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Religion Watch is a newsletter monitoring trends in contemporary religion. For more than two decades we have covered the whole range of religions around the world, particularly looking at the unofficial dimensions of religious belief and behavior.

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"Holy alliance" between Rome and Washington in jeopardy?

The close working relationship between the Vatican and the U.S. government since the 1980s, known as the "Holy Alliance," may be coming to an end or significantly changing as it faces a new era of world power relations, reports *Inside the Vatican* magazine (April). The alliance was born when President Ronald Reagan and the Vatican under Pope John Paul II cooperated closely in fighting communism. But Andrea Kirk Assaf writes that "a perceptible tension between Rome and Washington became apparent during the 1990s" that intensified as a result of the war in Iraq, which the Vatican has often criticized. The war's effect of imperiling the fate of the ancient Christian community in Iraq has been a particular sore point with Pope Benedict XVI. The Bush administration has been fairly close to the Vatican on common pro-life and family concerns, but the prospect of a Democratic presidency may unravel even that tie (the latter's opposition to the Iraq war notwithstanding).

The Vatican is also re-evaluating the alliance as the U.S. position in the world is changing and the nation ceases to be the unilateral power due to the weakness of the dollar and the emergence of new non-Christian powers such as India and China. The issue of Russia may be another divisive point; Benedict has made ecumenism with the Eastern Orthodox Church a priority and shares with Russia a concern to protect the native Christian communities of the Middle East (which are largely Catholic and Eastern Orthodox), a goal that the U.S. does not necessarily share, Assaf writes. Fr Sergio Mercanzin of the Russian Ecumenical Center in Rome adds that the "Vatican is a great master of equilibrium between opposed powers. With Russia and the Vatican, the dialogue is more religious than political because of the Orthodox, while in the United States it's the other way around. However, between religion and politics things are not always so distinct." (*Inside the Vatican*, P.O. Box 57, New Hope, KY 40052-0057)

Pentecostalism in Europe and Latin America shows growth and stability

Pentecostalism is seen as one the most dynamic expressions of religion in the contemporary world, but this general impression should be qualified by a variety of contrasting developments from one country to another, as attested by several papers presented at the INFORM/CESNUR conference on new religious movements in London (April 16-19), which **RW** attended.

In Latin America, Pentecostals now make up 10 percent of the population (not including Catholic Charismatics), reported Paul Freston (Calvin College, Grand Rapids). This makes it part of mainstream Latin American Protestantism and contributes significantly to a process of religious pluralization of the whole area and to a decline of the percentage of Roman Catholics. In a coun-

try such as Brazil, Protestants may now make up 18 percent of the population, but the percentage of non-religious people is growing as well (7–8 percent). Both Pentecostals and the non-religious are located in urban peripheries and rural frontiers: a Pentecostal group is established much quicker than a Catholic parish. Catholic responses are primarily aimed at halting losses in the middle classes. Pentecostalism is much more successful among indigenous populations. Freston remarks that it is too early to assess what new ecclesiastical or theological forms will emerge from this development, or its impact on politics and civil society. The process of fragmentation of Pentecostal denominations goes on. A possible prospect for the future religious landscape of Latin America would be a highly fragmented Protestantism (20 to 25 percent of the population), a slimmer but dynamic Roman Catholic Church, and adherents to a variety of other religions.

In Finland, where 81.7 percent of the five million inhabitants are

Lutherans, but only 3.1 percent go to church regularly, Pentecostalism in all its shades gathers some 45,000 faithful in 270 congregations. While it has been present in the country since 1911, explained Tuija Hovi (Church Research Institute, Tampere), traditional Pentecostalism used to be agrarian, while a more recent, neo-Charismatic wave mostly attracts young adults born between the mid-60s and the mid-1980s (Generation X). They tend to gather in small congregations (20 to 50 members), with half of them founded during the present decade. It is a fluid and changing environment, and not all congregations prove stable or lasting, but it is also a very flexible milieu. Independent congregations form a network in a dynamic environment, with high mobility (inside the neo-Charismatic field), but it is far from sure that it will grow strongly, according to Hovi. Statistical research suggests that there are better prospects in Finland for alternative forms of spirituality, including New Age. The growth of the number of members of neo-

Charismatic communities remains modest.

A symposium on the Pentecostal movement in Italy also took place during the London conference. The Assemblies of God represent the third largest organized religious group in Italy, with 140,000 members (after the Roman Catholic Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses). The second largest Pentecostal denomination is the Federation of Pentecostal Churches. Despite internal divisions, there is, however, no doubt that the number of Pentecostals will continue to grow in Italy, stated Alessandro Iovino (University of Federico II, Naples). The origins of the Pentecostal movement in Italy are humble ones, but its members can no longer be identified only with the metropolitan proletariat, stressed Ivan D'Alessandro (University of LUISS—Guido Carli, Rome): a vast majority of third- and fourth-generation young Pentecostals gain academic degrees and become successful professionals.

Publisher serves as clearinghouse and unifier of New Age movement

The New Age movement has faced many obituaries over the past few decades, but if anything, this movement of disparate spiritual therapies, techniques and teachings is becoming more consolidated thanks to a unique publishing strategy. One publisher is

rarely that influential in the fortunes of a religious movement, but Hay House has managed to create a platform where many New Age-oriented groups, teachings and personalities are finding a unified audience, reports an article in the *Sunday New York Times Magazine*

(May 4). Psychic healer Louise Hay started the publishing company in 1987 to publish and distribute her own writings, largely involving her work with AIDS patients, but gradually she expanded its offerings to include other New Age and self-help

► Continued from page two

authors. Today the company turns out an array of “Mind/Body/Spirit” products that embrace psychics/intuitives, angel therapy, positive thinking, New Thought and motivational speaking, including such prominent personalities as Wayne Dyer, Suze Orman, Deepak Chopra, and Marianne Williamson. Last year Hay House sold 6.3 million products, taking in \$100 million.

Many of the big names in New Age, such as Wayne Dyer, came to Hay House first for ancillary

products, such as audio tapes, but then later abandoned mainstream publishers to publish their books with the specialty publisher. With each product helping to drive the sales for other products, Hay House authors are less dependent on the “whims of book-review editors and the buyers for megastores,” writes Mark Oppenheimer. The publishing company provides a unique platform for multiple authors through its large group events, offering a cornucopia of readings, book signings and lectures. The 2005 launching of Hay House Radio on the Web offers 30 hours a week of original pro-

gramming hosted by Hay House authors. This united publishing platform links different authors and schools of thought together in readers’ minds, even if “the descendants of New Thought, theosophy and other metaphysical movements are distant cousins, but cousins nonetheless.” Hay House is hosting regular family reunions, helping to renew ties among relatives. Such publishing influence allows Hay House to start trends as well as to spot them; self-help books for young people are being targeted as the next frontier.

CURRENT RESEARCH

► **Holding to a “wrathful” image of God and a literal reading of the Bible tends to correlate with political intolerance, write Baylor University sociologists Christopher Bader, Paul Froese and Buster Smith in the journal *Sociology of Religion* (Spring).** Past studies have long suggested that political intolerance is linked to religious affiliation or church attendance, but Bader, Froese and Smith argue that individuals’ religious worldviews may be even more significant. The researchers introduced the variables of views on the Bible and images of God in predicting intolerance of fringe groups (including limiting free expression), specifically atheists,

racists, homosexuals, militarists and communists, in their analysis of data from the General Social Survey. Only three variables were consistently significant predictors of political tolerance and intolerance: those with higher levels of education are more tolerant of fringe groups, while “People who believe the Bible is the word of God are significantly less tolerant. And images of a wrathful God are also significantly predictive of intolerance for every fringe group.” Frequent church attendance only affected the likelihood of intolerance toward some groups, such as atheists, racists and homosexuals. (*Sociology of Religion*, 618 S.W. Second Ave., Galva, IL 61434)

► **Contrary to popular wisdom, mainline Protestant clergy are more concerned with politics today than they were in the**

1960s, though church members do not express much dissatisfaction with such involvement, according to a recent study. In a study of clergy from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church, researchers Paul Djupe and Christopher Gilbert argue that the level of clergy concern with political matters, shown in the time they address such concerns in sermons and other speech, has increased by 33 percent over their careers compared to studies of clergy in the 1960s (from two-thirds of clergy in 1968 to 90 percent in 1998. In their study, Djupe and Gilbert find that even though there is still a gap between laity and clergy on these political issues (with laity usually holding more conservative views), the former do not express strong levels of dissatisfaction about such activity.

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The researchers find that both clergy political involvement and levels of opposition have not increased among the laity, largely because these churches have been able to satisfy the worship needs and development opportunities of members, thereby allowing clergy the space and time to devote themselves more to politics. They add that “Whether by conscious assent or indifference, ELCA clergy and Episcopal clergy may gain latitude to undertake political activities due to their effective actions in other spheres of congregational life.” This finding offers a credible explanation for why mainline Protestant clergy have become significantly more political than they were in the 1960s. (*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Commerce Pl., 350 Main St, Malden, MA 02148)

▶ **American perceptions about the pope have turned significantly more favorable since Benedict XVI’s recent visit to the U.S., according to a survey by the Pew Research Center and the Pew Forum.** After the visit, just as many Catholics express “very favorable” opinions of the current pontiff as they did of Pope John Paul II (both 49 percent). The very favorable rating went up from 31 percent last August to 36 percent shortly before the visit in March. The current pope’s image improved the most among the less observant; 41 percent of those not attending church very often have a favorable image of the pope, up from 25 percent in March. Views of the pope’s outreach to other

Christians and those of other faiths have shown substantial improvement, especially among evangelical Christians (32 percent of evangelicals rated Benedict’s relations with other faiths good or excellent in March compared to 57 percent after his visit). Catholics are more or less evenly split about the pope’s handling of the sex abuse scandal—the less observant are the most critical. Overall, however, there has been little change in the public’s (including Catholics’) view of the pope as being conservative, though more Protestants are of this view after the visit (going from 34 percent to 42 percent). (<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=303>)

▶ **Religious organizations, including congregations, have the lowest “mortality rates” of any type of organizations, though that is not necessarily good news, according to a new study.**

A new analysis and updating of the 1998 National Congregations Study, which examined how many of the congregations under study were still recently active, found that only 1 percent of U.S. congregations go out of existence each year. The rate of dissolution in secular institutions usually has been higher, according to Mark Chaves and Shawna Anderson, co-authors of the study, which is to appear in the June issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* and is cited in the *Christian Century* (May 6). Chaves adds, however that a low mortality rate does not necessarily signal

organizational health. “We think that it means that whereas in other arenas the weakest organizations shut down, the weakest churches have ways of staying alive for a longer time.” (*The Christian Century*, 407 S. Dearborn St, Chicago, IL 60605)

▶ **Black churches that use rap music tend to be oriented to liberal social activism while also showing a growing membership, according to a recent study by Sandra Barnes of Case Western Reserve University.** The study, published in the *Review of Religious Research* (March) finds that the use of “gospel rap” in church services is increasing in black churches, although 46.5 percent of congregations surveyed never use this musical form. Those that do use it tend to belong to the United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches. The Church of God in Christ is the least likely to use it (54.4 percent). Barnes also found a direct relationship between churches that use rap and those congregations drawing new members, and among those pastors stressing social justice and preaching on political issues and “liberation themes.” She concludes that churches attracting diverse new members, including males, professionals and college graduates, may be more receptive to non-traditional ways of worship, including the use of rap. (*Review of Religious Research*, 618 S.W. Second Ave., Galva, IL 61434)

► **A new study by Barna Research finds that evangelicals are less likely than the overall population to divorce.** In the past there have been studies finding that citizens of states with large evangelical populations are more likely to be divorced than those of states with more religiously pluralistic populations. The Barna study also finds that one out of every four evangelicals who are or have been married nevertheless have gone through at least one divorce. But the telephone survey found that while 33 percent of U.S. adults who have been married have been divorced at least once, 26 percent of married evangelicals have divorced. The poll did not ask whether the divorce occurred before or after their conversion experience. (<http://www.barna.org>)

► **Media representations of Buddhism over the last half century have tended to dispel more unfavorable views of the religion—a far different situation from that of Islam, writes Thomas Tweed in the journal *Material Religion* (March).** Tweed

writes that since 1945 Buddhism has “been interpreted as individualistic and pacifist and in harmony with shared cultural values, whereas Islam been imagined as communal and violent and in tension with all that Americans say they cherish most.” Especially since the late 1950s, the “solitary meditator” has been the prevailing image of the Buddhist practitioner, although in reality meditation was historically practiced by groups of monks and was rarely isolated from other rituals such as offerings and chanting. This image tended to fit in with American ideals of individualism. In contrast, it is the communal elements of Islam (such as prayer in the mosque) that are often represented in the media, along with the negative connotations of crowds and submission to authority, even though Islam has individual as well as communal components. The link between Islam and violence was reaffirmed with the widely circulated images of the Iranian hostage crisis and 9/11. But Buddhism also has also been portrayed in the media as having violent associations. Between

1968 and 2005, there were 142 evening broadcast news stories involving Buddhism, of which more than half (79) dealt with violence, conflict and disaster. The most well-known Buddhist media image was of Buddhist monks setting themselves on fire in Vietnam, subsequently shaping attitudes about the Vietnam war. But these acts were interpreted as violence produced by the solitary meditator, as well as a “public action turned toward the self, not others,” which is in line with American notions of religious-based democratic protest. While some Muslims may have viewed the hostage crisis and even 9/11 in similar terms, the media did not buy that interpretation. Tweed concludes that “Buddhism has been able to loosen its association with public violence in ways that Islam has not,” and the image of the solitary meditator and “righteous protestor” played a significant role in this change. (*Material Religion*, Berg Publishers, 1st Fl., Stratton Business Park, Pegasus Drive, Biggleswade, SG8 8TQ, U.K.)

Rethinking the "cult" issue in France?

Cult controversies are enduring in France, and it is likely that the state will continue to be involved, but there are signs of a possible change on this issue, reported French sociologist Véronique Altglas, currently a research fellow at the University of Cambridge, at

the recent INFORM/CESNUR conference in London (April 16–19).

Some changes have already taken place over the past few years: for instance, the notorious list of 172 “dangerous” movements included in the 1995 parliamentary report is no longer allowed to be used for official purpose since 2005. At the

same time, however, the French MIVILUDES (Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combating Cultic Deviances) has tended to extend its field to alleged “cultic” risks presented by certain techniques (e.g. various therapeutic practices). Moreover, MIVILUDES continues to be engaged in a privileged partnership

with private anti-cult groups, giving it what could sometimes appear as a quasi-official status.

However, Altglas remarks that other voices are increasingly heard: the head of the department in charge of religions at the Ministry of Interior has voiced very critical comments regarding MIVILUDES. In contrast to some perceptions, Altglas suggests that French State agencies are far from being unanimous in their approach to the issue. This has been made clear by recent comments by President Sarkozy's cabinet secretary, describing cults as a "non-issue" in France.

This does not mean that the State intends to give up the monitoring of possible deviances associated with "cults". But there are indications that the French Ministry of Interior would like it to be a more neutral approach, concerned only about wrongdoings against the law and more consistent with a positive interpretation of French secularism, according to Altglas' analysis. It remains, however, to be seen if such projects will be implemented and how far it will be possible for the State to dissociate such efforts from those of anti-cult groups.

In wake of cyclone in Burma, some Buddhists question non-violent path

The recent disaster caused by a cyclone in Burma has once again

highlighted the repressive nature of the regime: facing such circumstances, some Buddhist monks have felt justified to join violent resistance, Anna Sussman and Jonathan Jones report in the online magazine *Inthefray* (April 6). The two reporters visited 67-year old monk Saw Wizana, who has joined the Karen fighters, because he sees armed resistance as the only viable strategy against the military junta. He justifies his support of the armed struggle by the fact that it saves lives and that the actions of the regime do not leave other options open. However, while other monks show an understanding of the Karen struggle, most continue to consider that non-violence is the best way for Buddhist resistance. Future non-violent protests are being planned. (*Inthefray*, <http://www.inthefray.org>)

Syria invests in Islamic banking

Two Islamic banks, Cham Bank and Syria International Islamic Bank, launched their services to the public in Syria in 2007, and more banks are set to start operating this year, John Dagge reports in *The Middle East* magazine (March). Islamic banking started to blossom in the 1970s and has been enjoying wider recognition in recent years: even a number of Western banks have started sharia-compliant funds. Around 300 Islamic banks operate in 25 countries. Islamic finance is estimated to manage around \$500 billion, Asma Hanif writes in an

article published by *Religioscope* (March 18).

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Private banks started operating in Syria in 2004 and have rapidly expanded; Islamic banks are part of that trend. In the long-run, Islamic banks hope to attract up to 50 percent of the Syrian market. Such a development could be an indicator of growing tendencies to identify with Islamic values. However, Dagge notes, Islamic banking faces challenges too, one of them being finding qualified staff. Islamic banks have approached local universities to encourage them to introduce courses on sharia-compliant finance. In addition, a higher cost is often associated with Islamic banking, and some observers wonder if customers will be willing to pay a premium for the service. (*The Middle East*, IC Publications, Coldbath Sq., London, E1CR 4LQ, U.K.)

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

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

■ Readers should take note of our new address for business and circulation matters. It is: **Religion Watch, P.O. Box 18, New York, NY 10276**. All inquiries and notifications regarding address changes, subscriptions, renewals and missing back issues should be sent to this address. The North Bellmore address remains the same, but it should only be used for editorial matters.

■ The March issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* features a special forum on racially and ethnically diverse congregations. An introduction by Michael Emerson notes the relative absence of research on these mixed congregations up until the 1990s, but with the growth of ethnic diversity, this subject has received more attention. Current research on interracial churches finds that these congregations are shaped by unique factors, such as specific denominational traditions, and have their own interactions and impact on civic participation. But there is no clear theoretical orientation in such studies, nor has there been much comparative work between religions. The forum includes four articles that attempt to break new ground, covering topics such as the dif-

ference between evangelical and Catholic racial integration in congregations, and how race is both transcended and reconfigured in these congregations. For more information on this issue, write: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Commerce Pl., 350 Main St, Malden, MA 02148.

■ The March/April issue of *Society* carries a special section on “Neo-Darwinism and Its Discontents,” which, as one might guess, has a lot to do with the Darwinist critique of religion as recently advanced by popular authors and scientists Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. Most of the articles tend to counter Dawkins’ and Dennett’s view that religions are maladaptive features of evolution that are bound to disappear and be replaced by science. Contributors, including sociologist Andrew Greeley, literary critic Frederick Turner, Catholic philosopher Peter Augustine Lawler and anthropologist Lionel Tiger, range from critics of Darwinism (though not necessarily evolution) to supporters of theistic evolution, and those (like Tiger) viewing religion as having a more positive and adaptive function. For more on this issue, write: *Society*, Springer, 233 Spring St, New York, NY 10013.

■ The spring issue of the *Review of Faith & International Affairs* is devoted to the issue of black clergy and American policy in the Middle East and North Africa. As R. Drew Smith notes in an opening article, if one looks at African-American denominations, the im-

pression would be that they have not played an activist role on Middle Eastern issues; in general, they do not have the official apparatuses, such as advocacy offices in Washington, to engage social concerns as have mainline and Catholic churches (except through their participation in the National and World Council of Churches). But Smith notes that on issues such as the Iraq war, black churches and leaders have cooperated with anti-war groups and mass action efforts to extend their voices.

In an important article on black churches and U.S. policy in Sudan, Allen Hertzke found that they developed a strategy that served as a significant source of pressure on the regime to end its assaults against southern tribes. He notes that such a program of action was in response to the wider faith-based movement for human rights, but the black church strategies, honed in the civil rights movement, were central to this successful effort. The program of action started with marginal black pastors (and eventually new leaders) being drawn into the anti-slavery effort in Sudan with white evangelicals and then convincing and networking with other African-American church groups to speak out on the issue until the cause reached the black establishment, who then put pressure (often through civil disobedience) on legislators to enact disinvestment and cease-fire proposals. This effort was then duplicated and applied to the related crisis in Darfur. Other articles in this issue include an interesting study by

Lawrence H. Mamiya on African-American Muslims and the war in Iraq, noting that Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam have gone beyond the critical yet "accommodationist" stance of other Muslim groups to embrace a radical anti-Americanism, believing the war has ushered in the period of Armageddon. For more information on this issue, go to: <http://www.cfia.org>.

■ In 2007, Equinox, a dynamic UK-based publishing house, launched a new journal, **Religions of South Asia**, which is published twice a year. In the second issue, Tracy Pintchman (Loyola University, Chicago) pays attention to new developments in the Western academic study of Hindu traditions, linked to the critique of earlier Indological work. Field research on lived religions has gained an increasing place, and the split between ethnographic and textual approaches has become increasingly eroded. Due to the involvement of a number of scholars in Hindu groups or practices, the insider/outsider dichotomy has been put into question. The same has also happened to the category of Hinduism itself—as evidenced again by the conference "Rethinking Religion in India", which took place in New Delhi in January and which **RW** attended, where both the category of Hinduism and the concept of religion itself (as a Western construct) came under strong criticism.

According to Pintchman, scholars are now having new opportunities for research, linked to the

globalization of Hindu traditions around the world and the emergence of "Western Hinduisms" (new religions). Technological changes also call for new research, for instance, on the varied consequences of the Internet, which has provided opportunities for "the creation and promulgation of a wide variety of Hinduisms that transcend all manners of divides." Television and film are also offering new interpretations of traditional narratives. Provided the category of Hinduism itself is valid, globalization might push scholars to reconsider its boundaries.

In the same issue, Véronique Altglas (University of Cambridge) summarizes her research on the global diffusion and Westernization of Siddha Yoga and Sivananda Centers. According to her observations, the approach of neo-Hindu teachings is revealing of attitudes toward religion in modern societies: religious individualism, inner-worldly orientations, relativism and subjectivism, as well as pragmatism. Hinduism "becomes an individual religion at the same time that it becomes global." Hindu traditions are de-ethnicized and delinked from their cultural heritage, since the assumption is that religions share a universal and unique truth.

Another new periodical is the **Journal of Religion in Europe**, published by Brill. The first issue was published in 2008. In their introductory article, editors Hans G. Kippenberg (Max Weber Kolleg, University of Erfurt) and Kocku von Stuckrad (University of Amsterdam) stress that recent

research has shown a sometimes overlooked complexity of religious life in Europe. A pluralism of religious communities is not new, and has shaped religious identities and practices. Regarding the concept of secularization, some researchers now place the concept in the European context, while others prefer to emphasize the existence of different developments in different regions of Europe.

An article by David Nirenberg pays attention to the different dialectics regarding the relation between Islam and the West—one of exclusion, another one of inclusion, but inseparable from each other. Generally speaking, the new journal combines attention paid to contemporary developments with a strong interest in their historical background. For more information, visit the websites of these new publications at: *Religions of South Asia*, <http://www.equinoxjournals.com/ojs/index.php/ROSA>; *Journal of Religion in Europe*, <http://www.brill.nl/jre>.

■ **The Party Faithful** (Scribner, \$25), by journalist Amy Sullivan, documents the changed strategy of Democrats in the U.S. to appeal to religious voters that has been taking place for several years. Sullivan traces the alienation of the Democratic Party back to the late 1960s and '70s when the crises of the Vietnam war and Watergate and changes such as the women's movement led to disillusion with traditional religious institutions among liberals. The "culture wars" over abor-

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The realization that average Democrats also shared a concern over values propelled a new breed of religious advisors to plan a more effective religious strategy.

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tion and gay rights similarly created new divisions between secular and religious Americans, often expressed in the political affiliations of Republicans versus Democrats. Sullivan writes that the realization that average Democrats (who are often Catholic) also shared a concern over values, and issues such as abortion propelled Democratic operatives and a new breed of religious advisors to plan a more effective religious strategy, particularly after the defeat of John Kerry by George W. Bush in 2004. The strategy has included advising Democratic leaders and candidates to address matters of religion “early and often” in their campaigns and to work with clergy and congregations in a manner similar to that of Republicans. The emergence of new organizations, such as Common Ground, and the re-energization of older ones, such as Sojourners, often serve to mediate between Democratic politicians and their advisors and moderate and liberal congregations.

■ ***God’s Mechanics: How Scientists and Engineers Make Sense of Religion*** (Jossey-Bass, \$24.95)

makes for interesting reading about a topic too long ignored by scholars and journalists. Most books on science and religion deal with the “big” questions—the existence of God, evolution, the nature of humanity—but tell us very little about the everyday nature of religious and scientific life. While Consolmagno, a Vatican astronomer and Jesuit brother, starts the book by addressing the larger matters, he quickly settles for more practical answers to questions on how scientists and engineers (he tends to combine the two professions) approach personal religious matters. He does this biographically at first, but then interviews several engineers, IT professionals and scientists, finding that his stereotypes about how these professionals would approach questions of faith did not always hold up. Consolmagno found that the rule-based and logic-driven mindset of his interviewees did not translate into a similar kind of religious faith. The “techies” tended to value religion as much for providing a sense of community as for guiding them in the search for truth. The last part of the book turns into an apologetic account of how, in the opinion of the author, Roman Catholicism provides the best set of answers for techies.

■ ***Christian Citizens in An Islamic State: The Pakistan Experience*** (Ashgate, \$29.95), by Theodore Gabriel, is a sobering

account of how the extensive Islamization of political life affects religious minorities in Pakistan. Gabriel makes the somewhat controversial claim that the founders of Pakistan never intended to create an Islamic state, but rather were seeking only a nation protecting the full rights of Muslims. Nevertheless, he notes that even though most Muslims do not strongly believe in an Islamic state, the government (even its moderate leaders) has supported Islamization in most aspects of public life to appease radical Muslim groups. In this process of Islamization, Christians—who lived in the region for more than a hundred years before the formation of the nation—have been relegated to second-class or even alien status. This is especially the case after 9/11 and the Iraq war, when Christians are identified with the U.S, even though they have made significant efforts to indigenize their worship and theology. Far more than their lives or homes, it is the churches and many Christian schools (which often educate more Muslims than Christians and avoid proselytizing) that are targeted by militants. Gabriel remains somewhat optimistic about the plight of Christians, largely because of the growth of inter-faith efforts and dialogue groups (often started by Christians), which have built bridges to the many moderate and intellectual Muslims in Pakistan.

■ While **RW** rarely reviews books in languages other than English, we should make an exception for

Internet et Religion (Infolio, €17), by Jean-François Mayer, associate editor of **RW** and Director of the Religioscope Institute. The new book, which is the first in a series of titles to be published under the Religioscope logo, describes various uses of the Internet by both mainstream and smaller religious groups and is especially interested in the impact of technological changes in the field of religion. While the Internet offers opportunities for religious groups to reach their faithful without any mediation, it also makes it easier to challenge traditional religious authorities and to make divergent, competing voices heard. In the case of Islam, it worsens the current crisis of authority. Less dramatically, for other religious groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, it raises the issue of distinguishing between bona fide teachings and sources considered as not legitimate. Even groups that initially were tempted to ignore the Web—from Shinto groups in Japan to Fundamentalist communities in the West—seem all to come finally to the conclusion that there is no escape from it. The Internet creates a pressure by making even internal controversies relatively public.

While the author acknowledges having been initially skeptical about the ability of the Internet to create virtual communities, he has come across instances that seem to go in that direction: for instance, prayer groups gathering online. Similarly, he mentions cases of small religious groups (e.g. neo-pagans) currently emerging out of forums. Rituals online are found in several religions, but they have not evolved

into a specific kind of cyber experience, as some observers had initially expected: they mostly tend to replicate classical rituals to some extent. Traditions putting a strong emphasis on visual components, such as Hinduism with its concept of *darshan* (seeing the sacred), find themselves in the best position for making use of the Internet for rituals, as shown by websites offering online *puja*. [The book cannot be ordered from Religioscope Institute; but it can be ordered from any French language bookshop, or from Amazon.fr, the French counterpart of Amazon.com, which allows the use of the same customer ID.]

■ **Although the Arab press has been faulted by the Bush administration and other critics as being tolerant of Islamism and even terrorism, a new study suggests that Arab journalists are largely critical of Islamic states and religious leaders involved in government.** The study, cited in the *New York Times* (May 25), by researchers Lawrence Pintak, Jeremy Ginges and Nicholas Felton, surveyed 601 journalists in 13 Arab countries in North Africa, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. Overwhelmingly, the journalists wanted religious leaders to stay out of politics (78 percent). The majority (60 percent) agreed that “national laws may contradict Islamic law.” Forty nine percent said it is “not necessary to believe in God to have good moral values,” and only 25 percent said “politicians who do not believe in God are

not fit for office.” The study, which is to be published in July in the *International Journal of Press Politics*, found that most of the journalists see themselves as agents of political and social change who believe it is their mission to reform the antidemocratic regimes they live under.

■ The new book **Worship and Sin: An Exploration of Religion-Related Crime in the United States** (Peter Lang Publishing, 34.95), by Karel Kurst-Swanger, attempts to integrate the often scattered theories and research on criminal behavior and religion found across the various disciplines into a more orderly and categorized approach. The author, a criminologist at the State University of New York at Oswego, states at the beginning of the book that religion-related crime is far from a single phenomenon and that like other crimes it needs to be distinguished by its various dimensions. Swanger arrives at a three-fold typology of religion-related crime: theologically based; reactive/defensive; and abuse of religious authority. She pays the most attention to the first two kinds of religion-related crime, viewing them as most distinct from other types of criminal activity. Often groups straddle the line between these two categories, as in the case of the polygamous Latter Day Saints groups; their “criminal” practices stem from their theology but they become involved in other such unlawful activities because of outside pressure and attack.

In contrast to the first two categories, the abuse of religious authority is closely linked with occupational and corporate crime, although Swanger acknowledges the religious implications of such activity as clerical sex abuse. The purpose of the book seems to be to serve as a primer on the importance and complexity of religious crime for criminal justice professionals, providing a wealth of case studies and research findings, rather than proposing or advancing a particular theory or argument. Swanger provides an even-handed overview of such issues as religion, crime and the First Amendment, crimes against children (though she tends to be more receptive to charges of recovered memory/ritual abuse

than many scholars), illicit drugs, and hate crimes. She tries to break out of the anti-cult and new religious movement debate (although taking a middling position on such a controversial issue as brainwashing) by creating the new designation of “destructive religious groups” regardless of whether they are labeled “cults,” sects, or established religions.

■ **Religion Dispatches** is an interesting online magazine devoted to exploring the interactions and intersections of religion, values, and public life. Founded by religion scholars and journalists, the web magazine attempts to analyze religious news events for their wider political and social implications for the “common good.” Although the

magazine views its work as “increasing attention to progressive expressions of religion and values,” its coverage is not heavily ideological or biased toward the left side of the spectrum. Recent articles include reports on signs of a new “evangelical center” in politics forming, the international charismatic television network God TV, the role of Buddhist clergy in the violence in Tibet, and new religious freedoms in Cuba. The website has started featuring videos, the first being a roundtable discussion of scholars and journalists with commentator E.J. Dionne on religion and politics. Visit *Religion Dispatches* at: <http://www.religiondispatches.org>

On/File: A Continuing Survey of People, Groups, Movements and Events Impacting Religion

1) The **Evangelical Manifesto** represents an attempt by a wide spectrum of evangelical leaders to avoid the politicization of the movement. The statement seeks to articulate a clear definition of what it means to be an evangelical and to differentiate it from both fundamentalism and liberal Protestantism. The 19-page manifesto asserts that theological principles

should be more important than any policy preferences in defining the movement. The document, drafted over three years by nine evangelical theologians and writers and signed by 80 pastors, theologians and activists, is largely the brainchild of social critic Os Guinness. Some leaders of the New Christian Right, such as James Dobson, did not sign it. Conservative critics have charged that the document’s call to expand the evangelical agenda beyond such issues as abortion and anti-gay rights may dilute evangelical political action and reduce its effectiveness. Others have noted that the document is too moderate, not taking a deci-

sive position on the major issues of the day. But such moderation may be the point of the signers as the election season arrives and the evangelical vote is again in the spotlight. (Source: *U.S. News & World Report*, May 13)

2) **Max Beauvoir** is the first person to occupy the newly created position of Supreme Master of the Voodoo religion. Only officially recognized as a religion by Haiti in 2003, Voodoo has been an underground religion for centuries, often facing stigmatization and opposition for its secretive and syncretistic nature. Beauvoir, a

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houngan (or priest) and long-time self-styled public relations figure for the religion both in Haiti and the U.S., has used his new platform to press for greater public recognition and rights for Voodoo. He has spoken out against the misrepresentation of Voodoo by Holly-

wood, as well as “pogroms” carried out against Voodoo practitioners after the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986 (the religion was linked with the *tonton macoutes* militias). The recent establishment of a national federation of Voodooists and their election of Beauvoir as their leader is hoped to gain the religion new legitimacy on the world stage. (Source: *Sightings*, May 1)

About Religion Watch

Religion Watch looks beyond the walls of churches, synagogues and denominational officialdom to examine how religion really affects, and is affected by, the wider society.

It is through monitoring new books and approximately 1000 U.S. and foreign periodicals (including newspapers from across the country, as well as newsletters, magazines and scholarly journals, as well as the Internet), and by first-hand reporting, that *Religion Watch* has tracked hundreds of trends on the whole spectrum of contemporary religion.

Published every two months, the twelve page newsletter is unique because it focuses on long-range developments that lead to, and result from, world current events.

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