

## INSIDE

### Page two

America's "Fourth Great Awakening" at its end?

### Page four

Cyber dissidents weaken Scientology's control of its teaching and image

### Page eight

India's Sufis unite against terrorism

Religion Watch is a monthly newsletter monitoring trends in contemporary religion.

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**RELIGIOSCOPE**  
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## Growing Buddhist militancy across Asia?

From Burma to Tibet, from Thailand to Sri Lanka, more and more Buddhists are taking to the streets and supporting increasingly assertive political movements, in contrast to the usual image of Buddhism as "Asia's quietest religion," writes Christian Cary in *Newsweek* (March 1). The recent protests in Tibet and across the Tibetan diaspora that erupted from March 10 seem to confirm such an assessment: while the Chinese security agencies were "mentally prepared" for some form of Tibetan activism in the months preceding the Beijing Olympics, the widespread nature of this activism has been a matter of surprise, explains Indian intelligence expert B. Raman in an analysis published by the Chennai Centre for Chinese Studies (March 14).

Interviewed by *Newsweek*, Prof. Jim Holt (Bowdoin College) analyzes the rise of activist Buddhism as "an instance of the wider politicization of religion worldwide." But the magazine remarks that there are several forms of Buddhism, and that apolitical forms continue to flourish along with other expressions of that tradition. Other forms find a middle way, supporting specific issues while avoiding general politics. Despite the impression that there is unity among contemporary Buddhism, there is a difference between the "very local" and the "very national" dimensions of the religion, writes Thomas Borchert (University of Vermont) in *Re-*

*ligion Compass* (September), a new online academic journal. While international ties among Buddhist institutions have been growing, as evidenced by international Buddhist gatherings, the significance of different nation states in relation to Buddhism should not be overlooked: similarly to other religions, Buddhism is "marked by a tension between the transnational and the national."

The most well-known case of Buddhist social activism was the massive protests of Buddhist monks and laypeople in Myanmar (Burma) last fall. But since then, there has been a government clampdown on freedoms, as well as a paradoxical reassertion of military support for Buddhism, something that will make religious-based democratic reform difficult. The e-newsletter *Sightings* (February 14) notes that the same Buddhist monks doing the protesting against the military ironically need the government, even if it is a tyrannical one, to transmit and legitimate their teachings and practices, known as *Sasana*. These texts and rituals affirm the existence of a multi-tiered cosmos in which sentient beings are born, die and are reborn. The junta adheres to a kingship model whereby the lay

### Correction

The volume number of the January-February issue was wrong. It should have been Volume 23 instead of Volume 22.

government plays an active role in promoting the persistence of the Sasana (including funding lay and monastic meditation centers and the publication of Buddhist texts), even if a large number of monks dissent and protest against it. Jason Carbine writes that “monastic transmissions of the Sasana have been conducive to sustaining military rule in Myanmar, and hence to the violence the military perpetuates, precisely because those transmissions laud and often depend upon lay governments (even repressive juntas) that support them as representatives of the Sasana.”

Yet the demonstrations of a few months ago demonstrated that the military support for the Sasana can also contribute to the “strengthening of a powerful

enemy: the monkhood itself, motivated by compassion for the suffering of the Burmese people and by the perception that its way of life is under severe attack.” Carbine concludes that if these efforts to challenge and reject the role of the junta’s claim that it is a good sponsor of the Sasana (and its own legitimating roles in transmission of these teachings and practices) can be sustained by the dissident monks and their lay supporters, and can “help encourage massive defections from the armed forces, they may finally open the door to the change so many have sought.”

(*Sightings*, <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu>; *Religion Compass*, <http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/religion/>; Chennai Centre for Chinese Studies, <http://www.c3sindia.org>)

## America’s “Fourth Great Awakening” at its end?

America’s “Fourth Great Awakening,” marked by a period of evangelical revival and reform, is coming to an end, judging by the failure of such religious and moral change and programs to gain wide resonance in the U.S., writes Ronald Bailey in the libertarian magazine *Reason* (April). Bailey’s reference to the Fourth Great Awakening is taken from historian William McLoughlin and economist Robert Fogel, who both argue that there is a cyclic pattern of evangelical-led upsurges in religion and moral reform in the U.S. every century dating back to the first Great Awakening in the 1730s. Fogel posits that such Great Awakenings are large-

ly political phenomena in which “evangelical churches represent the leading edge of an ideological and political response to the accumulated technological, economic, and social changes that undermined the received culture.” Fogel argues that there are three phases to such events: revival, when cultural stresses cause religious revitalization movements; reform, when activists are able to convince government to take up moral improvement programs; and resistance, when religious fervor wanes and opposition builds against the forces of moral upliftment. Bailey sees the first stage of the Fourth Great Awakening in the growth of evangelical

churches and the decline of the mainline denominations in the 1970s.

The eventual adoption of the anti-abortion crusade by the evangelicals and the resulting emergence of the Christian right led to the reform stage of the Fourth Great Awakening, according to Bailey. In the 1980s, these moral crusades were bipartisan, including the attacks against rock music (led by Tipper Gore) and the later faith-based social programs to use the government to accelerate moral betterment. The high point of the reform period was the Bush administration’s abstinence-only sex education programs and his

foreign policy based on fighting evil and spreading democracy abroad. But now this period is coming to an end, argues Bailey, as best seen in the failure of a wide range of programs and movements appealing to morality to gain a foothold with the public. Thus, the opposition to gays and gay rights is fading, even if gay marriage is still unpopular (though efforts to ban gay marriage are

passing by much narrower margins than was the case a few years ago). The support for embryonic stem cell research, the division and weakness of the Christian right and the slackening off of support for Republican would-be presidential candidate Mike Huckabee all suggest a mood of resistance to evangelical moral reform. Bailey argues that another scenario may be that the Fourth

Great Awakening is “taking a left turn,” where “environmental revivalism may supplant the fundamentalist aspect of the Fourth Great Awakening. If so, we may be in for a period in which campaigns for green reform programs dominate American politics.” (*Reason*, 3415 S. Spulveda Blvd, Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA 90034-6064)

## Issue of divestment creates tensions between Protestant churches and Israel

Critical comments from several mainline Protestant churches regarding current policies in Israel and calls to divest from companies involved in some specific types of business with Israel are creating tensions between those religious groups and Jewish organizations, Nathan Guttman writes in the Jewish daily *Forward* (January 30). While relations with the Presbyterian Church are also strained, it is especially the United Methodist Church (UMC) that has recently come under fire. A recent extensive report produced by the Women's Division, General

Board of Global Ministries entitled *Israel–Palestine: A Mission Study for 2007–2008* has met with harsh criticism. The B'nai B'rith International claims that the report follows “a now familiar ... pattern of the UMC in maligning Israel” (*Jewish Tribune*, February 28). The re-emergence of a divestment campaign has added to those tensions. A resolution in the report recommends the UMC to call for divesting from a manufacturer supplying Israel with bulldozers used in building the separation barrier and demolishing Palestinian homes. The issue will probably be discussed

at the UMC April conference. Advocates of the resolution insist that it should not be represented as anti-Israel, but as a refusal to benefit from human rights violations: the report does not issue a general call to divest from Israel or companies just doing business with Israel, reports Robin Russell. (*United Methodist Reporter*, February 1). (*The Forward*, <http://www.forward.com>; *Jewish Tribune*, <http://www.jewishtribune.ca>; *United Methodist Reporter*, <http://www.umportal.org>)

## Romney's run seen as bellwether for anti-Mormonism

The failed candidacy of Mitt Romney both created greater visibility for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and served as a painful reminder to Mormons that they are still not fully accepted in American society. The *Wall Street Journal* (February 8) reports that the high rates of opposition to or wariness about a Mormon candidate found in the polls tended to surprise many observers and scholars.

Mormon sociologist Armand Mauss said, "I don't think that any of us had any idea how much anti-Mormon stuff was out there. The Romney campaign has given the church a wake-up call. There is the equivalent of anti-Semitism still out there." While other factors may have been at play in

Romney's withdrawal from the campaign trail, even secular analysts noted the anti-Mormon fervor. Both evangelical and Catholic leaders, such as Bill Keller and Fr Richard John Neuhaus, cited Romney's religion as a factor in why he should be defeated, while secularists, such as Christopher Hitchens, were unsparing in their ridicule of the Mormon faith.

Although Mormons have been taught not to defend their religion publicly, the last straw may have been commentator Lawrence O'Donnell's tirade against Mormon teachings and practices on the national McLaughlin Group show. That show has served as a "rallying cry" for Mormons to

engage in a "wave of activism," with the encouragement of the church leadership, to speak out and defend their faith. After M. Russell Ballard, one of the church's 12 apostles, urged the students at Brigham Young University to use the Internet and the new media to defend their faith, there was a rapid growth of websites—numbering over 150—established for that purpose. The church has also engaged in a public relations campaign and posted a series of videos on YouTube to counter anti-Mormon footage on that site. Mauss concludes that post-Romney, there will be a "wholesale consideration with how Mormons should deal with latent and overt anti-Mormon propaganda."

## Cyber dissidents weaken Scientology's control of its teachings and image

While Scientology has been more effective than most religions in controlling its teachings and official writings from online use and criticism, recent events suggest that the dynamics of the Internet have overtaken the controversial church. David Sarno, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* (March 3), reports that there have been a series of challenges to the Church of Scientology's "well-

established ability to tightly control its public image. The largest thorn in the church's side has been a group called Anonymous, a diffuse online coalition of skeptics, hackers, and activists, many of them young and Web-savvy." The loosely based movement has encouraged former Scientologists to come forward to relate their negative accounts of life in Scientology. Two women who are

close relatives of Scientology leaders recently launched their own website, ExScientologyKids.com, accusing the church of physical and mental abuse, while the popular Internet culture blog BoingBoing has issued the inflammatory allegation that the church's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, plagiarized his teachings from a 1934 German book called *Scientologie*.

More alarming to church officials have been the threats and “cyber-attacks” (including a bomb threat) against church personnel and websites. The Anonymous group has even taken its protests to the streets, as thousands of masked members picketed Scientology locations around the world. Much of the protests started in January

when a Tom Cruise video about the church was leaked on *You Tube* and then ridiculed and passed around in cyberspace. When the church charged copy-right infringement, one prominent web poster refused to take the video off his site, encouraging more people to defy the church. The new wave of activists soon

made common cause with long-time church critics and ex-member groups, writes Sarno. He adds that all of this ferment has given more courage to ex-members and even to journalists formerly concerned about church lawsuits against negative coverage.

## CURRENT RESEARCH

► **A widely publicized survey on religious affiliation by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life either shows a growing rate of disenchantment with organized faiths or greater religious pluralism and dynamism, depending on one’s own place on the religious spectrum.**

The survey made headlines around the world for its finding that more than one-quarter of American adults (28 percent) have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion or no religion at all. Including those who have changed from one Protestant denomination to another makes the switching rate jump to 44 percent. The percentage of those who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith (16.1 percent) is more than double the number of those who say they were not affiliated with any particular religion as children. Catholicism experienced the greatest net losses as a result of the affiliation changes (one in three or 31 percent said they were raised Catholic, while today fewer than one in four, or 24 percent, described themselves as Catholic).

Boston University religion professor Stephen Prothero writes in *USA Today.com* (March 14) that a host of religious groups can “read the tea leaves” to find either success or failure in the survey’s data (e.g. secular humanist and atheist groups have—as with previous studies—asserted that the figures indicate a growing secularist tide). But Prothero argues that the Pew study does not show the decline of religion as much as the growth of faiths built on the popular maxim of being “spiritual but not religious.” More interestingly, Prothero traces the rise of the “nones” (those with no religious affiliation) to a “decline in the stigma of being a religious free agent, and an increase in the stigma of being a church member.” The association between conservative politics and organized religion may have tended to convince liberals who might have described themselves as “Christians” to discard that affiliation. At the same time, scandals among the clergy and the decision by many young parents not to raise their children with any faith at all may have contributed to the growth of the nones. But Prothero also notes that 44 percent of the respondents did call themselves “evangelical” Christians, particularly those in non-denominational churches stressing

personal choice. Prothero concludes that “faith is becoming more political. But it is also becoming more personal at the same time.”

► **Astrological signs have no influence on the probability of marrying (and staying married to) someone of any other sign, even for believers in astrology, according to statistical research carried out by David Voas of the University of Manchester.** Writing in the *Skeptical Inquirer* (March/April), Voas notes that popular astrologists have regularly promoted the idea of “love signs,” where people are compatible with their partners by having the right combination of birthdays. Voas did a statistical breakdown of husbands and wives by day and month of birth from the 2001 Census of England and Wales, looking for evidence of any combinations of signs that could be found more or less often than would be expected to occur by chance. At first, the spousal star sign table showed a “very small but significant tendency for people to marry partners of the same sign.” After the breakdown of husbands’ and wives’ birthdays, Voas did find that the number of couples for whom the same birthday was recorded for husband and wife is 41 percent higher than expected (39,800 rather than 28,300).

But he argues that these resulted from “response error,” since it is not uncommon for the Census to be completed by one member of the household, who might mistakenly list their own birthday for that of their spouse or estimate the month of their spouse’s birthday. Even those who listed birthdays in the same month more often selected dates that were far apart enough to fall under different astrological signs. Voas found that even the belief in astrology had no apparent influence on partner choice. He concludes that “If enough people believed that signs matter and were prepared to act on those beliefs, then some combination would appear more often than expected even if they had no bearing on compatibility.” (*Skeptical Inquirer*, 3965 Rensch Rd, Amherst, NY 14228)

► **An Oxford University study confirms that there are a disproportionate number of engineers in Islamist groups up to the present day.** There has long been anecdotal information on the large number of applied science professionals in fundamentalist and militant Muslim groups. Through compiling information on the educational attainment of 178 members and participants in violent non-Western Islamist groups, sociologists Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog found that engineering was most popular field of study (78 out of the 178 studied engineering, compared with 14 cases in medicine, 12 in economics and business, and seven in natural sciences). Although Western-based Muslim extremists had low educational levels, engineering also showed up as the predominant profession. The researchers venture that there may be a universal “engineering mindset” that is predisposed toward the conserva-

tive and exacting approach of Islamism. But they also note that in countries where engineers don’t experience the “relative deprivation” of low occupational prestige and unemployment (such as Saudi Arabia and Indonesia), the correlation between engineering and extremism is weak or non-existent.

(<http://www.nuff.ox.ac.uk/users/gambetta/Engineers%20of%20Jihad.pdf>)

► **Muslims are more likely than any other religious group in England to consider themselves British, according to a study by economists Alan Manning and Sanchari Roy of the London School of Economics.** Using data from the Labour Force Survey, a quarterly sample survey of households in Great Britain, Manning and Roy found that groups thought to be resistant to integration, such as foreign-born Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, were actually more likely to self-identify as British than were their counterparts from other Western countries, such as Canada, Western Europe and Japan. Although the religious factor was weaker than nationality in identification with Britain, the study found that Muslims were more likely than the other religious groups represented by different immigrant groups to think of themselves as British. The study, which is cited in the March issue of *Reason*, found that by the third generation, all differences by religion or nation or origin in the responses had disappeared. (*Reason*, 3415 S. Spulveda Blvd, Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA 90034-6064)

## More diverse forms of Islam are appearing in the former Yugoslavia

Islam in the Muslim areas of the former Yugoslavia is becoming more diverse, with a development of neo-Salafism, but the prospects for any type of Islamic state are not very good, write experts Xavier Bougarel and Bashkim Iseni in the newly published issue of *Politorbis* (No. 43, 2007), a journal of international affairs published by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Their analyses include prospects for the next ten years. Following the events of the past 15 years and the recent proclamation of independence of Kosovo, the issues related to Islam in the former Yugoslavia and neighboring countries has been a matter of concern. Bougarel and Iseni rule out any possible emergence of an Islamic state: Islamist groups will continue to be active, but either as small political players (in electoral terms) or as subgroups within mainline political parties. Current debates vary from one country to another: political Islamism has declined in Bosnia-Herzegovina (after experiencing an impetus in the 1990s), while a discussion on links between Albanian identity and Islam has emerged in Kosovo and Macedonia.

However, the influence of pietist neo-Salafi trends within established Islamic institutions in the area is likely to grow, as a consequence of neo-Salafi propaganda—which has appealed to young people and those returning after training in Arab countries. This should lead to more literal interpretations of Islam within official institutions. This should be seen in a context where such institutions are feeling competition, both from dynamic neo-Salafi groups and from Sufi or neo-Sufi groups; this has led to compromises allowing the entry of neo-Salafis. Moreover, Bougarel and Iseni observe that the situation in Bosnia is complex, since there are also preachers mixing Sufi and neo-Salafi elements, or former members of Islamic armed units who have subsequently affiliated with Sufi groups and denounced neo-Salafism. The picture is one of a process of diversification within Bosnian Islam. Moreover, local religious institutions are likely to face difficulties in financing their activities, due to the increasing number of religious scholars trained at home or abroad and looking for jobs. Institutions will have to look for new sources of income; failure to do so may reinforce dependence upon foreign funding from Muslim countries, but also create internal tensions and frustrations. (*Politorbis*,

Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Secretariate, Bernastrasse 28, 3003 Bern, Switzerland, <http://www.eda.admin.ch/politorbis>)

### **Is the Gülen movement becoming the leading Muslim network?**

The Turkish-based movement founded by the American-based preacher Fethullah Gülen now represents one of the most influential and effective Muslim networks in the world, reports *The Economist* magazine (March 8). The movement claims to have established 500 schools in 90 countries and has even built up a presence in northern Iraq, with schools, a university and a hospital—no mean feat in an area marked by Turkish-Kurdish conflict. While unpopular among secularists in Turkey, the movement has a wide following in the country's political and social life, with many Turkish police believed to be sympathizers. The Gülen message of embracing democracy and upward mobility makes it well received in the West, particularly as its rivals, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, are often seen in a more anti-democratic light. (*The Economist*, March 8)

### **India's Sufis unite against terrorism**

Sufi groups in India are currently engaged into efforts to establish a network around the country in order to try to prevent terrorist attacks, reports Farzand Ahmed in *India Today* magazine (January 28). The idea behind this civic organization is to create a "Sufi corridor of peace" connecting some 400 Sufi centers across India. The decision was made at a convention in New Delhi in December 2007. Representatives of various Sufi groups have since met again in order to identify the chain of Sufi centers, which should be operational by October. The purpose is a dual one: on the one hand, to help authorities to counter terrorism and identify potential threats; and on the other hand, to create an awareness of the threat in the population and to educate it regarding such threats. The initiative is a consequence of several bomb attacks against Islamic places of worship and other spots in Muslim areas of India in recent times. On October 11, 2007, a bomb blast occurred at one of the main Sufi shrines on the subcontinent, in Ajmer.

A number of militant Islamic groups strongly oppose Sufism, which they see as not being faithful to "pure" Islam. The creation

of a "Sufi corridor" apparently also reflects concerns among Sufi leaders regarding the potential threat of violent Islamic activism. It also signals a willingness of some Sufi groups to engage in organized and public efforts, al-

though not everybody in the Muslim community is enthusiastic about it: the president of the Ulema Council of India thinks that such a move can create suspicions "that the community is feeling guilty." In some countries, es-

pecially Arab ones, governments have made attempts to promote Sufism for countering radical trends over the past decade. (*India Today*, <http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/>)

## FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

■ The new password for access to the archives at the **RW** website, at <http://www.religionwatch.com>, is: Friendly

■ The March issue of *Atlantic Monthly* features a cover story on religious competition and conflict around the world. The lead article by Eliza Griswold is a photographic essay on the Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria, where she finds new forms of competition and even hints of reconciliation. Griswold reports that while the conflict continues, some of the most violent flash points in the country have seen a decline of violence. Part of the reason is the realization that the corruption and poverty endemic to the region has not been alleviated through implementing sharia. Some Muslims are also borrowing the Pentecostal's prosperity gospel, making economic development an important compo-

ment of the faith. Another article by Alan Wolfe sees religious competition on a world-wide scale as leading to an Americanization of religions, where, with a few exceptions, tolerance and accommodation trump religious warfare. (*Atlantic Monthly*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803>)

■ *Charisma* magazine (February) features a cover story on African-American leaders and what they see as the most important issues in the black church. Although the respondents come from the more evangelical and charismatic wings of black churches, they represent fast-growing movements that have gained wide influence in recent years. Most of the respondents cite racism and racial divisions as an important unresolved issue for these churches, though they give as much space to internal matters. D. L. Foster writes on the growth of "sexual immorality" in black churches and how "religious gays and lesbians are on a relentless quest to establish theological credibility for same-sex relationships in

the black church today." Claudette Copeland argues that the growing independence of many black churches resulting from the severing of denominational alliances has produced a lack of accountability of clergy and the dangers associated with a "celebrity" mentality. For more information on this issue, write: *Charisma*, 600 Rhinehart Rd, Lake Mary, FL 32746.

■ The **Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Observatory on Islamophobia** has released its first report, which has been submitted to the Eleventh Islamic Summit Conference held in Dakar, Senegal in March. While it believes that "Islamophobic incidents" will continue, the 58-page report also states that both the Danish cartoon affair and the controversial remarks by Pope Benedict "succeeded in making an impact on the international community on the gravity of the issue" and in creating a general awareness. Islamophobia is defined in the report as "an irrational or very powerful fear or dislike of Islam." It is "a reli-

gion-based resentment" incorporating "racial hatred, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping." The report specifically denounces scholars such as Samuel Huntington, Daniel Pipes, Steve Emerson and Bernard Lewis as proponents of Islamophobia who are said to have "accentuated" it through their writings.

The report lists both what its authors see as issues of concern—such as "Islamophobic" statements by politicians in various countries—and positive developments—such as the appointment by President Bush of a special envoy to the OIC and work done by the Council of Europe for countering anti-Muslim prejudices. In accordance with the ten-year action program decided by the OIC in 2005, the Observatory will make efforts to project Islam "as a religion of moderation, peace and tolerance." The publication of the report is indicative of trends toward coordination among Muslim countries on such issues, with various potential consequences. On the one hand, those efforts are meant to allow governments of Muslim countries to show that they care and to keep such developments under control, instead of leaving them to the streets. On the other hand, it might contribute to spreading concerns on such issues even more widely across the "Muslim world." The full report

can be downloaded from the OIC website: <http://www.oic-oci.org/oicnew/is11/English/Islamophobia-report-en.pdf>.

■ ***Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation*** (Rutgers University Press, \$19.95) by Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller covers the now familiar territory of the post-baby boomers, but sheds more light on the subject through its in-depth research on congregations and ministries dealing with this generation. Flory and Miller categorize post-boomer ministries into four camps: innovators, appropriators, resisters and reclaimers. The innovators include the "emergent" movement stressing "authenticity," community and intimacy in their experience-based worship and social outreach. The appropriators, such as Harvest Fellowship and Christian rock groups and skate boarders (and other "extreme" Christian sport groups), try to adapt to popular secular culture in order to find a hearing. Resisters, as their name implies, actively resist the inroads of relativism and postmodernism in the culture and the church. Such ministries and organizations as the Discovery Institute (in its promotion of intelligent design) and much of the Christian right and other groups stressing a "rational Christianity" and a "Christian worldview" fall into this camp.

The reclaimers include those post-boomers who have been drawn to ancient tradition and ritual-based churches, such as Eastern Orthodoxy and conservative Anglicanism and Catholicism. Many churches and ministries catering to baby boomers and older people can probably be placed in at least two or three of these categories, whose boundaries the authors themselves agree are fuzzy to begin with (the resisters and reclaimers seem to share so many features that they may represent just different dimensions of one category). But Flory and Miller do capture the complexity of the young adult religious search and its institutional expressions. They make the interesting point that the reclaimers, appropriators and innovators all hold to—in one way or another—an "expressive communalism" that stresses embodied and experiential forms of Christianity. Flory and Miller clearly see the resisters as fighting a losing battle, particularly since they rely on an "expert system" of approved theologians and teachers that seems to be out of touch with the more democratized approach of post-boomers.

■ Theories of globalization often appear so vague and amorphous that their value seems questionable and difficult to apply to religious institutions. But the new book ***Religion, Globalization, and Culture*** (Brill,

\$99), edited by Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman, is noteworthy in how it looks at this process as it is played out in specific religious and national contexts. The editors introduce the 608-page anthology by noting that the discussion of globalization since the late 1980s has tended to exclude religion, with the exception of the much-disputed concept and movement of “fundamentalism” (specifically by trying to link the various fundamentalist expressions as part of one global phenomenon). There is little mention of fundamentalism by the contributors, but quite a lot on other major currents in contemporary religion. As Beyer and Beaman suggest, it is now difficult to discuss secularization, the deinstitutionalization of religion and religious conflict without touching on matters of globalization.

Various contributors claim that the concept of globalization itself has religious elements. One chapter looks at how “global rationalism” functions as a religion, while another contribution argues that spirituality and religion have shaped how globalization has been expressed—from spiritual environmentalism and “global consciousness” to the global war on terror. Other noteworthy contributions include a study of religious international NGOs by pioneer globalization theorists John Boli and David Brewington, which finds that Christian organizations of this kind

still predominate throughout the world, though they have an increasingly secular orientation and are joined by Muslim, Jewish and other religious groups. A few chapters look at religious opposition to globalization, focusing mainly on developments surrounding Islam, such as the Danish cartoon controversy. The last part of the book focuses on regional cultures and politics and how almost all religions—from indigenous African churches to Sufi Islam—are enmeshed in local, transnational and global networks.

■ In the Autumn of 1962 bishops from all around the world gathered in Vatican City to start what would be the twenty-first Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church. By 1965, when the Council ended, it had changed Catholic Church priorities and radically transformed both the way in which the Church would relate to other Christian denominations and the secular world at large. In ***Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change*** (Princeton University Press, \$35), Melissa Wilde attempts to explain the reasons for this change based on a careful reading of the Council documents as well as statistical analyses of voting patterns on several contentious issues. Wilde’s basic assumptions are that traditional sociological approaches to religious change are insufficient to ex-

plain the exceptional outcomes of Vatican II. Relying heavily on interviews conducted by the Italian scholar Rocco Caporale, she explains the extent of the changes generated within the Council by looking at the organizational strategies of progressive bishops clustered around the Domus Mariae group. In her view, progressives in search of a new ecumenical church involved in social justice were able to come together because of their strong organizational culture and their trust in episcopal conferences. While progressives became organized and developed effective means of communicating and reaching agreements, conservatives remained skeptical about those assemblies—believing that bishops’ collegiality would undermine papal authority—and were thus unable to thwart the power of their opponents.

Wilde aims to substantiate her insight by studying four contentious issues and looking at the ways in which progressives and conservatives from different geographic regions voted in the Council. Unlike previous examinations of Vatican II, she rejects the claim that it was pressure from below (i.e. the faithful) that moved progressive bishops towards ecumenism and social justice. To prove this, she analyzes the Council’s failure to liberalize birth control (a major lay claim in

the turbulent 1960s, mainly in developed countries). Other interesting topics are the way in which the declaration of religious freedom was obtained, as well as the role played by the Virgin Mary in Catholic doctrine and its deaccentuation in the Council as a means to build bridges with other Christian denominations. Although well crafted and relying on an impressive amount of raw data, the book fails to explain at least part of the progressive wing by almost ignoring its thrust toward social justice and the preferential option for the poor, which were to prove so influential during the later turbulent years marked by the theology of liberation. - *By Marisol Lopez-Mendez, a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the New School for Social Research*

■ In an ambitious comparative study, Joseph M. Palacios's ***The Catholic Social Imagination*** (University of Chicago Press, \$25) aims at sociologically understanding the different ways in which Catholics from Mexico and the United States have approached social justice issues during the last three decades without relying on the most obvious explanation: their different histories. Palacios's analysis begins with a sophisticated theoretical approach based mostly on classic sociology. Nonetheless, most of the book is based on ethnographic research carried

out in both countries between the early 1970s and the early 2000s in Oakland, California and Guadalajara, Mexico. At the core of his comparison between the two Catholic "social imaginations" is the assumption that the existence of freedom of religion in the U.S. has allowed Catholics to organize and put forward a clearly defined social agenda. Meanwhile, their Mexican coreligionists have been mostly constrained in their public activities both by Mexican laws and Mexican history. Palacios accurately identifies the Catholic Worker movement, the United Farm Workers Union, the anti-death penalty movement and the School of the Americas Watch as cultural sites where Catholic social justice has expressed itself while forming a distinctively American Catholic openness to the secular world. His take on Mexican Catholic social imagination is insightful inasmuch he distinguishes the complex political entanglements between the official Catholic Church and the Mexican government and the culturally loaded meanings they have had for socially active Catholics in the country. However, there are stunning absences. While Palacios clearly depicts the U.S. Catholic social imagination and the several ways in which it is practiced by activists, he fails to provide a similar account when it comes to Mexico. His research seemingly went in the wrong direction:

he found civil society groups that emerged from Catholic settings, but did not look in the one place where Catholic activism has clearly made an impact in public Mexican life: human rights organizations.

Most of these national, regional or tiny local NGOs have a strong Catholic component, are frequently led by priests and were founded by dioceses (like Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center in Chiapas) or by religious orders (like the Jesuit Miguel Agustin Pro Human Rights Center in Mexico City). It is not unfair to say that human rights are the only Catholic social justice initiative in which natural law and positive law discourses have entwined, and the only one that has been available well beyond local initiatives. Moreover, human rights organizations have successfully organized to put pressure on the Mexican government and have been able to create the kind of cultural sites that Palacios identifies in the U.S. - *By Marisol Lopez-Mendez*

**ON/FILE: A Continuing Survey of People, Groups, Movements and Events Impacting Religion**

1) The **Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC)**, a conservative coalition of churches that have split from or were established apart from mainline Episcopal and Anglican bodies, has embarked on its own kind of ecumenism by openly appealing for the pope to restore Anglican unity with Roman Catholicism. The TAC is said to be the largest of the Anglican groups outside of the jurisdiction

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of the Archbishop of Canterbury, with representation in 41 countries and approximately 400,000 members. Its largest expression in the U.S. is the Anglican Church in America. Last fall, the TAC sent a letter to the Vatican seeking full, corporate and sacramental union with Rome. It is said to be significant that the letter was sent to the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) rather than to its ecumenical office.

The head Vatican ecumenical official, Walter, Cardinal Kasper, is reported to be opposed to the idea of receiving groups—rather than individuals—of Anglicans into communion with Rome. The CDF, in contrast, and its former (though still influential) head, Pope Benedict XVI, is less opposed to promoting such an arrangement, according to observers. The TAC believes that the liberal Anglican bodies are incapable of promoting church unity with Catholics due to their acceptance of such innovations as women priests and gay rights, and that it is now up to them to forge such unity. The TAC proposal was placed on the agenda for discussion and consideration at a Vatican meeting by the pope last November. (Christian Challenge, October 2007–January 2008)

2) In January 2008, the first episode of a new version of the *Ramayana*, the great Hindu epic, was aired on NDTV Imagine. The previous TV version, aired on Indian national television channel Doordarshan in 1987–88, had a tremendous impact and is widely credited with having helped Hindu nationalism to spread at that time. While half of the Indian population today is too young to have watched the previous series in the 1980s, most observers don't expect the new one to have similar consequences to those of its predecessor. The *Ramayana* series was the biggest success of Indian television in the 1980s, bringing the country to a

standstill each week. The 26 episodes of the new series produced by NDTV, which started on January 21, 2008, benefits from technical progress and more special effects. The producers also attempt to introduce some new concerns, for instance, environmental questions and women's issues, giving a greater role to the perspective of Sita, the tale's heroine.

But will the series boost Hindu nationalism, with elections coming in India next year? While this cannot entirely be discounted, one observer remarked that Indians get inputs from many more quarters than 20 years ago: beside national television, there are now 100 competing channels, and perceptions of a number of issues have also changed in the meantime. Nationalists may, however, still attempt to capitalize on the series, presenting Ram as a symbol of "national identity, unity and integration," in the words of prominent nationalist leader L. K. Advani. And the executive vice-president of NDTV Imagine said she felt that the time for reviving the tale was ripe in order to counteract "moral and social degeneration." (*Times of India*, February 18; *The Week*, February 3, <http://www.the-week.com>)

3) To reach young people is a concern for all religious groups; a Japanese Buddhist monk, **Kansho Tagai**, chief monk of Tokyo's Kyojoji temple, has chosen to do it through using rap music, which he learned at the age of 47. This allows the monk to come closer to a young audience. Another temple in Tokyo is reported to use samba music for the same purpose. A variety of other means have also been devised by other Buddhist monks, including interacting with people in bars. The purpose of all such initiatives is to "stop the drift of young people away from Buddhism." (DPA News Agency, February 28)

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