allows individuals to function in a capitalist society that they feel powerless in.

Both Cusack and Stephens expressed concern over the turn towards the commodification of spiritual experiences. Žižek's remark that capitalism relies on spirituality as a release valve is intriguing.

The target on which we should focus, therefore, is the very ideology which is proposed as a potential solution... Western Buddhism, this pop-cultural phenomenon preaching inner distance and indifference towards the frantic pace of market competition, is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in capitalist dynamics while retaining the appearance of mental sanity – in short, the paradigmatic ideology of late capitalism.⁶⁹³

Although Žižek specifically refers to western Buddhism here, the same thought could be applied to a range of spiritual practices. As discussed by Stephens, this is echoed in the writings of Bonhoeffer on cheap grace: 'Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate'.⁶⁹⁴ For Tacey, Žižek and Bonhoeffer, the sacred has come to exist outside mainstream belief, doctrine and religious systems, in order for human beings to function within an ideology and structural worldview that is, to varying

⁶⁹³Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press, 2003).p. 26.

⁶⁹⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship / Dietrich Bonhoeffer; [Translated from the German...By R. H. Fuller]* (London : SCM Press, 1959. Revised and unabridged edition., 1959). pp. 44–45.

degrees, religiously illiterate. It also contributes to an oppositional paradigm in which religion becomes negatively charged, unable to adopt to the changing world around it.

SPIRITUALITY IS THE 'AUTHENTIC' FORM OF FAITH EXPERIENCE⁶⁹⁵

That spirituality, in its current cultural and historical mode, is the authentic form of faith experience is a prevalent and influential idea. David Tacey discusses the characteristics of this experience by stating it is 'democratic and non-hierarchical... the new paradigm is ruled by a sibling model'.⁶⁹⁶ Although this is an attractive way of describing spirituality, the fact that spirituality has strong roots in both traditional and, more recently, emerging forms of religion goes unacknowledged. The forms of spirituality most often referred to in the interviews as exemplars of contemporary experience included yoga, meditation, communing with nature and similar experiences.

This 'new' spirituality is imbued with some very 'old' strands of spirituality that have existed for millennia, including cosmology, nature and inwardness and the connection between these. That these have now been rediscovered and labelled as authentic suggests a misinterpretation of the current cultural climate and its relationship to historical changes that have always existed. These changes to spirituality were discussed in the interviews, as explored in Chapter 4; however, the overriding feature of these discussions was concern over these changes and whether they are of a delusory nature that is specific to western spirituality.

For Houtman and Aupers, this spirituality emerged during the 1960s and is often referred to as 'New Age', which they understand as being 'an incoherent collection of ideas and practices'.⁶⁹⁷ This is related to the array of practices and beliefs that circulate around the term New Age, which has been identified in sociological literature as fostered by a 'pick and mix'

⁶⁹⁵Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.pp. 38–39.

⁶⁹⁶Ibid. p.38.

⁶⁹⁷Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers, 'The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46/3 (2007), 305-20.p. 306.

attitude. The fragmented nature of these beliefs and practices has led many to assume the 'New Age' is an insignificant movement, even though it has emerged from a historical era. There is a tendency to relegate all eclectic spirituality to the single category of New Age and to thereby suggest the ephemeral nature of their existence. What has been missed here is that such eclectic spirituality is drawn from a long faith tradition that looks to the self and inwardness as the path to the truth of the real self. This, then, has influenced the diversity of this tradition in its contemporary forms.

The claim then made regarding spirituality is that, under the influence of the secular (including individualisation, detraditionalisation and differentiation), spirituality has become ever-more associated with the individual. It exists outside traditional religious boundaries and is viewed as a discrete phenomenon fostering a relationship between religion and the self that has taken on previously uncharted dimensions.

WE ARE IN AN AGE OF 'SECULAR SPIRITUALITY'⁶⁹⁸

It is also significant that, alongside the changes to spirituality commonly grouped as New Age, there is a drive to understand an ever-broader range of practices as spiritual, ranging from national celebrations and memorials to sporting events and walks in national parks and other outdoor activities. This broadening of denotation was part of the discussions in the interviews. There was a generally negative view of the relabelling of secular activities as sacred and the resulting changes to the definition of spirituality. The relocation of the sacred was cause for concern, as this meant that the sacred has become an entirely subjective experience mediated by the individual and entirely removed from the traditions from which it emerged. Of deeper concern is the sacred being mediated by national interests, political agendas and economic interests. Concerns were expressed about the commodification of

⁶⁹⁸Du Toit, 'Secular Spirituality Versus Secular Dualism: Towards Postsecular Holism as Model for a Natural Theology', (p. 1253.

religious and sacred experiences and what the buying of sacred experiences leads to in terms of the future of religion. These will continue to be the subject of ongoing speculation and research.

The imprecision that sits at the heart of these discussions – the relationship between secular, spiritual and the relocation of the sacred – is, Tacey suggests, a problem of unclear boundaries. He asks, ‘How secular are secular people? How religious are church-going people? How spiritual are the religious organisations? Almost everything is uncertain, difficult, complex’.⁶⁹⁹ However, this uncertainty is characteristic of any time in history, so I do not see this questioning as offering any enlightening way of thinking about this topic. That these questions are being asked more frequently, however, is significant, as it suggests the space between the secular and religion is occupied by spirituality.⁷⁰⁰ Even if this is a very tenuous space, it is worth considering that it continues to press its influence both towards secular and towards religion. This is depicted in Figure 5.

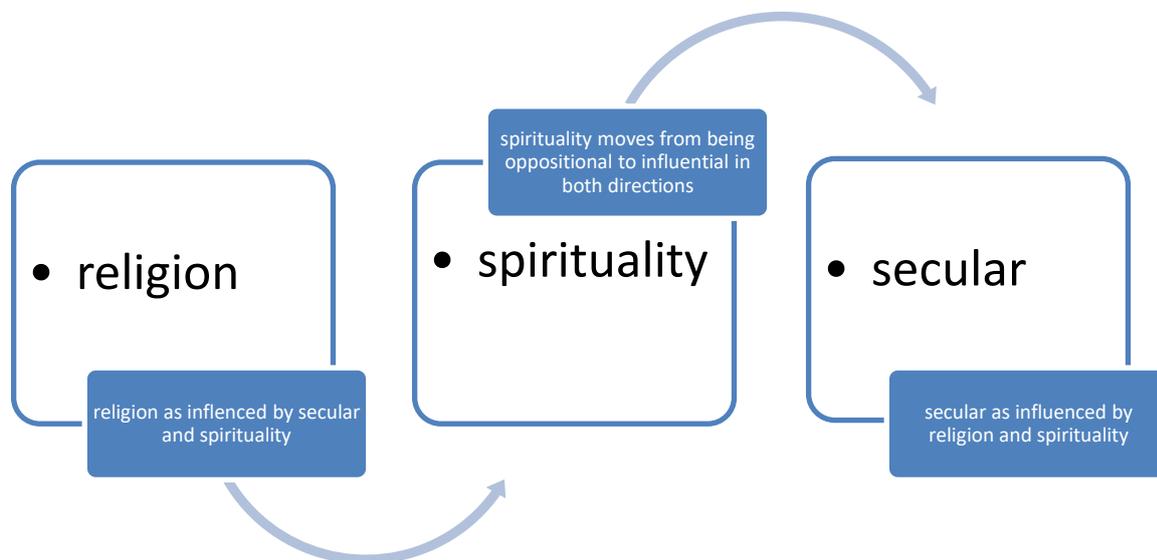


Figure 6: The space between religion and the secular.

⁶⁹⁹Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality.*, p. 122.

⁷⁰⁰ Gorski, Kim, and Torpey, *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society.* p. 7.

Spirituality and youth

The spirituality of youth in Australia needs to be raised in any discussion of the secular and post-secular, as it gives an indication of the future direction of these phenomena. Recent studies have shed light on important aspects of spirituality in Australian youth; these include the 2004–05 ‘The Spirit of Generation Y’ project.⁷⁰¹ In 2015, Tacey referred to young people as ‘apparently secular’ in a conference lecture.⁷⁰² This is a very intriguing perspective to me, as it calls for a rethink and renegotiation on of my ideas about young people – for example, that young people are individualistic, narcissistic and apathetic when it comes to religion and spirituality. For Tacey, this is simply not the case; in his experience, young people are open to seeking understanding of the interior life and a greater purpose. Here, it appears, there is a pairing of the secular with the spiritual as the drive for the former leads to a renewed interest in the latter.

In 1993, Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter outlined the characteristics of youth spirituality they viewed as differing from older generations. They concluded of the younger generation that:⁷⁰³

- they are at a high-water mark of secularisation,
- they tend to forge meaning and purpose in ways that are different from those used by older generations; the focus of their spirituality is different,
- they relate to traditions and traditional religion in different ways, and
- they have a different approach to understanding and forming identity – and religious identity in particular.

Fast-forward 13 years to 2006, and nine prominent elements of youth spirituality are identified by Crawford and Rossiter, as summarised below.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰¹ See Mason, Michael Christopher & Singleton, Andrew Tintin, 1970- & Webber, Ruth, 1944- (2007). *The spirit of Generation Y : young people's spirituality in a changing Australia* (1st ed). John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, Vic

⁷⁰² *Youth Spirituality: The Call to Interiority* (2015) (The World Community for Christian Meditation).

⁷⁰³ Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, 'The Spirituality of Today's Young People: Implications for Religious Education in Church-Related Schools', *Religious Education Journal of Australia*, 9/2 (1993), 1-8.p. 2.

1. Ideals – guidance in life management.
2. Varied sources of spirituality– family, friends, secular and religious movements, other religions, celebrities and popular culture.
3. Being part of a community of faith – the need to feel accepted and comfortable.
4. Group membership – social and friendship groups are a large influence.
5. The prolongation of adolescence – a range of lifestyle options are available to them which they can try out.
6. Cultural plurality – they are exposed to an ever-increasing range of cultural belief systems and behaviours.
7. Social and political concerns – wary of political, corporate and large institutions.
8. Environmental concerns –environmentally savvy but at the same time consumerist.
9. Anxiety about a violent society – growing up with the backdrop of terrorism, there is diminished positive valuing of some belief systems.

These characteristics are significant in that they link in with a number of post-secular understandings of spirituality discussed in the sections above. They demonstrate that youth in Australia may contribute to a growing post-secular presence as they continue to explore the issues and experiences they see as important. Also important is that very little reference to church, doctrine and gospel values is made in either of the above lists. It appears, then, that the secular project has been successful in terms of youth culture; there is still a need to connect to and experience spirituality, but this takes place within secular frameworks. Many of the nine elements listed above speak to an important consideration of youth spirituality – that of spirituality as relational.

⁷⁰⁴Graham Rossiter, 'Some Perspectives on Contemporary Youth Spirituality : A 'Need to Know' for Church School Religious Education', *ibid.*27/1 (2011).

SPIRITUALITY AS RELATIONAL

Although Tacey asserts there is a ‘phoney wall between religion and spirituality’,⁷⁰⁵ for youth in Australia spirituality remains a positive expression, while religion is tied to the negative. Spirituality continues to gain currency in a range of circles, including education, health and wellbeing, while religion remains positioned in the opposing negative perspective.⁷⁰⁶ Jacqueline Hodder has categorised youth spirituality as falling within one of two expressions, New Age or Evangelical. For her, New Age denotes an individualistic approach, while Evangelical is community- and belonging-centred.⁷⁰⁷ The polar opposition of these categories is notable, as it points to different trajectories with a similar goal – that of finding meaning through relationship. Also ironic here is that, according to Hodder’s research, young people understand spirituality in relational terms and, in both the above categories, saw this as being the primary result.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed a number of key factors underpinning religion and spirituality in Australia. Religion and spirituality have changed in Australia in significant ways. Although mainstream religious affiliation has changed, this does not necessarily indicate a change in religiosity in Australia. Similarly to Bouma Mackay notes a decline in affiliation with mainstream religion has seen a concomitant rise in spiritual affiliations and practices with less restrictions and institutional governance desired by participants.⁷⁰⁸ A movement away from mainstream belief systems to an eclectic range of beliefs and practices is evident. However, also notable are the movements and changes within and between mainstream religions. These movements, although less apparent, indicate the shifting grounds on which

⁷⁰⁵World Community for Christian Meditation, *Youth Spirituality: The Call to Interiority*

⁷⁰⁶Jacqueline Hodder, 'Spirituality and Well-Being: 'New Age' and 'Evangelical' Spiritual Expressions among Young People and Their Implications for Well-Being', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 14/3 (08// 2009), 197-212. pp. 199–200.

⁷⁰⁷Ibid. pp. 197–98.

⁷⁰⁸ Hugh Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, (Macmillan Publishers, Australia, 2016)

understandings are based in Australia. The following chapter looks at how these are linked to understandings of the post-secular.

REFLECTION SUMMARY: THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

- Secularisation has had religious effects and these effects are different to previous eras.
- Religion prior to the pre-modern era was largely a unified phenomenon that incorporated spiritual and devotional practices that regulated the sacred for believers.
- The commodification of spirituality and spiritual experiences marks this particular time in history. Spirituality and spiritual experiences can be bought and sold, offering the individual a therapeutic balm against the pressures of this age.
- The new religious landscape created by the influence of secularisation and the relationship of the secular to religion has had two effects.
- First, spirituality and religion have been reconstructed to enable them to exist separately. Spirituality has taken on multiple and individualised meanings while religion has lost meaning and has been recast into a negative discourse.
- Second, individuals have become subject to these changes and now enter a relationship with religion and/or spirituality based on a redefining of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular.