

WESTERN SPIRITUALITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHT INTO SMALL PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

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ABSTRACT

In a time of increasing secularization where one would think that religion comes far behind in an individual's priorities, scholars like Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Penny Edgell and others have shown how adaptive techniques, both from churches and from people, are used to reach the still existing demand for spiritual satisfaction. Along new ways of experiencing spirituality – the New Age movement – Protestant forms of Christian religion have been set in the modern environment adapted to the social paradigm of individualism, as with less stricter rules and more focused on the individual. An organizational paradigm shift that changes the locus of focus from material resources to human resources.

One objective of this paper is to verify in a practical way, through observation and in depth interviews, Durkheim's theory of religion, where religion is seen as a process of idealization that allows the transfiguration of the society in something divine. The second objective is to describe how a church employs modern methods and instruments of a consumerist society for the promotion of its ideology and to maintain a high degree of customer satisfaction. The article is based on a research I conducted in 2012, in Bergen op Zoom, Brabant province, during my one year stay in The Netherlands.

Key words: Secularization, religion, spiritual, satisfaction, consumerist society, organizational.

We shall not cease from exploring,
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.'
(T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, poem, 1942)

MOTIVATION

In 2012 I had the opportunity to work as a volunteer in a Dutch Christian organization for one year. Connected with protestant churches of different denominations, and, as for myself, coming from an orthodox background,

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