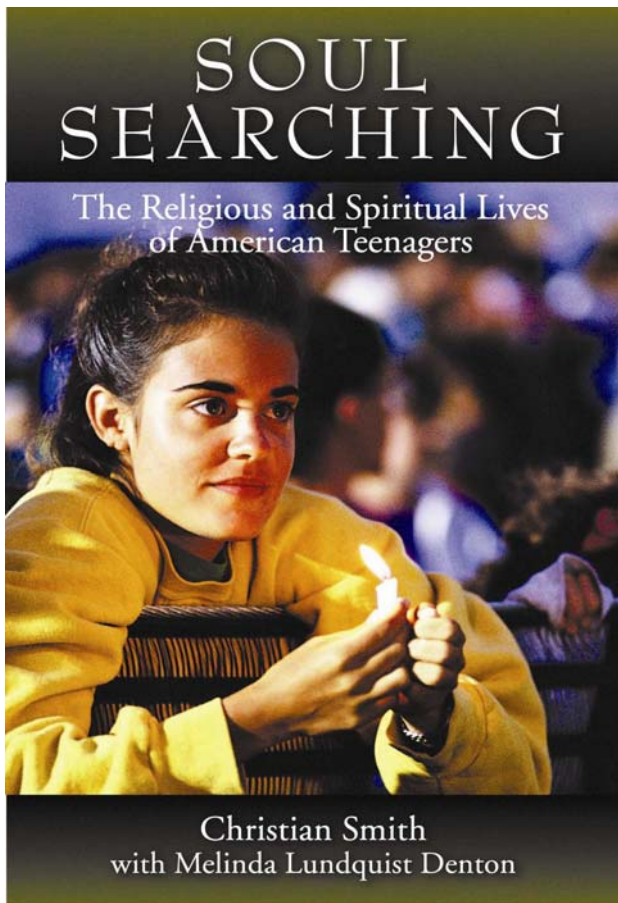


Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers
by Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton
Oxford University Press

The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) has published its first major findings in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, by Oxford University Press. To order, please visit www.oup.com/us/soulsearching or call 1-800-451-7556. The cost is \$25.00.



Soul Searching vividly portrays complexity and paradox in the story of contemporary teenage religion. Though widely practiced and positively valued by teens, faith is also de-prioritized and very poorly understood by them. Nonetheless, religion remains a significant force in shaping their lives.

More broadly, *Soul Searching* describes what appears to be a major transformation of faith in the U.S., away from the substance of historical religious traditions and toward a new and quite different faith the book describes as “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”

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Visit www.oup.com/us/soulsearching
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Following is a detailed description of *Soul Searching* along with book reviews from the Oxford University Press website.

Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers,
Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist
Denton (cloth, 340 pages Jan 2005)



Description

In most discussions and analyses of American teenage life, one major topic is curiously overlooked--religion. Yet most American teens say that religious faith is important in their lives. What is going on in the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers? What do they actually believe? What religious practices do they engage in? Do they expect to remain loyal to the faith of their parents? Or are they abandoning traditional religious institutions in search of a new, more "authentic" spirituality?

Answering these and many other questions, *Soul Searching* tells the definitive story of the religious and spiritual lives of contemporary American teenagers. It reports the findings of The National Study of Youth and Religion, the largest and most detailed such study ever undertaken. Based on a nationwide telephone survey of teens and their parents, as well as in-depth face-to-face interviews with more than 250 of the survey respondents, *Soul Searching* shows that religion is indeed a significant factor in the lives of many American teenagers. Chock full of carefully interpreted interview data and solid survey statistics, *Soul Searching* reveals many surprising findings. For example, the authors find that teenagers are far more influenced by the religious beliefs and practices of their parents and other adults than is commonly thought. They challenge the conventional wisdom that many teens today are "spiritual seekers." And they show that greater teenage religious involvement is significantly associated with more positive adolescent life outcomes.

Soul Searching reveals the complexity of contemporary teenage religious life, showing that religion is widely practiced and positively valued by teens, but also de-prioritized and very poorly understood by them, yet significant nonetheless in shaping their lives. More broadly, *Soul Searching* describes what appears to be a major transformation of faith in the U.S., away from the substance of

historical religious traditions and toward a new and quite different faith the authors call "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."

Reviews

"This book is a landmark study of the religious attitudes and practices of American teenagers. While the study demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between religious commitment and positive social behavior, there are also disturbing trends related to this theologically illiterate generation of teens who primarily think of God as their private butler. The authors offer a number of concrete suggestions in a concluding postscript that will be of value to youth workers and religious communities. Drawing on a national survey of teens and their significant caregivers, as well as several hundred in-depth interviews, this book is the most comprehensive study of teenage religiosity that has ever been done." --Donald E. Miller, author of *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*

"*Soul Searching* is a bombshell, and one that is long overdue. It convincingly demonstrates that many of our assumptions about youth and religion in the U.S. are well off the mark. Instead of finding hostility toward religion, we meet young people from every corner of the culture who echo their parents' religiosity to an astonishing degree—but this, as it turns out, is hardly a formula for vibrant faith. *Soul Searching* puts American religious communities on notice: if religion matters, then we had better stop 'exposing' young people to faith and start *teaching* it to them. Anyone who lives or works with teenagers simply must read this book. You won't be able to sit still after you do." --Kenda Creasy Dean, Princeton Theological Seminary and author of *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*

"This is an extremely important book. In presenting the results from the most ambitious national study ever conducted among American teenagers about their religious and spiritual lives, it sheds new light from start to finish. I highly recommend it." --Robert Wuthnow, author of *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*

Product Details

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<http://www.oup.com/us/soulsearching>