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British Gods: Religion in Modern Britain

Steve Bruce

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Spiritualism, Spirituality, and Social Class

Steve Bruce

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Although Victorian spiritualism and contemporary spirituality share some common themes, they differ in important respects that reflect their very different social class bases: the former was strongest in the working-class towns of the industrial English Midlands and the North, while the latter is almost exclusively a middle-class (and female) movement. The popularity of both movements is assessed, and data on the geographical distribution of the charismatic movement is added to make an important point about the effects of individualism and consumerism on religion. The general point is made that the contrasting balance of fatalism and personal autonomy in these variations of the dominant religion resonates with the underlying realities of different social class position.

Keywords: Spiritualism, contemporary spirituality, New Age, social class, fatalism, autonomy

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