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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.

RELIGIOSCOPE

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## Rehabilitating jihadists—and reviving ghosts of the “cult wars”?

Linked to an increasing emphasis on counter-ideological work as part of efforts against radical Islamic groups, several countries are developing "terrorist rehabilitation programs." On February 24–26, **RW** attended an international conference on the topic in Singapore, organized by the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR). For jailed terrorists and extremists, prison can become either a place of further radicalization or offer the possibility to change one's way of thinking—hence the idea of terrorist rehabilitation. This tends to be linked to efforts to prevent the spread of extremist ideas in the wider society. Most "terrorist rehabilitation" efforts tend to involve the families of the jailed people as well, so that no second generation of radicals will emerge; there is also an attempt to alleviate the financial difficulties of the detainees' wives and children (who might otherwise depend on help from extremist groups).

Beside psychological, social and vocational rehabilitation, the programs emphasize religious rehabilitation. Muslim scholars visit jails and make efforts to correct the ideological views of detainees and bring them to the "correct" interpretation of Islam. One of the best-known programs was set up by Saudi Arabia following the 2003 Riyadh bombings. According to figures quoted at the conference, more than 700 of the 2,000 people sent to the rehabilitation program have been freed, after staying at halfway houses.

In Singapore, the program is conducted by the authorities in cooperation with the Muslim Religious Rehabilitation Group

(RRG), which currently involves 38 religious counselors and is complemented by an After-Care Program, conducted by a number of members of the Muslim community. Rehabilitation efforts have also been conducted by U.S. forces with detainees in Iraq and are being considered by some European countries, although there are some terminological and conceptual differences. For instance, the preventive dimension is taking an increasing role in the UK strategy for countering terrorism, and it includes "extremist disengagement."

For a Western scholar working on religious movements, the development of rehabilitation programs inevitably brings back memories of the cult and deprogramming controversies. There are similar tendencies to use medical metaphors: the need to "cure" the minds of terrorists. And, in fact, there have been some direct influences from advocates of the brainwashing school of thought. However, as one high-ranking security official observed at the conference, there is no foolproof way to assess if a detainee has been rehabilitated, and no tool in the world can read a person's mind. Moreover, reports on the motivations of jihadists presented at the conference clearly show that, as much as ideological views, what drives them is what they see as the plight of Muslim populations around the world. As long as such conditions exist, they will provide arguments for Al Qaeda's and other groups' propaganda and will fuel resentment and grievances, according to some presenters.

(ICPVTR: [www.pvtr.org](http://www.pvtr.org); RRG: [www.rrg.sg](http://www.rrg.sg))

## Evangelical scientists turning fellow believers to climate change activism

Evangelical scientists are having a significant impact on many evangelicals and their views on environmentalism, writes Mark Pinsky in the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Winter). The American evangelical rank and file have been divided on such environmental issues as climate change, with both sides using scientific authorities to help defend their positions. But Pinsky writes that a subset of evangelical scientists at prestigious (often British) universities have turned their attention to climate change, authoring several books making the Christian case for curbing global warming, among the most popular being *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming*, by

Michael Northcott. Other scientists, such as Brian Heap and Sir John Houghton, along with their American counterparts, such as Francis Collins and Calvin DeWitt of the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, have directly influenced religious leaders, who, in turn, spread the word to their constituencies about the dangers of climate change and the need for activism.

For instance, Houghton personally influenced Richard Cizik, head of the 30-million-member National Association of Evangelicals, who became an outspoken proponent of activism on climate control (attracting the attention of critics such as Pat Robertson and James Dobson, who exerted pressure to

try and have him fired). Joel Hunter, an influential megachurch pastor and advisor to President Obama, has likewise been the recipient of Houghton's personal counsel. Hunter says that believing researchers have been very important in generating support for activism on the issue, mainly because they are seen as respected scientists who are also committed Christians. Pinsky adds that support for an activist role regarding climate change has become a "major tenet among a cohort of younger megachurch pastors now bidding to assume national leadership of the evangelical movement."

(*Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, 45 Francis Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138)

## Pope's appointments tilt American church leadership

Recent papal appointments of American bishops show a pattern of center-right Catholic leadership emerging, writes John Allen in the *National Catholic Reporter* (March 6). The appointment of Archbishop Timothy Dolan to the New York see in late February is part of a pattern of Pope Benedict's choosing prelates who are "basically conservative in their politics and theology but also upbeat, pastoral figures seemingly open to dialogue," writes Allen. He divides the U.S. bishops into four broad categories—right, center-right, center-left and left—

and notes that in Pope Benedict's choice of 10 leaders for U.S. archdioceses since his election in 2005, in four or five cases the appointments seemed to signify a transition from a center-left prelate to one from the center-right. In other instances, the appointments have replaced one center-right candidate with another one (such Dolan replacing New York's Cardinal Egan).

Only in the case of Archbishop George Neiderauer replacing Cardinal Levada in San Francisco was the new appointee slightly

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A center-right bishop will hold the papal line on most issues, but would “prefer to set a tone rather than impose penalties.”  
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center-left (meanwhile, no right bishops have been appointed to key spots, with the possible exception of Archbishop Vigneron in Detroit). How are center-right bishops different from “right” or

conservative ones? Allen writes that a center-right bishop will hold the papal line on most issues, but would “prefer to set a tone rather than impose penalties,” such as against pro-choice politicians.

They are more likely to work with other more liberal bishops. The distinction may be important, since trying to work in the more liberal political environment under President Barack Obama may

necessitate compromise and a less ideological approach, writes Allen.

(*National Catholic Reporter*, 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111)

## Pro-life position gaining support in mainline denominations and becoming strong in world Christianity

While the pro-choice and the pro-life positions of denominations have become fairly settled, some change is taking place in mainline denominations, according to an article in *Touchstone* magazine (March). The main divide on abortion has been between mainline Protestants, on the one side, and evangelicals and Roman Catholics, on the other, but, at least among the United Methodists and the Presbyterian Church (USA), there has been a gradual shift in the pro-life direction. The UMC issued a statement at its 2008 conference asking its members to “respect the sacredness of the life and well-being” of the unborn child, where previously it only mentioned the life and well-being of the mother. The denomination also called for

parental (or other adult) notification for minors having an abortion and for greater involvement in crisis pregnancy centers. The church remains officially pro-life, although the influence of a pro-life group such as the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality has grown in the denomination. The same trend is evident in the PCUSA, which stated in 2002 that an abortion performed after fetal viability is a matter of “grave moral concern.”

Writer Dennis Di Mauro notes that even without the mainline drift toward the pro-life side, most of the world's Christian churches are predominantly pro-life. Using data from the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and Adherents.com, Di Mauro did a statistical analysis

of the world's Christian denominations with respect to their position on abortion. Even when he categorized denominations whose position on abortion was unknown as being pro-choice, he still found that 72 per cent of the world's approximately two billion Christians worship in pro-life denominations. Di Mauro adds, “Taking into consideration the large number of unaffiliated pro-life churches that exist in the world, it is likely that more than 75 per cent of the world's Christian churches are pro-life or in other words, that pro-life churches outnumber pro-choice ones by at least a three-to-one margin.”

(*Touchstone*, P.O. Box 410788, Chicago, IL 60647)

## The Family moves in a collaborative, if centralized, direction

The Family, formerly known as the Children of God, appears to be making the transition from an authoritarian religious movement based around one leader to a more democratic, if centralized, institution more capable of

surviving beyond its founding generation, write Gordan Shepherd and Gary Shepherd in the journal *Nova Religio* (February). The Family, a quasi-evangelical group, has generated waves of controversy since its

founding by David “Moses” Berg in the late 1960s because of its unconventional sexual practices, as well as charges against some of its members of sexual abuse. The authors write that the movement has taken a more collaborative and

democratic turn since Berg's death, while retaining its distinctive teachings and practices.

The organization is now divided into three levels, with only the most committed living communally in Family Disciples Homes. It is at this level that members dedicate themselves to "witnessing" for the church and are required to engage in "sexual sharing" among married couples (the other levels require neither of these practices). The Family's current co-leaders, known as Maria and Peter Amsterdam, have replaced the prophetic leadership of David Berg with a process of overseeing and giving approval to the work done by others at World Services, the group's

headquarters. The group's practice of issuing and publishing continuing revelation (collecting as many as 60,000 prophecies in a year) is now delegated to members and other staffers, although Maria Amsterdam has the final say in how prophecies (including messages from "spirits," including deceased founder Berg) are used.

The researchers find that the way in which these "channeled" spiritual messages become the means for making organizational decisions is unique for prophetic movements, especially as the Family tries to include women and youth in the decision-making process. Although highly centralized, the transnational group's style of leadership is

"more in line with the egalitarian ideologies of contemporary environmental and global movements which explicitly function as non-hierarchical alliances based on consensus decision-making." With the Family's flexible leadership, which has sought to promote young people of the second generation, the article concludes that the "Family International has successfully instituted organizational forms and mechanisms for sustaining a religious way of life that is likely to persist for generations to come."

*(Nova Religio, University of California Press, 200 Center St., Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223)*

## CURRENT RESEARCH

► **There is a noteworthy shift of Catholicism in the U.S. to the Southwest, as well as a continuing growth of non-affiliated Americans, according to the third American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS).** In a survey conducted between February and November of 2008, ARIS questioned 54,461 adults, asking them to self-identify themselves religiously. The study, led by Trinity College researchers Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, found that immigration and natural increases among Latino Catholics have given California a higher

proportion of Catholics than New England—once the nation's stronghold of Catholic residents. The ARIS finding of 14 per cent unaffiliated Americans (or "nones") in 2001 has now increased to 15 per cent. Northern New England has replaced the Pacific Northwest as the most secular region, with Vermont leading all the other states for its share of "nones" by nine per cent (having a total of 34 per cent disaffiliated). Only 1.6 per cent of Americans called themselves agnostics or atheists, although based on stated beliefs, 12 per cent fit into this category. The number of outright atheists has nearly doubled since 2001, from 900,000 to 1.6 million.

The percentage of Christians continues to decline (though by

just 0.7 per cent from 2001) to 76.7 per cent, according to the survey. What growth there is in the Christian sector comes from non-denominational evangelicals, who have increased from less than 200,000 in 1990, to 2.5 million in 2001, to over eight million today. Also, the survey found that 38 per cent of mainline Protestants now also identify themselves as evangelicals or born again. Mark Silk, who is associated with the ARIS based at Trinity College, says that the study suggests that the "two-party system" made up of evangelicals and mainline Protestants is collapsing as a "generic form of evangelicalism is emerging as the normative form of non-Catholic Christianity in the United States." The survey also found that Muslim proportion of

the population continued to grow, from 0.3 per cent in 1990, to 0.5 per cent in 2001, to 0.6 per cent in 2008.

(The ARIS report can be downloaded at [www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org](http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org))

▶ **Despite pressing economic considerations, faith-based voting played a significant part in the election of President Barack Obama, according to political scientist John C. Green.** In *First Things* magazine (March), Green writes that for the most part the voting patterns of the 2004 elections held steady—only more so. The religious coalition that helped elect Obama was “much like the Democratic vote in recent elections: strong support from minority religious groups, the Unaffiliated, and white modernist Christians. In 2008, Obama expanded the level of support from religious minorities [especially non-white] and made some modest gains among other groups of white Christians. The latter gains were offset somewhat by lost ground among modernist Christians and Centrist Catholics.”

Among evangelicals, there were no substantial changes, although there is some evidence that Obama did better among white evangelicals in battleground states, where competition was the most intense, where Democrats campaigned the hardest and where economic considerations were the most pressing. Green adds that while the election showed no major shifts in the structure of the faith-based vote, Obama’s victory could reveal religious and demographic changes. For

example, many of the religious minorities that supported Obama, along with the unaffiliated population, are growing in the U.S. Since young voters are found in these groups, for the near future at least, this could “shift the center of gravity of the faith-based vote toward the Democrats.”

(*First Things*, 156 Fifth Ave., Suite 400, New York, NY 10010)

▶ **American congregations have changed significantly in their ethnic makeup, ministries, and worship styles since 1998, according to a new National Congregations Study.** The first survey, conducted in 1998, found that 20 per cent of churchgoers reported attending a church that was all white and non-Hispanic. In the second round of the study, conducted in 2006–07, this figure had dropped to 14 per cent. The percentage of congregations with no Asians decreased during the same time period from 59 per cent to 50 per cent, while the percentage of those congregations with no Latino members declined from 43 per cent to 36 per cent. Ethnic diversity also increased in the Catholic priesthood: 13 per cent of Catholic parishes were led by Hispanic or black priests, compared to one per cent in 1998. The *Christian Century* survey also found that the use of drums in church music increased by 14 per cent (to 34 per cent) and that there was a 12 per cent increase of people raising their hands in praise in the charismatic style (to 57 per cent).

(*Christian Century*, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60605)

▶ **Mainline clergy remain active on public issues, although they do not often preach about politics from the pulpit.** This finding comes from the new Pew Research Center study, *Clergy Voices: Findings from the 2008 Mainline Protestant Clergy Voices Survey*. In his e-newsletter *Sightings* (March 9), Martin Marty writes that the study finds that these clergy have voices in public affairs, but rarely and mildly try to project or enforce social justice “dogma.” Some see their limits to be the result of lay reaction to leftism, but current members are not regularly offered “radical preachments and policies.” Almost 80 per cent of these clergy say they are strongly interested in politics, but most do not preach on specific legislative or candidacy themes. Marty adds that “Politicians who would organize and exploit them, as they do some other religious groups, would have difficulty doing so; constituencies vary too much by denomination, region, social class, and height of boundaries that might be used to keep members in and others out. Their members may have strong social justice commitments, but they blend them with those in other religions or in the secular order.”

Half of the clergy respondents call themselves “liberal,” while a third described themselves as “conservative.” Over half are Democrat “leaning” and one-third “claim a Republican affiliation.” The survey found that more than three-quarters want the federal government to have a greater role in alleviating social problems, especially concerning

environmental and health care issues. The clergy clearly are in the "church–state separation" camp, and "far more are worried about public officials who are too close to religious leaders than about those who are too far [from them]," Marty adds. Four out of five speak out on hunger and poverty issues, but only one-fourth "often discussed the issues of abortion and capital punishment." They are strongly supportive of gay rights. Ninety-three per cent of the clergy are white and 80 per cent male. Only 29 per cent believe in biblical inerrancy. The clergy and their church members work on causes other than strictly political ones and prefer broad-based works of mercy through voluntary associations in church and society. Most "are firmly opposed to the war in Iraq and most think Israel has to make greater concessions to achieve Middle East peace."

(The full study can be downloaded at [www.publicreligion.org/research/?id=167](http://www.publicreligion.org/research/?id=167))

► **Evangelical beliefs that are internalized can serve as a basis for greater tolerance of "out-groups," such as homosexuals, according to a study published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (March).** The study was conducted by Thomas Ford, Thomas Brignall, Thomas van Valey and Michael Macaluso. The researchers administered questionnaires and tests to 251 undergraduate students of different faiths. They found that when controlling for "right-wing" authoritarianism," the endorsement of orthodox Christian beliefs led to more

tolerance toward homosexuals, though not towards homosexuality as a behavior. Although other studies have linked Christian orthodoxy to prejudicial attitudes to gays and other minorities, the researchers maintain that the claim of many conservative Christians that they are opposed to the "sin" of homosexuality while loving the "sinner" may not be far off the mark. They write that when orthodox Christian beliefs are internalized, they may become preconscious standards that overrule or suppress stereotypical attitudes that may spontaneously come to mind.

(*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774)

► **Americans of most faiths say that they prefer religiously diverse neighborhoods, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.** The *Cara Report* (Winter) of Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate cites the survey as showing that 59 per cent of Americans say that they would prefer to live in a community where there are many people from different religions, while 25 per cent say they would rather live mainly among people of the same faith. "Some 40 percent of white evangelicals, 42 percent of Hispanic Catholics (but only 28 percent of all Catholics), 38 percent of those who attend religious services at least weekly, and 41 percent of conservative Republicans say they would rather live in communities filled with people who share their religion," according to the Pew study. The study was based on a

representative sample survey of 2,260 adults.

► **While the recent economic downturn has affected many religious and non-profit institutions, the negative impact on evangelical parachurch organizations has not been as great as feared, according to a recent survey by the Evangelical Churches for Financial Accountability.** The survey found that most evangelical parachurch ministries exceeded, met or came very close to their 2008 fourth-quarter contributions goals, despite the downturn. In the survey of over 300 ECFA members, 72 per cent of responding organizations reported that they exceeded, met or came within 10 per cent of their goals, while 28 per cent reported that they were more than 10 per cent below their goals. Many of the parachurch ministries surveyed reporting small donations of \$10 to \$100 were relatively unaffected, and in some cases, donations in this category increased.

Some ministries attributed steady or increased contributions to increased prayer and widespread humanitarian interest in supporting organizations that help the poor and disadvantaged. When asked what specific measures were taken to support fund-raising during the downturn, 53 per cent said they increased one-on-one contact with key donors. Although most ministries exceeded, met or came close to fourth-quarter 2008 goals, 50 per cent reported that their investments lost 15–30 per cent of their value. In addition,

many have concerns about how the ongoing economic crisis may affect 2009 contributions. To navigate through the downturn and recoup or minimize losses, some ministries implemented strategies to keep operating costs and spending down.

(The survey is available at <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/7aefda69>)

► **Muslims are more likely to see themselves as thriving than their counterparts in most other countries, although they were found to be the least content group in the U.S., according to a Gallup poll.** The *New York Times* (March 2) cites the poll as showing that the only countries where Muslims are more likely to see themselves as thriving are Saudi Arabia and Germany. The Gallup study is significant because it is the first to examine a randomly selected sample of American Muslims. Three hundred thousand people were interviewed by telephone in 2008 when Gallup conducted broader polls, and then it focused on 946 who identified themselves as Muslims. (The margin of sampling error is approximately four percentage points.) The researchers say that the high levels of discontent may be because the largest segment of American Muslims are African-Americans (35 per cent, including first-generation immigrants), who usually report lower levels of income, education, employment and well-being than other Americans. In contrast, Asian-American Muslims (from such countries as India and Pakistan) have more income and education

and are more likely to be thriving than other American Muslims. The poll actually found that their quality of life indicators are higher than for most other Americans, except for American Jews.

“We discovered how diverse Muslim Americans are,” said Dalia Mogahed, executive director and senior analyst of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, which financed the poll. “Ethnically, politically and economically, they are in every way a cross-section of the nation. They are the only religious community without a majority race.” Contrary to stereotypes, American Muslim women are more likely than American Muslim men to have college and postgraduate degrees. As with Muslims in general, the women are more highly educated than women in every other religious group except Jews. American Muslim women also report incomes more nearly equal to men, compared with women and men of other faiths. Muslim women in the U.S. attend mosque as frequently as Muslim men—in contrast with many Muslim countries where mosques are primarily for men (and only men are required to attend Friday prayers at the mosque). American Muslims are generally very religious, saying that religion is an important part of their daily lives (80 per cent), i.e. more than any other group except Mormons (85 per cent). The figure for Americans in general is 65 per cent, according to the survey.

► **The Czech Republic has been considered one of the most secularized countries in Europe,**

**if not the world, but there are early signs that this situation may be changing.** *Quadrant* (January), the newsletter of the Christian Research Society, notes that the Czech Republic’s atheism rate of 59 per cent is among the highest in the world. Darrell Jackson adds, “Some commentators suggest, however, that atheism, in company with traditional Christian belief, is in decline. The most perceptible shift is towards a middle ground of spirituality with increasing numbers [no figures are provided] of Czechs taking the view that life continues after death whilst simultaneously refraining from practicing any form of religious observance. This shift can be set against the low rate of 5.5 percent of Czechs being churchgoers.”

(*Quadrant*, Christian Research Society, Trinity Business Centre, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon, UK SN5 7DG)

► **Religious intolerance is now seen to be a bigger problem in British society than racism, according to a recent survey.** The survey, conducted for the government by the Ipsos MORI research organization, found that 60 per cent of respondents believe that religion has replaced race as a more divisive issue facing the country; this figure climbed to 66 per cent among Muslim respondents, according to a report in the *Christian Century* (February 24).

► **In 2007 the Church of England registered the largest growth of ordained clergy since 2000.** *Quadrant* (January), the newsletter of the Christian

Research Society, notes that overall, 262 women and 290 men were ordained. The weekly giving rate of Church of England parishioners also increased (by six per cent), suggesting to the editors “more verification of the changing patterns of church attendance.”

► **Along with the debate about the political influence of the Muslim-based JDP party in Turkey, there is renewed attention to the process of neighborhood pressure exerted against secularists and religious dissidents.** The concept of neighborhood pressure in Turkey is well known, but has received new attention in a recent study by

political scientist Binnaz Toprak. *Footnotes* (February), the newsletter of the American Sociological Association, reports that Toprak conducted fieldwork in 12 Anatolian towns and two Istanbul neighborhoods, interviewing those of minority or excluded identities, such as Christians, Alevis (considered heretics by orthodox Muslims), Roma, women and leftists. Toprak found that many Alevis reported that they were regularly excluded from commercial relations, denied employment in the private and public sectors, and subjected to insults by their Sunni neighbors.

University students were

threatened with violence for not fasting during Ramadan. Female students who did not wear veils and unmarried men were refused apartments by conservative landlords, particularly in some Anatolian towns. The study also found that discrimination against individuals with secular identities was often reinforced by local government agencies controlled by the JDP. The local institutions and networks of the Gülen community, an influential Muslim organization in Turkey, contributed to the exclusion of outsiders.

(*Footnotes*, American Sociological Association, K Street, NW, Ste. 600, Washington, DC 20005)

## Sri Lanka: new role for religious communities in conflict areas

The conflict in Sri Lanka has led to the emergence of new organizational structures in some religious groups and has endowed them with a stronger community role, according to European and Sri Lankan scholars at a workshop that took place at the University of Edinburgh on March 12–13, which **RW** attended. The research focused on two districts in eastern Sri Lanka (Batticaloa and Ampara) and was conducted by a team from the Universities of Edinburgh and Zurich, School of Oriental and African Studies, as well as from three universities in Sri Lanka.

The new fault lines in the Muslim community between traditional and reformist Muslims cannot be attributed to the civil war under way in Sri Lanka, since similar

developments can be observed in other places across the world. But a direct consequence of the conflict has been the emergence of local mosque federations, which take a leadership role and supply a variety of services that the state is unable to provide, in contrast with the traditional low-key role of local mosques in the country. More and more mosque-based activities are developing.

No counterpart has emerged among the Hindu communities, since anything distracting from the cause of Tamil nationalism has been discouraged by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which does not want to see other sources of leadership emerge. The situation is different with the Roman Catholic Church, due to its structure; it is the only relatively safe field for leadership figures to emerge beside the LTTE in the Tamil community.

Regarding Buddhists in the two

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Temples have become kinds of crisis management centers.

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eastern districts under observation, temples have become kinds of "crisis management centers" in Buddhist villages. In addition, the situation has led a number of monks to become social activists beside their traditional role. There are also some interreligious efforts to mediate and work toward peace in the area. This can contribute to dampening the violence, but it does not address the root causes of the conflict. To go further would mean challenging the positions of political and military actors, and thus losing the "neutrality" and unique "transgressive capacity" of religious actors in a conflict situation.

## New Age movement returns to India in Hindu dress

The New Age movement, which distilled Eastern and occult teachings with human potential techniques for Western audiences, has “returned home” to India, finding wide popularity among Indians for a more individualized spirituality, reports *Hinduism Today* (April/May/June). Although the New Age movement has shed much of its Eastern religious baggage and focused on holistic health in the U.S., it is a different story in India. New Age books and magazines in the latter country are seen more as an extension of Hinduism than

creating a generic spirituality. In India’s New Age shops and among New Age publishers, there is an offering of various spiritual practices and teachings, such as Reiki, Tai Chi and even Islamic mysticism. Most of the people interviewed said that they value New Age literature and books because these texts make spiritual teachings easier to understand than the Hindu religious texts.

Indian New Age magazines are similar in style and content to their counterparts in the U.S., celebrating “success, harmony and consumerism.” The two main differences are that in India these publications’ Hindu thrust is on display and they have both male

and female readerships. The article makes much of the way American New Age magazines and culture have become “feminized,” reaching mainly women and offering a non-offensive and consumeristic secular spirituality. But even these publications see their role as bridging the gap between the older and younger generations. For instance, one newcomer to the market is the magazine *Soul Curry*, which presents itself as a voice of those who wish to be “free from the clutches of religion, dogma and societal conditioning.”

(*Hinduism Today*, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, HI 96746-9304)

### FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

■ The new password for access to RW’s archives, at [www.religionwatch.com](http://www.religionwatch.com) is: Unasancta. (Some readers have asked about the strange-sounding RW passwords. They are all defunct periodicals that dealt with religion in one way or another.)

■ In reviewing the ASR Bibliographic Database (at [www.tnstate.edu/sociology/bibliodb/browse.asp](http://www.tnstate.edu/sociology/bibliodb/browse.asp)) in the November/December issue, we neglected to mention that the database is directed and compiled by Anthony Blasi.

### ■ Watch This! *The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black*

*Televangelism* (New York University Press, \$23), by Jonathan Walton, is a critical examination of both the older and new generation of African-America religious broadcasters. Whether it preached a strong otherworldly and conservative political message or a progressive or radical gospel, the black church, from its beginnings, was not a stranger to televangelism and religious broadcasting. Walton bases his book on case studies of prominent black televangelists, ranging from the pioneering prosperity preacher Rev. Ike to the modern charismatic and megachurch pastors Eddie Long, T.D. Jakes and Creflo Dollar.

Walton writes from a leftist political perspective, viewing black televangelists as embracing the “collective myth of American success and black victimology” (through their prosperity teachings and stress on self-help and entrepreneurship) and the power and leadership of men, and forsaking the “prophetic” black church tradition. He views the increasing use of media by black religious leaders as a way of claiming a place in mainstream American religion. But the book often allows for more complexity. It does a good job of showing how blacks have gradually become the leaders of the “word of faith” movement, upholding prosperity and prophetic teachings. Walton also knowledgeably categorizes black

televangelists as neo-Pentecostal, charismatic mainline and word of faith. He notes that the leaders of these ministries, especially Eddie Long and T.D. Jakes, often place themselves in the black church-civil rights tradition. Their ministries, often existing outside the precincts of traditional black denominations, have provided innovations in the areas of women's leadership, community development and racial reconciliation.

■ With recent research suggesting there has been a growth of unaffiliated—mainly younger—Americans, there is considerable debate about the identity of these “nones.” Are they disenchanting church dropouts tending toward secularism or “spiritual but not religious” individuals seeking a sense of community? In ***Lost and Found*** (B&H Publishing Group, \$17.99), authors Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley and Jason Haynes present research findings among the young unchurched suggesting both a “demand” for Christian involvement and a “supply” of innovative congregations that are doing a good job of reaching this group. The authors, who base much of their findings on surveys conducted by Lifeway Research, a polling organization associated with the Southern Baptists, acknowledge that unchurched young Americans are far from a monolithic group. They identify four simple yet overlapping types of unchurched: the “always unchurched” (22 per cent), the

“dechurched” (62 per cent; having attended as a child), the “friendly unchurched” (15 per cent; those not particularly angry at the Christian churches) and the “hostile unchurched” (37 per cent; those angry at churches, sometimes because of negative experiences they have had with these institutions).

Many of the findings from *Lost and Found* have been reported in these pages (the growth of the “spiritual but not religious” category among the young), but the authors do show the fairly high rate of spiritual interest and belief in God (81 per cent) among the young unchurched. More than 60 per cent said they would attend church if its message were presented in a relevant way. The rest of the book provides findings from a survey of 149 churches that are successful at reaching young adults. The contemporary worship element is seen in many of these ministries, as are such traits as community emphasis, social action programs and mentoring.

■ While no longer officially the most unchurched region of the U.S. (New England now claims that title, according to the recent American Religious Identity survey), the Pacific Northwest is still distinctive in the ways in which its religious institutions interact within the region's secular and environmentalist culture. In his recent book ***Evangelical vs. Liberal*** (Oxford University Press, \$24.95), James

K. Wellman looks at the evangelical and mainline Protestant clash in the Pacific Northwest. The region's unchurched and individualistic nature creates an open playing field unencumbered by tradition and memories of religious establishments. Wellman finds that in such a free-market environment, evangelicals have become quite entrepreneurial, competing with other religious and secular subcultures, and have actually reported growth and stability, forming a more solid religious bloc than in other regions.

Liberal Protestant churches, in contrast, have the more difficult job of differentiating themselves from an already liberal, inclusive and socially conscious culture that is at the same time anti-institutional and libertarian. But these churches are particularly attractive to gays and lesbians as communities that celebrate diversity more intensely than the surrounding society; they have a harder time bringing families and youth into their congregations. Through interviews and observation, the author portrays the clash between evangelicals and mainliners as particularly sharp, whether on theological, political and aesthetic grounds (traditional versus contemporary worship styles) or in terms of moral world views.

■ ***Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia*** (Ronsdale Press, \$24.95), edited by Douglas Todd, is a quite

different book, although it also seeks to understand the distinctive religious and spiritual culture of the Pacific Northwest. Cascadia is the name that some environmentalists (known as bioregionalists) have given to the region stretching from much of Oregon to southwestern Alaska (including western Canada). The anthology, through scholarly studies, autobiographical accounts, theological reflections and even poetry, provides a compelling map of the spiritual and religious currents in the region. A chapter by Canadian pollster Andrew Grenville provides an actual map of the “peaks” and “valleys” of residents’ spiritual and moral inclinations,

including those of self-reliance, individualism, tolerance, an inclination to social activism, non-participation in religious institutions and high use of marijuana (especially in British Columbia).

Chapters by Mark Silk and Patricia Killian O’Connell focus more on religious institutional life in Cascadia, showing how the region is far from homogeneous—British Columbia has less of an evangelical presence and shows less religious innovation than the U.S. states to the south, but has a far greater Asian religious presence. Meanwhile, the eastern and western segments are as different as the “red” and “blue”

states divide throughout the rest of America. Most of the other chapters explore and detail the “nature spirituality” evident in much of the region (so much so that Todd describes it as a “civil religion”), as well as secular-spiritual currents, such as workplace spirituality. An interesting chapter by political scientist Philip Resnick highlights the “elusiveness” of Cascadia’s utopia, arguing that the region’s stress on innovation and individualism tends to give short shrift to the importance of historical memory—something that a more amiable dialogue across the secular-religious divide may help address.

On/File: A continuing survey of people, groups, movements and events impacting religion

**1) Aleksandr Dugin** has made a name for himself in Russian political and intellectual circles for his radical anti-Americanism and a unique kind of religious nationalism. Dugin’s recent rise from being an obscure intellectual to a key government advisor took place alongside Vladimir Putin’s ascent to power. Dugin, a dissident since his youth, was

heavily influenced by the religious philosophy of Traditionalism, which teaches that there is an esoteric and mystical inner core that unites the world’s religions. After flirtations with the occult and the European “new right” (calling for a revival of paganism to replace Christianity), Dugin now calls for the restoration of Russia’s medieval social hierarchy, with an aristocratic ruling class under religious patronage. “Unlike Catholicism and Protestantism, Dugin claims, Eastern Orthodox Christianity preserved its esoteric character and its ties with

divine tradition.” Recently appointed head of the Center for Conservative Studies at Moscow State University, Dugin is also a leader and architect of the Eurasian movement, which seeks to bring Russia, Asia and Europe (as well as the Middle East and particularly Iran) into an alliance against the U.S. and other pro-Western societies. With Russia under Putinism increasingly embracing the Eurasian vision (attacking Western allies and sympathizers), Dugin’s religious nationalism is likely to gain more influence. **(Source: Azure, Winter)**

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## 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.

*Religion Watch* does much more than just summarize articles. To provide you with solid background information on the trends presented, we also do research, reporting and analysis on many subjects. A special section in each issue keeps an eye on new books, special issues and articles of publications and new periodicals in religion. We also profile new organizations and prominent figures that are making an impact on the religious scene.

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