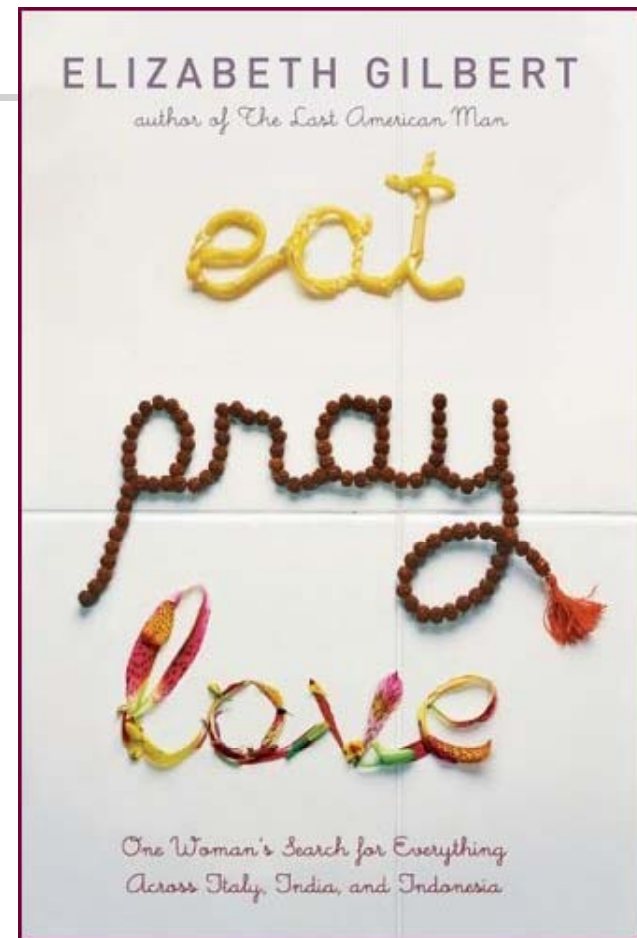
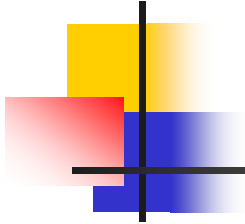




Christ, the Mystery of God

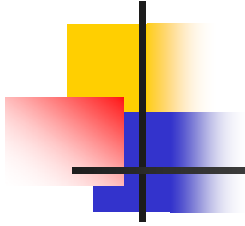
Colossians 2:1-7





The Colossian Heresy?

- **Early form of gnosticism?**
- **Emphasis on mystery and mysticism?**
- **Fascination with angels and demons?**
- **Some kind of asceticism?**
- **Jewish legalism?**
- **All of the above—syncretism!**



www.harding.edu/CWM



The North American Context

- ***Postmodernism***, with its view of meaning and truth, undermines authority of Scripture
- ***Individualism***, which helps fuel the negative reaction to institutionalized religion
- ***Skepticism***, reinvigorated by Hitchens, Dawkins, Harris and others



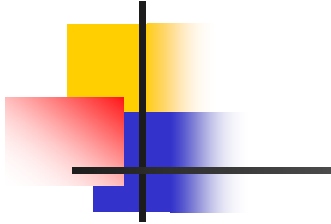
The New York Times

More Atheists Shout It From the Rooftops

By Laurie Goodstein

PUBLISHED: APRIL 26, 2009

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Two months after the local atheist organization here put up a billboard saying “Don’t Believe in God? You Are Not Alone,” the group’s 13 board members met in Laura and Alex Kasman’s living room to grapple with the fallout. Loretta Haskell, a board member of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry, is also a church musician. “I am not one of the humanists who feels that religion is a bad thing,” she said.



April 21, 2009
Harrin Hall
Room 225
7 PM
University of Central
Arkansas



Dr. Monte Cox
Dean of College of
Bible and Religion
at Harding
University



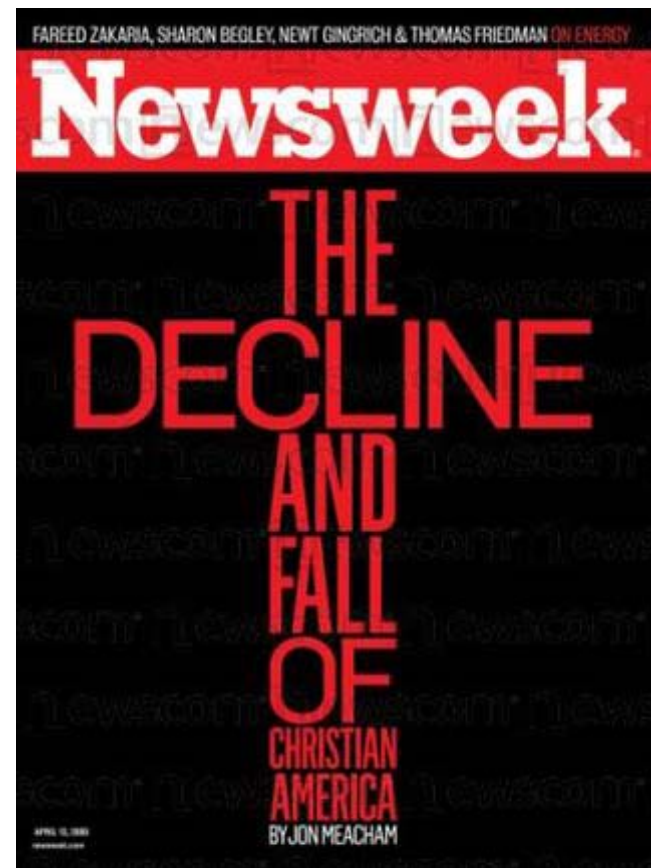
Dr. Clayton Crockett
Head of Religious
Studies Program at
University of Central
Arkansas

Religious Debate
Does God Belong in a Religion Class?



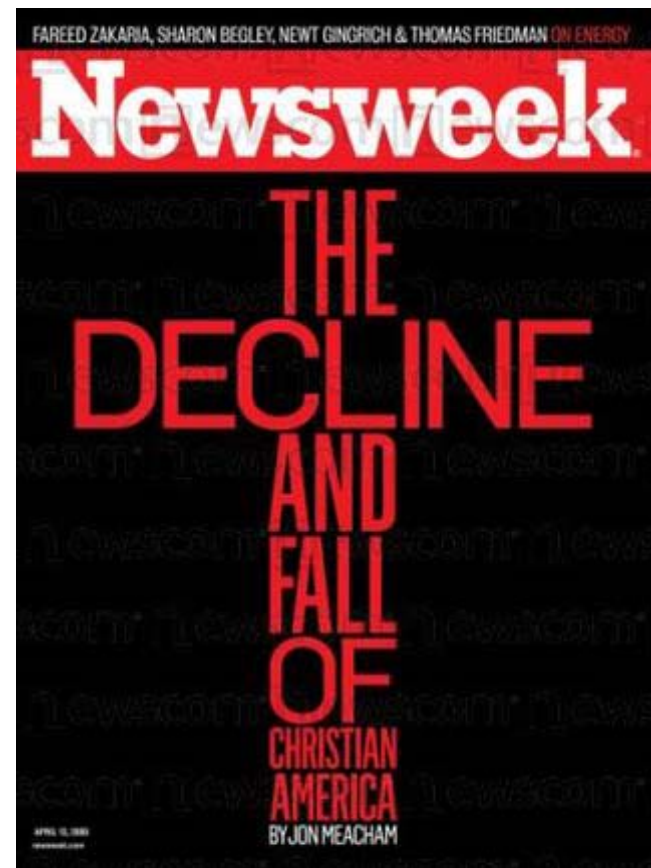
American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)

- **Self-identified “Christians” has dropped from 86% to 76% since 1990**



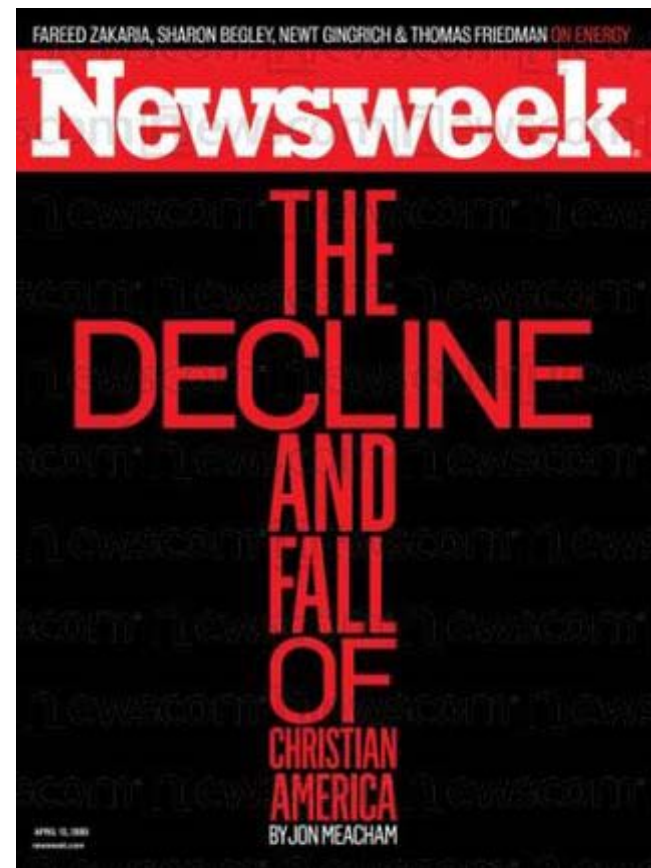
American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)

- Number of “unaffiliated” rose from 8% to 16% in recent years



American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)

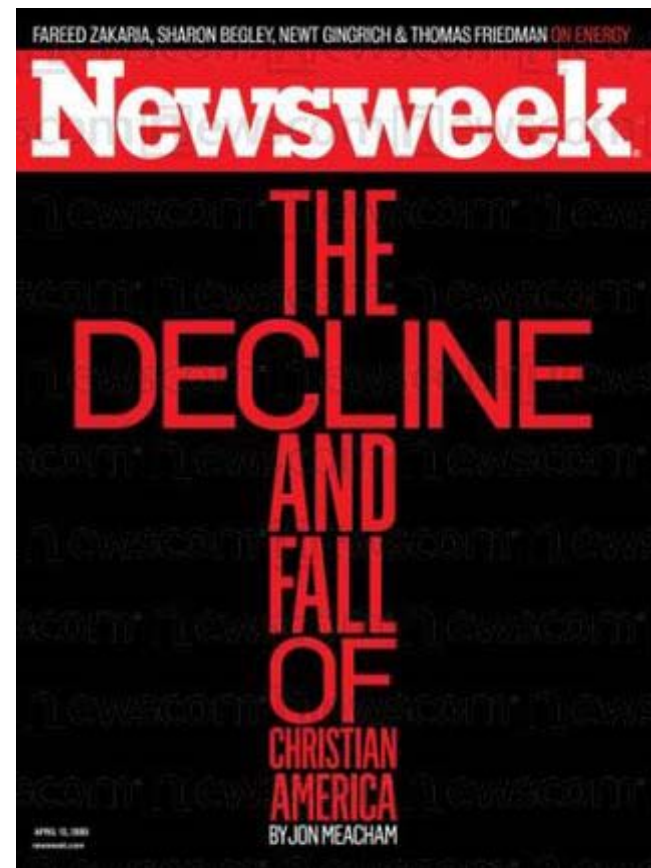
- **Self-identified atheists or agnostics rose from 1 million in 1990 to 3.6 million in 2009**





Newsweek Poll

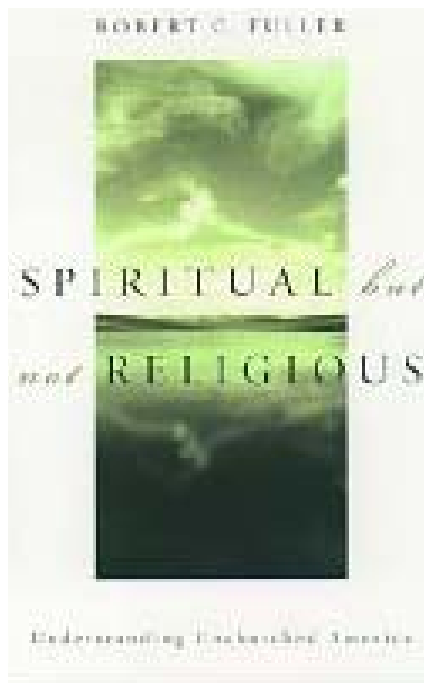
- **Self-identified “spiritual but not religious” rose from 24% in 2005 to 30% in 2009.**





“Spiritual But Not Religious”

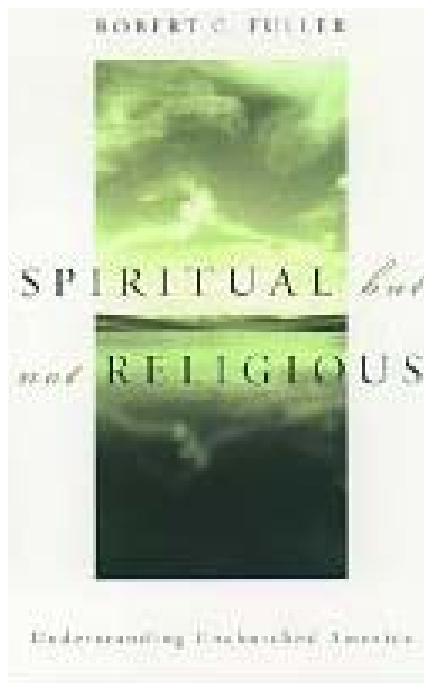
- **There is an experiential core common in all religions.**





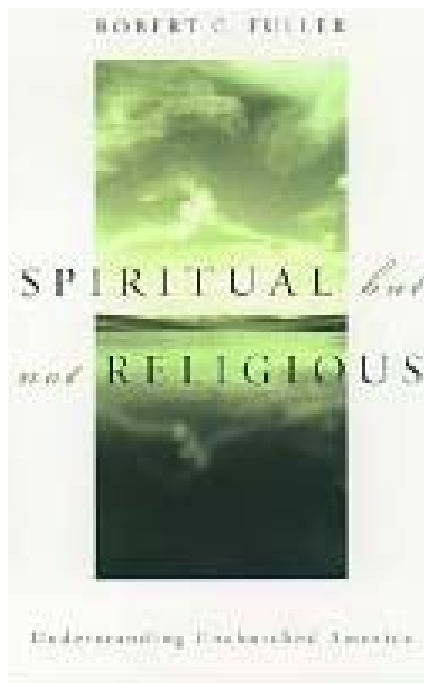
“Spiritual But Not Religious”

- That core is spiritual energy, described in personal terms by some and impersonal terms by others.





“Spiritual But Not Religious”

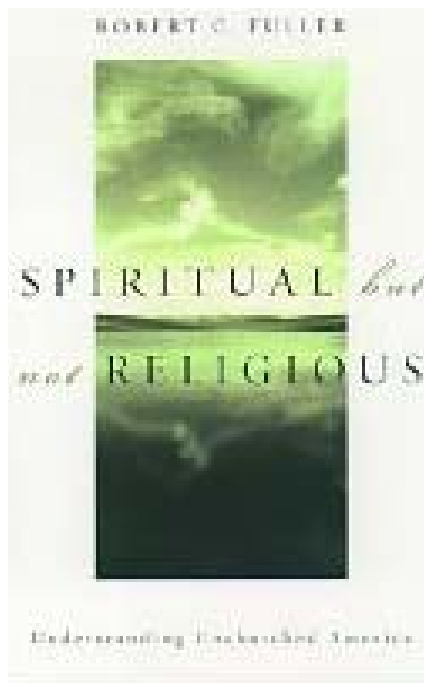


- **Human beings have unlimited spiritual potential which must be actualized to achieve success in life.**



“Spiritual But Not Religious”

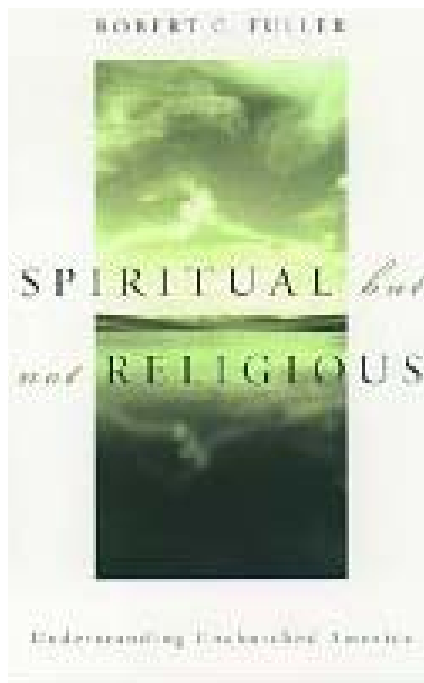
- **Experience, not truthfulness, is the proper test of any worldview.**





“Spiritual But Not Religious”

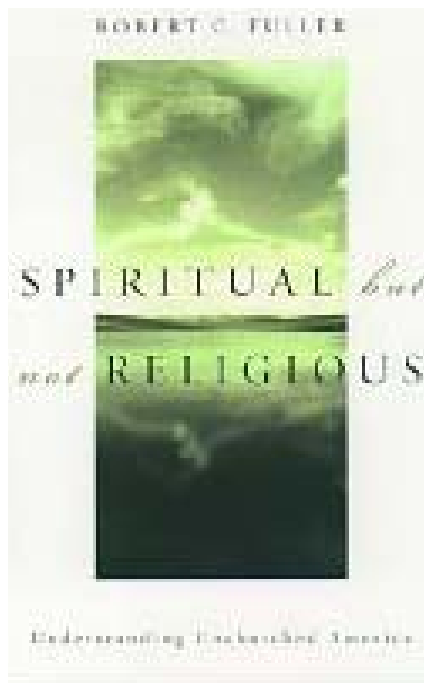
- **Spirituality has more to do with a general “openness” to multiple spiritual realities than a commitment to a particular set of creeds.**





“Spiritual But Not Religious”

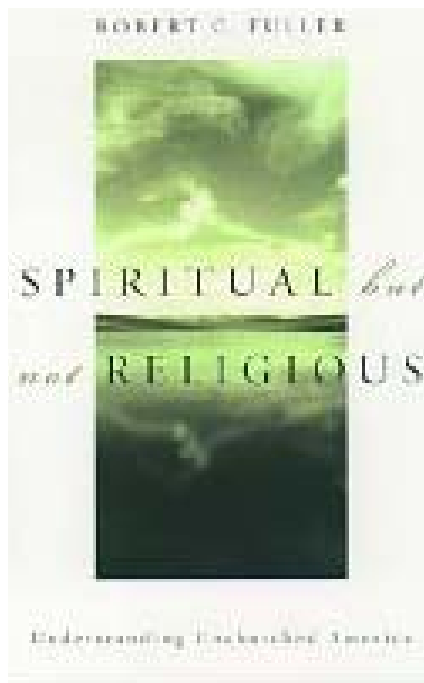
- Those who are “spiritual but not religious” are very suspicious about institutional religion.



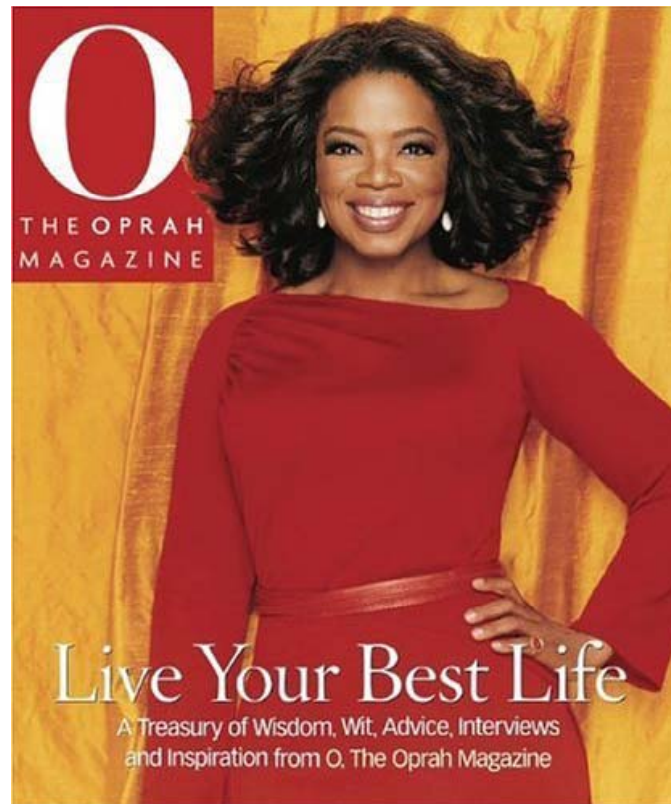


“Spiritual But Not Religious”

- **Jesus, if he is included at all, is seen as a highly evolved spiritual being who can aid us in our own spiritual evolution.**



"Spiritual But Not Religious"



“Spiritual But Not Religious”



“Zen Christianity”



“Spiritual But Not Religious”

“The trouble when people stop believing in God is not that they thereafter believe in nothing; it is that they thereafter believe in everything.”

G. K. Chesterton



Colossians 2:1-7

¹I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ²My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.



Colossians 2:1-7

⁴I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.



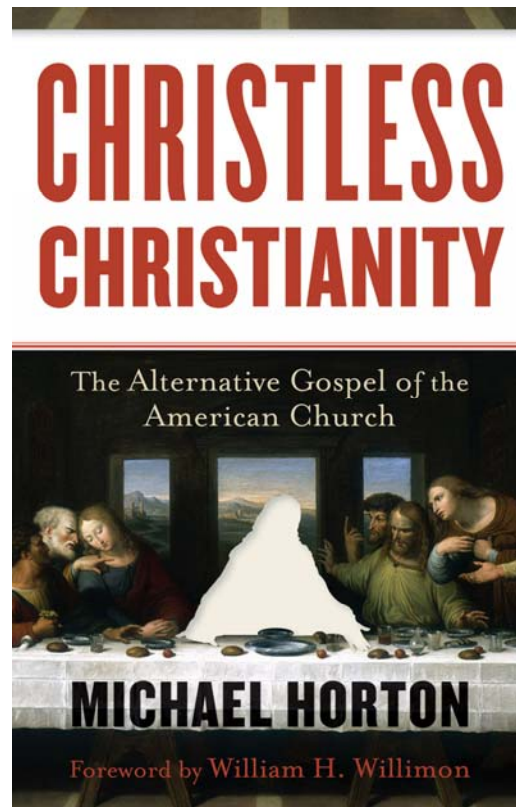
Colossians 2:1-7

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.



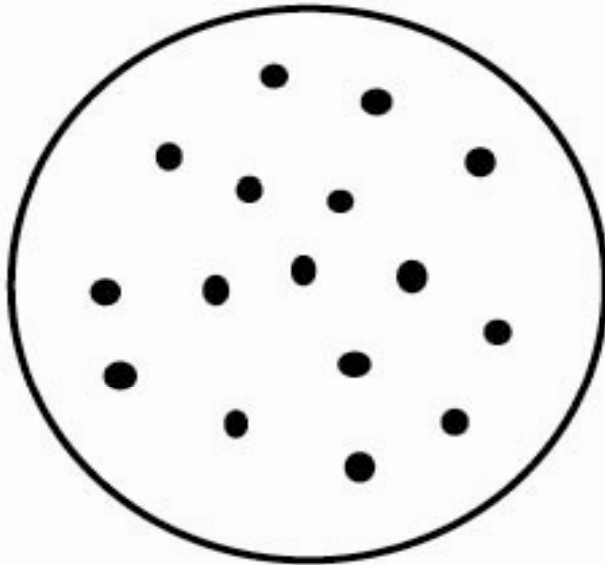
“Christless Christianity”?

**“Moralistic
Therapeutic
Deism”**

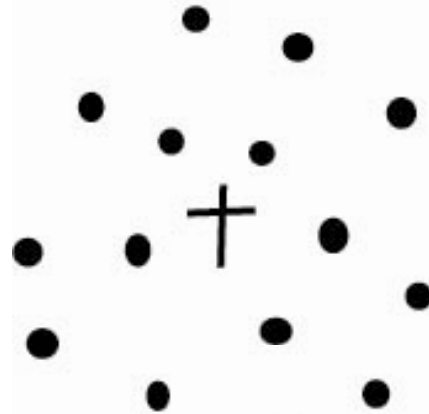


Identity Crisis or Re-Orientation to Center?

Bounded Set

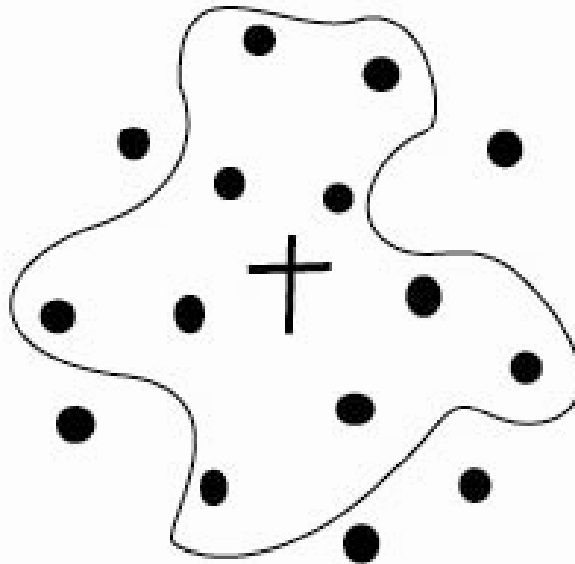


Centered Set



Identity Crisis or Re-Orientation to Center?

Fuzzy Centered Set





Colossians 2:1-7

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.