November-December 2008
volume 24 number 1

RELIGION WATCH
A NEWSLETTER MONITORING TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

INSIDE

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.

RELIGIOSCOPE
This is a publication of Religioscope Institute

Financial crisis felt across the religious spectrum

Across the world, the current financial crisis has also had an impact on religion—not only with people turning to faith in difficult times, but also with reassessments of business approaches. The *Christian Century* (November 18) reports that while reassuring clergy and retirees that their pensions are safe, mainline churches are concerned about how the economic downturn will affect their operating budgets and ministries. Both the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Episcopal Church may experience possible budget shortfalls at the national level because of reduced income from endowment funds, reports John Dart. It may also be the case that a severe economic recession could reactivate mainline churches in advocating for economic alternatives. Three Presbyterian leaders have already urged in a letter that the mortgage crisis should cause Presbyterians to look anew at the American economic system—"one which has been immensely productive in many respects, but which has tended to favor the strong and the aggressive, often at great cost to the weak."

Although the Catholic Church has also suffered from the recent turmoil in the financial markets, *The Tablet* magazine (September 27) reports that the Vatican's shrewd investments are helping it to weather the storm. A report on church finances stated that the Holy See's total assets at the end of last year amounted to 1.4 billion euros. It reveals that the Vatican's financial advisors "shrewdly spotted the risks of keeping the Church's money tied up in shares and switched to safer investments, including bonds, cash and gold." In other places, it was suggested that church leaders should set an example with their own practices in the markets, instead of just affirming principles. In England, the Ekklesia think tank said that the Church of England should "put its money where the message is," after it was revealed that its finance managers had been using similar tactics to those of the City traders that the Church criticized. Ekklesia's Jonathan Bartley claimed that the Church had made huge profits from short-selling and speculation in order to maximize profits. The think tank suggested that the Church could invest more in institutions such as cooperatives and housing associations, in return for a slightly lower profit. Ekklesia added that, worldwide, churches "control billions of pounds of assets", and thus they could act for promoting alternative models of the global economy not based on greed, as many church groups already do (*Ekklesia*, September 25).

From Russia to New York, investors and other concerned business people are turning to occult sources for comfort and advice. The *New York Times* (November 23) reports that psychics, palm readers and astrologers are finding a robust business among Wall Street stock traders. Such psychic practitioners report that their once solid clientele among women now includes many men, and the topic of consultation has changed from romance to financial prospects. An analyst from Consumer Sentiment Index notes that when the economy is down, consultations spike noticeably. In Russia, the *Noviye Izvestia* newspaper reported

(October 24) that a third of people seeking advice from astrologers and other "occult" counselors currently ask them questions on finance and exchange rates, while such requests usually do not exceed five percent. There is in Russia a high level of interest in everything related to the supranormal and mysterious. Interestingly, according to surveys, people with higher education, youth and people in the 40–49 year age range are more interested in paranormal phenomena than other population groups (*Interfax*, October 24).

There are also religious leaders who feel that the financial crisis has proven them right. Promoters of Islamic finance systems hope to draw in customers during the crisis. Influential Egyptian-born Sheikh Yusuf A-Qardawi said that the crisis had showed the failure of financial systems based on usury—a practice that Islamic finance rejects—and not on exchange of goods. However, although Islamic banks did not directly invest in subprimes, the financial system is so extensively interconnected that it will take time to see what the real effects of the crisis on Islamic finance will be. Islamic finance has been growing rapidly (10–15 percent per year), but the very demand creates a pressure for developing new products, all of which do not fully conform to Islamic rules. Nevertheless, observers agree that Islamic banking (still a very minor player at this point) might benefit from the broken confidence in the conventional financial systems (*Le Monde*, October 25).

Did subtle shifts in the religious vote play a part in the Obama victory?

The religious–political configurations in the 2008 election of Barack Obama are still being analyzed, but it may be the case that slight variations in religious voting patterns made all the difference. In his e-newsletter *Sightings* (November 10), Martin Marty notes the conflicting reports about the changes in the religious votes. For instance, post-election day, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that evangelicals and Catholics had stayed on the Republican track, while the *New York Times* noted that Obama had "succeeded in chiseling off small but significant chinks of white evangelical voters who have been the foundation of the Republican Party for decades, especially among the young." Marty adds that Catholics showed a definite switch, with their majority voting Democratic this time (by a 54 percent margin). As the September/October issue of **RW** noted, the switch among Hispanics to the Democrats in 2008 may account for this change. A slight majority of mainline Protestants also seemed to have voted Democratic.

Whether or not there was a significant, if slight, evangelical shift to Obama, many observers are asking the larger question about the state and prospects of the Christian Right and evangelicals in politics for the near future. Sociologist Michael Lindsay, writing on the *Immanent Frame*, a blog dealing with religion and public life, cautions against the recurring tendency of the media and others to write the obituary of the religious right. The likelihood of President-elect Obama reversing the "Mexico City Policy," which banned all non-governmental organizations from receiving federal funds for performing abortions in other countries, will likely reactivate evangelical and Catholic pro-life protests, he adds. With the old stalwarts of the Christian Right retiring or passing away, such as James Dobson, Charles Colson, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, it is an open question who will emerge as the new evangelical political leaders. Lindsay doesn't see too many possibilities in Sarah Palin, who has "never been able to articulate a religiously inspired vision for public policy in the way that Phyllis Schlafly or Tony Perkins—both stalwarts of the Religious Right—have." Figures such as Mike Huckabee or Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal are more likely to take on the evangelical political mantle, Lindsay adds.
(http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/2008/11/07/changing-of-the-guard/)

More Muslim women running for US political office since 9/11

More Muslims, particularly women, are running for political office, spurred by the perceived erosions of their civil liberties. The soul searching that followed the 9/11 attacks prompted more woman to step into leadership roles, a trend encouraged by the community, says Agha Saeed, founder of the American Muslim Alliance, which has been tracking Muslim candidates since 1996.

Before September 11, less than 5 percent were women; now about one in three are, according to an *Associated Press* article.

Dozens of Muslim Americans of both genders have seats on city councils and work in Washington, DC, although few hold statewide office. Only two Muslims—Democrats Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Andre Carson of Indiana—serve in Congress. Jamilah Nasheed, an African-American convert to Islam and Missouri Democratic state representative, is one of just nine Muslim Americans in state legislatures nationwide, and the only woman, according to the alliance. She is said to be almost certain to win reelection this year, and Muslim American women in California, Michigan and Minnesota are vying to join her.

Emerging Movement finds niche in American denominations

The Emerging Movement, stressing intimacy, community and experiential, "post-modern" worship and theology, is gradually moving from small, independent start-up ministries to gaining greater denominational support and sponsorship. *Theology, News and Notes*, the magazine of Fuller Theological Seminary, devotes its fall issue to the new place denominations are making for emerging ministries, with case studies of the Seventh Day Adventists, Lutheran and Reformed churches, Evangelical Covenant Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Assemblies of God. It has been the case in the last three or four years that emerging initiatives have been seen within traditional churches and the megachurch movement. For instance, the Glendale, Arizona-based Community Church of Joy (of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—ELCA) has gradually changed from a strong entertainment-oriented megachurch to one stressing "transformation," discipleship and community. In the Seventh Day Adventist Church, there is a network called "rechurch," expressly modeled on Emergent Village (the unofficial center for the diffuse movement), although it exists on the margins of the denomination.

The Emerging Leaders Network (ELN) in the ELCA has been more successful in finding denominational support, even having new ministries eventually sponsored by the church's mission development office. Nadia Bolz-Weber, a leader in the ELN, developed the Denver-based House for All Sinners and Saints, and claims that the Lutheran theology and tradition is particularly friendly to the emerging themes of liturgy, mystery and ambiguity. The same goes for the Presbyterian Church (USA), where the Reformed tradition meshes with the emerging idea that church structures and worship patterns can be rearranged to meet the demands of changing times. Several presbyteries have funded emergent ministries, and proponents of the movement gather at the web-based discussion group Presbymergent.org.

Among evangelical denominations, the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) is strongly involved in planting emerging congregations. Although most ECC remain traditional congregations with Swedish roots, there are a growing number of emerging church plants, such as a hip-hop church for children and teens, and even existing churches that joined the denomination for stability,

such as Quest in Seattle and Jesus People USA in Chicago. Yet within the Assemblies of God, at least among Latino churches, there is more resistance to a younger generation stressing social activism and other emerging themes, report Elizabeth Rios and Luis Alvarez. (*Theology, News and Notes*, 135 N. Oakland Ave., Pasadena, CA 91182)

New interfaith movement takes congregational approach

Interfaith centers—small congregations seeking to draw people from all religions—are reportedly increasing in the US, according to the Harvard University-based Pluralism Project. The establishment of interfaith centers surged after the 9/11 attacks and now there are about 550 such groups in the US, with the largest numbers in New York, California, Massachusetts and Illinois. A *Christian News* article (November 3) profiles a New York interfaith center called Faith House, which is led by three co-leaders who are Jewish, Muslim and Christian. The service features includes rituals from these and other faiths, including the "blessing of atheism."

Most of the 50 or so attenders came to the center to learn more about other faiths and foster interfaith understanding. The participants are mainly between 30 and 50 years old, and half come from Protestant backgrounds. About one-third do not attend other services during the week. Research from the Pluralism Project also notes that these groups create new roles for women. Interfaith groups provide "opportunities for women's leadership in a way that oftentimes the religious traditions themselves do not, simply because those positions do not need to be sanctioned by any religious head or body," says Kathryn Lohre of the project.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Unlike many Protestant and Catholic churches, there are few sharp divisions over such issues as the ordination of women in Eastern Orthodox churches in the US, according to one of the first major studies of Orthodox laity. The survey, conducted by the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute of Berkeley, California and presented at the late October meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR), studied 1,000 parishioners in 103 parishes of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the largest Orthodox bodies in the US. The lack of wide differences between clergy and laity is most likely related to the basic unity on Orthodox doctrine and practices. The vast majority of both clergy and laity identify their approach to church life as either "conservative" or "traditional." Only a small percentage (about four percent) described themselves as "liberal," and anywhere from 19 to 28 percent of clergy and lay respondents called themselves "moderates." Yet very few (seven–eight percent) believed that the Orthodox Church was the only path to salvation. On the issue of women priests, only 14 percent of the Greek Orthodox laity and six percent of the OCA laity would agree with such an innovation. On the status of the priest, the laity were even more likely than the clergy themselves to recognizes the special status of the priesthood, preferring such a hierarchical model to that of a more egalitarian "servant–leader." The laity and the clergy almost equally agreed that the priest should have final authority in a parish. The laity valued the priesthood to the extent that three-quarters of respondents would encourage their sons to become priests. At the same time, a majority of laity (53 percent) said it was

okay to disobey the priest on some matters. The survey did not find a wide "generation gap" on doctrine and practice, nor much differences between cradle or convert members (who represent as much as 60 percent of the OCA membership).

‣ **Science undergraduates rate themselves as more religious than other groups and engage in prayer and attend religious services significantly more frequently than the majority of undergraduate groups, according to a paper presented at the SSSR conference.** Researchers Jennifer Storch and Christopher Ellison of the University of Texas found that these students are significantly more committed to biblical inerrancy than social/behavioral science majors. They emphasize the importance of religion in life decisions significantly more than nearly all other major groups. Storch and Ellison were surprised that business majors are the least religious of any undergraduate group on many measures. This could indicate that "materialism is the worldview which is most irreconcilable with religiosity," they added. In line with previous research, social and behavioral science majors demonstrate significantly less religious behaviors and attitudes in multiple measures when compared with science majors. Storch and Ellison concluded that early in the education process, science students do not show irreligious attitudes and hypothesized whether socialization throughout undergraduate science education may affect religious beliefs and behaviors, since professional scientists are less religious. They speculated that it could also be the case that religious science students are choosing to pursue graduate degrees less frequently than their non-religious counterparts.

‣ **Congregations have not deserted American cities, although the memberships of urban churches have shown a steady decline, according to a recent study.** A paper presented at the meeting of the SSSR by Dale Jones of the Research Center of the Church of Nazarene challenged the common view that most congregations followed their members to the suburbs, with a subsequent loss of ministry in US urban centers. In congregational studies conducted from the 1950s up to 2000, which asked US religious groups to identity their congregations and the people associated with them by county, it was found that the number of congregations in nine large cities (New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, DC, St. Louis, Denver and New Orleans) had not declined at nearly the rate of population loss. This means that it would be easier for residents of America's large cities to find venues for religious involvement now than was the case in 1952. However, the drop in membership exceeds the loss in total population. In all, there was a two percent congregation increase, a 29 percent population decline and a 23 percent membership drop in these cities.

Since New York showed an unusually high congregation growth (34 percent—probably due to outside church planters targeting the city), removing that city from the totals showed a 14 percent congregation loss, which was still lower than the population decline. Much of the stability in the number of congregations is due to a growth of African-American and evangelical congregations in cities; Catholic churches have held steady and mainline churches and Jewish synagogues have declined since 1952, according to Jones.

‣ **he growth of Calvinistic beliefs among evangelicals, particularly Southern Baptists, tends to encourage a more patriarchal attitude toward women and the issue of women in the ministry, according to a new study conducted by Dennis J. Horton of Baylor University.** Horton, who presented a paper at the meeting of the SSSR, surveyed 2,604 ministry students from 35 different schools in the US and Canada, from 28 different denominations (including non-denominationalism). In placing respondents in the two categories of "egalitarian" (agreeing that God calls women to serve in all

types of leadership ministry) or "complementarian/patriarchalist," it was found that those who are egalitarian are much less likely to be Calvinistic than those strongly patriarchal in their view of women in the ministry. The strongly patriarchal participants were generally three times more likely to hold to the tenets of Calvinism than were the strongly egalitarian participants. This finding was evident within the four different groups with some affinity for Calvinistic beliefs (Baptist, Non-denominational, Presbyterian and Reformed). Students affiliated with churches more likely to be Wesleyan (or Arminian), such as the Pentecostal and Methodist, were more likely to be open to women serving in all types of ministry leadership.

▸ **Contrary to expectations, the young Catholic pilgrims who traveled to the World Youth Day (WYD) in Australia last summer attended more for devotional than social reasons, with the more devout Catholics tending to view their participation as a "rite of passage" into a more personalized faith experience, according to a new study.** Every time there is a WYD pilgrimage, sociologists have set out to find the motivations behind young Catholics venturing near and far to attend the crowded events presided over by the pope. At the recent meeting of the SSSR, sociologists from the Australian Catholic University presented preliminary findings showing that there was a diversity of orientations of the young pilgrims. The researchers' early hypothesis that a high number of WYD pilgrims would be "social Catholics" (attending for social reasons) did not hold true. As might be expected, those from the host country of Australia were the most likely to have attended largely for such reasons as sightseeing and camaraderie; those coming from further away were more likely to select or "self-select" as an elite of the most committed Catholics (except for those from Ireland and England, which, for some reason, contained a high number of "social Catholics").

But even though there was not much change among the social Catholics attending the event, quite a number did experience positive results (more interest in the faith and attending mass). Contrary to the researchers' expectations, the large worship and catechesis events drew strong interest from participants. A key idea behind WYD is to help young people move from a familial to a personal Catholic faith—a pattern that was evident among those who came to the event from strongly religious families. Returned pilgrims of all orientations also showed an increase in awareness of the ethical dimensions of social issues and in compassion.

"Non-Jewish Jews" growing in Israel

The strong influx of Russian immigrants since the 1990s has greatly complicated religious demographics in Israel, since many of them cannot be technically considered as Jews from a religious perspective, writes Jesuit researcher David Neuhaus in a detailed analysis published in the Jerusalem-based journal *Proche-Orient Chrétien* (No. 1, 2008). According to 2006 religious statistics (which do not include foreign workers), there were about 5.4 million Jews, nearly 1.2 million Muslims, 149,000 Christians and 117,500 Druzes in Israel. In addition, more than 280,000 people are not categorized according to religion. Moreover, nearly 30,000 Christians are "non-Arabs." Before 1995 Israelis were divided between "Jews" and "non-Jews," the latter group being nearly all Arabs. But the picture has become more complex.

Most of the people in the "other" category come from the former Soviet Union (FSU) and identify themselves as Jews, although they are not listed as such. This means that a group of "non-Jewish Jews" has developed, enjoying some of the privileges of the Jewish population (e.g. the right to immigrate to Israel). And this raises crucial question about Jewish identity: should a state in which most citizens are secular respect the religious definition according to which a Jew either is born of a Jewish mother or has converted to Judaism according to Jewish religious law? Massive immigration from

FSU has made this issue particularly sensitive. Eager to receive new immigrants to counterbalance Arab demographic growth, Jewish organizations helping immigrants paid little attention to their genealogy, as long as they identified themselves as Jews. But the definition of "Jew" in the FSU was not the same as in Israel, since it was connected to an idea of nationality: people having a Jewish father only would also be considered as Jews, and would actually define themselves as Jews. Also, many Jews had intermarried. With the uncertainties of the post-communist period, emigration to other places looked like an attractive option.

Jewish religious authorities in Israel were not inclined to the same laxity as immigration authorities. This created many problems: for instance, people defining themselves as Jews were denied burial in Jewish cemeteries. Some are Christian believers, but their number is difficult to assess, since they tend to hide out of fear of compromising their Israeli citizenship. Beside those who are Russian Orthodox, there has been a significant growth of Messianic Jewish communities as a result of immigration from the FSU, due both to their warm atmosphere and to the social support provided in such communities. Anyway, there is no doubt that a majority of non-Jewish people among the immigrants are not Christians, meaning that they do not fit into any of the social religious categories used in the State of Israel.

One of the options would be conversions. The Institute of Jewish Studies has been working since 1999 in order to train people for conversion. According to its director, it focuses on those of the immigrant population of childbearing age. The hope is that a majority of young immigrants will be converted within a decade. A hurdle is the strictness of Orthodox religious courts (the only ones able to convert people with legal effect in Israel); so far, they have only accepted a minority among the candidates sent by the institute. The Israeli armed forces have also organized their own conversion procedures under the military rabbinate. The debate on the integration of "non-Jewish Jews" from the FSU is again raising the issue of whether only conversions performed by Orthodox rabbis should be officially recognized. (*Proche-Orient Chrétien*, Sainte-Anne, P.O. Box 19079,

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

■ The new password to the **RW** archives, at: www.religionwatch.com, will be from Dec. 8: **Crisis**

■ *In the May/June issue we experimented with bulk mailing the print version of **RW** (only to return subsequently to first-class mailing). We have subsequently learned of some subscribers who did not receive that issue. We are sorry for this mishap, and if any others did not receive the May/June issue, please let us know. We can send those individuals or organizations a copy, or they can go to our Web site (www. religionwatch. com) and download a pdf version of that issue.*

■ The **World Religion Database** (WRD) is a new online publication based on the research of the International Religious Demography project at Boston University's Institute for the Study of Culture, Religion and World Affairs. The WRD collects, collates and offers analysis of primary and secondary source material on religious demography for all major religions in every country of the world and makes estimates from these sources available to the scholarly community. The WRD, electronically published by the Dutch publisher Brill, specifically aims to provide adherence data, where it is available from censuses and surveys, at the province and eventually city level. It also aims to account for subgroups of each major religion to the maximum extent possible based on the best social science practices. Since its launch in 2008, the WRD has provided the most comprehensive collection of census and survey data on religious adherents in sub-Saharan Africa. The second phase of the WRD's work, to be completed in 2009, concentrates on Muslim-majority countries and countries where Muslims make up a significant proportion of the population. This phase will include providing country-by-country Sunni–Shi'a estimates, as well as estimates of other important Muslim subgroups. Subsequent phases will focus on other major religions, including Hindus, Buddhists and Jews.
For more information on the WRD, visit: http://www.brill.nl/wrd

■ The Association for the Sociology of Religion has created an excellent online **Bibliographical Database** that covers a vast range of

topics, books and journals according to terms (allowing for multiple-term searches), authors and publication dates. It's probably the most extensive online bibliography in the sociology of religion. The site also allows for visitors to make corrections and additions.
Visit the site at: http://www.tnstate.edu/sociology/bibliodb/browse.asp

■ ***One Nation Divisible*** (Rowman & Littlefield, $44.95), by Mark Silk and Andrew Walsh, is the culmination of a series of books called the Religion by Region project, which attempted to map out the relation of American religion and regionalism. For those who didn't read the books on the specific regions (which were reviewed in **RW** several years ago), the new book succinctly summarizes their findings, while updating the discussions. The various chapters are quite prescient about how the various regions are changing religiously and the social ramifications of this. A chapter on the Mountain West (comprising Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana) reports on how these states comprise a new swing region due to the increase of Latino Catholics and religious pluralism—a fact borne out in the recent presidential election.
Another chapter on the Pacific Northwest missed the debut of Sarah Palin by a few months, but accurately notes how the region has developed its own kind of non-denominational evangelicalism with a very cohesive identity (more so than in other regions), even if a spiritual environmentalism has become its new "civil religion" (especially in Washington State and Oregon). The concluding chapter attempts to tie together these regional trends and tendencies and explain how they contribute to the main narrative of American religion. Silk and Walsh argue that the Midwest's blend of personal piety, pluralism with a concern for unity, moderately conservative morality and a moderately liberal economic stance best defines American society today, noting that Obama's "determination to run for the 2008 Democratic nomination on a platform of bringing people together was very much in keeping with his Midwestern identity."

■ ***Religious America, Secular Europe*** (Ashgate, $29.95), by Peter Berger, Grace Davie and Effie Fokas, is, as the title suggests, a comparative examination of European secularism and religious vitality in the US. In seeking to understand just why there is a secular–religious divide between America and Europe, the authors pay particular attention to these areas' diverging histories and legal (especially church–state) arrangements. The book occupies the middle ground between secularization theorists, who see the US as inevitably following in the trail of Europe in losing its religious vitality, and market theorists, who argue that European church–state restrictions and the resulting lack of competition are the reason for the continent's secularization.
Berger, Davie and Fokas argue that Europe is an exceptional case in its secularity, and that its specific histories and cultures will keep it distinct from the US and other more religious regions of the world. There is some acknowledgement that there is secularism (or, at least, non-affiliation among the younger generations) in the US and religious resurgence in Europe, and it is especially in the case of the latter where there are signs of growing interest and even understanding of the public role of religion. It is the presence of religious (usually Muslim) immigrants that is expected to turn European countries toward a more "accomodationist" or, at least, accepting stance on religion.

■ The Emerging Movement, which expounds a postmodern Christianity, has been hailed as portending promise or peril, depending on one's perspective, but nowhere is it seen as heralding new Christian and societal change as markedly as in Phyllis Tickle's new book ***The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*** (Baker Books, $17.99). In her work as the religion editor of *Publisher's Weekly*, Tickle pioneered a new method of tracking religious trends by paying close attention to the reading habits of American believers. In the new book, Tickle is convinced that we are living in a second Reformation, because the older models of Catholicism and Protestantism are collapsing, as are traditional sources of authority, especially the Bible. While that claim is not new, Tickle does provide an interesting map of how Christianity might be changing. She sees a "gathering center" forming, as Christians from liturgical, "renewalist," social justice and conservative sectors increasingly swap ideas and practices and then sometimes organize informal gatherings (because established churches can't accommodate such ill-defined presentations of the faith) to explore such "emergent" forms of faith in venues ranging from house churches to pubs.
As these sectors experience cultural changes as well as these innovations, there is a certain segment in each that will resist, forming counter-movements, -organizations and -denominations. Tickle estimates that 60 percent of practicing Christians will be influenced by emergent forms and an unfolding emerging theology; between 9 and 13 percent will be in resisting movements; and another 30 percent will maintain traditional expressions, while accommodating new currents. To complicate things more, Tickle sees a growing split between "emergent" and "emerging" leaders and congregations, with the

former holding less strongly to the Bible as the only source of authority and making more room for tradition and experience.

■ While there have been recent research findings about the charitable giving patterns of religious Americans as compared to secular Americans, the new book ***Passing the Plate*** (Oxford University Press, $19.95), by Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, with Patricia Snell, takes a more critical look at the giving habits of US Christians. The book starts off with a good deal of empirical data showing that American Christians don't really give much to their churches and other religious and secular causes in general. American Christians give a mean average of 2.9 percent (with Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and evangelicals giving the most and Catholics giving the least), which is below the mean average of non-Christian American believers, who give 3.3 percent of income. The authors find that only a small minority of Christians are generous givers; higher-income Christians give little or no more money as a percentage of household income compared to lower-income Christians.

Smith, Emerson and Snell conclude that most Christians are not taught that their faith traditions demand more generous giving. Another reason is that there is a lack of trust toward the churches and other charitable organizations to which American Christians would give their money. The book concludes with a section offering practical suggestions on how churches and other organizations can connect with their members and constituencies to strengthen giving habits, such as showing greater transparency and encouraging discussion and programs on financial matters in congregations and seminaries.

■ ***North American Buddhists in Social Context*** (Brill, $99), edited by Paul Numrich, is a full-scale examination of the various Buddhist groups active on the North American scene. It includes Buddhist groups in the Asian diaspora, as well as the more home-grown Western types of Buddhist groups. Throughout the book, the writers show how difficult it is to make clear-cut definitions of Buddhism as it is practiced by these different groups. Not only does this show the developing stage of the field itself, but also the development of very diverse Buddhist expressions in North America. For example, a comparison of Thai, Lao and Cambodian Buddhists shows how, even with their similar orientations, the three Buddhist groups have different experiences, due to the Thai Buddhists' level of homeland government support and the lack of such ties stemming from many Lao and Cambodian Buddhists' refugee status.

Studies of immigrant Buddhist groups often focus on how the immigrants preserve their culture; however, Carolyn Chen's chapter indicates that this is not always the case. Chen writes that "Taiwanese immigrant Buddhists do not regard their religion as a vehicle to preserve ethnic traditions but to purge ethnic traditions." The redefinition of Buddhism as a Western science by this group, according to Chen, is ironically marking an ethnic boundary by equating modernity and the host culture of the US against Taiwanese Christians. The contribution on Korean Buddhists depicts the "double minority" status of these Buddhists (among co-religionists and among non-Buddhists). Although the motivation to become Buddhists varies, there is a distinctive development of "Western Buddhism" among non-immigrant North Americans. While the book illustrates the ambiguity of North American Buddhist Studies as an established field, it does a superior job of depicting the importance of these communities for those who adhere to them.—*Reviewed by Ayako Sairenji, a New Jersey-based writer and researcher*

■ Part polemic and part empirical study, ***Society without God*** (New York University Press, $35), by Phil Zuckerman, holds up the Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Sweden as the model of full-scale secularism. Right from the beginning, Zuckerman admits that he (somewhat unusually for a sociologist of religion) likes what he sees in these two nations—a disinclination toward and disinterest in basic religious belief on the part of citizens of cultured and innovative societies with humane social policies. Going against a main current of sociological thought, Zuckerman's argument is that these societies prove that religion is not necessary for ensuring good order and a beneficial social climate (lack of crime, good education and health care, general happiness). Through in-depth interviews with 149 Danish and Swedish residents, Zuckerman tries to unlock the mystery of why Scandinavia in general is so secular. Along the way, he reports several interesting findings. He divides secular Danes and Swedes into three nuanced categories, the first being reluctance/reticence, where religion is basically a non-issue or viewed as something marginal or even embarrassing (even among the many who admitted that there may be an elusive "something out there"). Half of Zuckerman's sample were in the "benign indifference" camp, which is close to what sociologists have called "belonging without believing"—seeing the church and its rituals as good, even if not to be taken too seriously. Zuckerman was more surprised by the orientation of "utter obliviousness," where respondents had not even considered questions of God or meaning for most of their lives.

As to the reasons for Scandinavian secularity, Zuckerman cites a whole range of factors: a monopolistic state church that discourages competition; a historical background where religion was imposed rather than freely accepted by the people; secularization among women as an overwhelming majority entered the work force and lost the religious influence they typically exert in society; the social democratic policies that marginalized religion as a social force; and the possibility that these societies were never very religious in the first place (although this was challenged by the respondents' claim that their grandparents were devout Christians). Unfortunately, not much attention is paid to the way in which environmentalism may function as a surrogate religion for a segment of Scandinavians. Zuckerman's most promising insight, however, is how Danes and Swedes hold to a cultural religion, in a similar way to that of American and Israeli Jews, rather than to atheism (which few claimed), as they retain Christian holidays, rituals (often for purposes of national identity) and ethics while emptying them of theological content.

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Danes and Swedes hold to a cultural religion, rather than to atheism, as they retain Christian holidays, rituals and ethics while emptying them of theological content.

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■ The new book ***The Spirit of Generation Y*** (John Garratt Publishing) could be considered the Australian and somewhat more somber version of ***Soul Searching***, the popular American study of teens and religion (also known as the National Survey of Youth and Religion). The book, coauthored by Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber, draws on a national survey and over one hundred interviews with Australian young people born between 1981 and 1995. The authors identify four types of spirituality held by Australian youth: traditional (espoused by 46 percent), New Age (17 percent), secular (28 percent) and "other" (nine percent). What strikes the authors is not only the fairly large percent of New Age and particularly secular youth, but also the growing ranks of Christians of various backgrounds joining the secular camp, and even embracing the New Age (though more in the realm of belief than practice). Generation Y young people are making the move away from the churches at an earlier age than did their baby boomer parents. Before they reach the age of 25, about 18 percent of those who used to belong to a Christian church are already ex-members.

Only those young members of conservative churches were more likely to hold on to their faith through adolescence. Far more than its American counterpart, *The Spirit of Generation Y* upholds the secularization thesis, viewing youth as the leading edge of a quiet societal abandonment of traditional religion and its institutions. Given their acceptance of one or another version of the secularization theory, the authors argue that the US youth's similarly individualistic and therapeutic spirituality (as found in *Soul Searching*) is likely a precursor to a general loss of religious belief.

■ ***Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*** (Ashgate, $29.95), edited by Rik Coolsaet, is one of the more balanced, if conflicted, treatments of radical Islamic terrorist activities. The collection shows how pressing the radicalization challenge is (four out of five incidents of suicide terrorism perpetuated worldwide between 1968 and 2004 have occurred since 9/11) and, at the same time, how elusive, slippery and debatable current theory and research findings are, even among experts. Several chapters take aim at the idea that the wave of religiously inspired violence since 9/11 actually represents a new more lethal form of terrorism that is distinct from the older kinds. For instance, Monica Crenshaw questions whether the new terrorism is really as religiously based as is often claimed, citing research showing that only nine of the 20 most lethal terrorist groups can be classified as exclusively religious. There is also a clash over whether there is a typical jihadist profile in Europe. Most chapters cite the importance of networks based on family ties and close friends, but that doesn't help law enforcement officials distinguish these networks from uncountable family and friendship groups that are not jihadists; at the same time, a number of jihadists operate as "lone wolves." Islamic specialist Olivier Roy is less hesitant in outlining characteristics that make up al-Qaeda, such as its bottom-up network structure, its increasing reliance on converts (with a good number originating from the West Indies) and its global rather than territorial or national orientation. Another chapter makes the distinction between the global jihadist terrorists, such as the ones fighting in Iraq, and the jihadists who confine their activities to Europe. For one thing, the global terrorists tend to be professionals (usually in the technical and scientific fields) and

and engage in terrorism "full time," while the European jihadists are mainly lower class or unemployed and are more sporadic in their activities. One of the few things the contributors seem to agree on is that with the dismantling of al-Qaeda as an operational international network, the action is now found in the grassroots, which Coolsaet describes as a "patchwork of homegrown, self-radicalizing terror groups and freelance jihadis, each going their own way without central command, unified only [by] a common view of the world."

"With the dismantling of al-Qaeda as an operational network, the action is now found at the grassroots."

■ The use of market concepts and terminology when referring to religion and spirituality may be most evident in the US, but the new book ***Salvation Goods and Religious Markets*** (Peter Lang, $50.95), edited by Jorg Stolz, suggests that it has also spread far beyond its birthplace. The term "salvation goods" is actually taken from the sociologist Max Weber, and it means, to put it simply, the expression of religious values in and through human action. While most of the book's contributors—who are largely Swiss—are hesitant to apply much of economic theory to religion (such as the concept of exchange and rational choice), they do provide interesting case studies showing the currency (pardon the pun) of market metaphors in academic thinking. The spiritual marketplace is clearly more than a metaphor in the chapters on competing "cults" of the saints and their relics in Italy, and the new pluralism and deregulation of church–state ties in Latin America. In the case of the latter, Jean-Pierre Bastian argues that Pentecostal and charismatic churches increasingly function as producers and consumers of religious goods, yet adds that there are other motivations among these believers besides the logic of the market, such as the struggle for social recognition. RW's own Jean-Francois Mayer concludes the book with a fascinating look at an esoteric theme park and how it operates under the logic of the religious market by its encouragement of the syncretism of practices and beliefs.

■ In ***The Plot to Kill God*** (University of California Press, $21) sociologist Paul Froese attempts to uncover the ways in which the Soviet state attempted to eradicate religious practices and, more importantly, religious beliefs from its population. He accurately points to the fact that this was the first time that not only the existence of religious institutions, but also everyday forms of religious beliefs, were targeted. Froese's main premise is the paradoxical nature of a political system that not only attempted to get rid of religion, but also to supersede it by creating a new system of religious-like symbols and rituals. Unlike its French counterpart, the Soviet revolution's endeavor was to destroy beliefs in a supernatural realm and instil a new form of faith in its citizens. This is, according to Froese's account, the main characteristic of the "secularization experiment" carried out in the Soviet Union.
The author sets its early stages already in 1917 and makes a convincing argument about the existence of a policy going on into the Khruschev era and up to the Glasnost period. The book follows the several ways in which the religious issue was tackled by the Soviet state through, for example, monetary constriction and lack of support to religious institutions; persecution and open attack; and the creation of "atheist alternatives" to religious ceremonies such as marriages, baptisms or confirmations. Froese's notion of secularization entails not only the separation between church and state and the existence of a political system free from religious constraints, but also the creation of a political religion in which a supernatural God was gradually replaced by the state itself. Froese's study makes careful distinctions among the several tactics used to deal with different religious denominations. Thus, the author provides an informed description of the aggressive policies developed against the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic communities during the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, he pays attention to the complex ways in which the Stalin and Khruschev administrations dealt with Muslim believers. Froese's main effort is to connect historiographical research done by Sovietologists with theoretical takes advanced by sociologists of religion. Unfortunately, Froese has limited his scope only to secondary literature and English written or translated sources.—*Reviewed by Marisol Lopez-Menendez, a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the New School for Social Research*

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November-December 2008

volume 24 number 1

Word of Life (or Livets Ord) has been one of the largest charismatic groups in Sweden, if not Europe, but recently the Uppsala-based movement has moved in more ecumenical and "Catholic" directions. In the past, Word of Life has generated its share of controversy over its "word-faith" teachings (where one is taught to claim God's blessings and prosperity), with anti-cultist groups also claiming that the group displayed authoritarian tendencies. But now Word of Life, under its leader Ulf Elkman, is increasingly associating with Catholic, Orthodox and high church Lutheran circles and teachings. Elkman insists that he is not adopting Catholicism, but only broadening his theology and promoting new unity among Christians. Elkman has spoken at charismatic Catholic gatherings and is associating with Oasis, the Swedish Lutheran charismatic movement, and the high church Lutheran Ostanback monastery. He recently stated that "[w]ith secularism and Islam taking over in Europe, revival slogans won't suffice. The need of the hour is a powerful, effective unity including the historic churches." While avoiding debates over Catholic teachings, Elkman added that the recent undoing of the Lakeland healing revival in Florida over leadership scandals has highlighted the "need to tie in with classical doctrines and with a stricter understanding of the church offices." **(Source: *Charisma*, November)**